

History 609/Anthropology 609
Approaches to the African Past
Prof. Trevor Getz



A *lukasa*: An encoded 'map' of family, society, history and space made by a BaLuba artisan and used in ritual and oral history recounting as a mnemonic aid

There ought to be no 'relationship' between history and anthropology, since there should be no division to begin with. A theory of society which is not also a theory of history, or vice-versa, is hardly a theory at all - John L. Comaroff, "Dialectical Systems, History and Anthropology: Units of Study and Questions of Theory," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 8, no. 2 (April 1982): 144.

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Office Hours: T/Th 11-12:30
Class Hours: T/Th 9:35-10:50
Business 106

Course Description

History 609/Anthropology 609 is an introduction to study of African pasts. While it focuses on the methodologies employed by historians and anthropologists to jointly interpret the past, it is open to students from all disciplines. The course interweaves three related tasks: interdisciplinary skills and methods, narratives of African experiences and perspectives from the past, and the relationships between contemporary Africans and their pasts.

Learning outcomes

This course is largely a course in methodology, especially methods of study advanced by scholars studying the African past. Upon completion, students are expected to be able to demonstrate skills in the interpretation of archaeobotanical and archaeological data, physical anthropological remains, oral histories and oral traditions, court testimony, and art as well as written sources including scholarly texts, inscriptions, novels, poetry, and textbooks. This is also a course centered around content. Rather than a single narrative of the African past, however, it will focus on a series of episodes, experiences, and perspectives connected thematically across time and space. Finally, this course does contain some theory and philosophy, and will require students to debate the ethics of studying the African past as well.

Thus the core objectives for this class are for students to take away an understanding of:

- the ways in which African history and anthropology has been studied and known by its inhabitants and professional scholars, and the sources used to understand the history of the continent.
- the relationships between Africans and the Muslim, Middle-Eastern, and European “worlds”.
- how African cultures developed to enable African peoples to deal with the challenges of the environment, their own societies, and relationships with other peoples.
- Contemporary methods for understanding the African pasts from across disciplines.

Stemming from these objectives, the learning outcomes for this course are:

- Students will enter debates on the advantages and limitations of different methods and approaches to studying the African past.
- Students will engage with evidence from the African and colonial “archive” and the “field”, and also beyond.
- Students will read scholarly studies engaging the African past and critically engage them utilizing tools and “primary” sources at their disposal.
- Students will explore the ethics of scholarly interaction with present and past African societies.
- Students will apply these skills to specific scholarly interrogations of events and trends situated within the African past.

Difficulty level

This is not an easy course. You will have 14 assignments, pretty much one a week. You are required to submit every single one of them. The top 10 will constitute your grade for this course. Failure to submit an assignment will hurt your grade.

Disability statement

‘Students with disabilities who need reasonable accommodations are encouraged to contact the instructor. The Disability Programs and Resource Center (DPRC) is available to facilitate the reasonable accommodations process. The DPRC is located in the Student Service Building and can be reached by telephone (voice/TTY 415-338-2472) or by email (dprc@sfsu.edu).’ (<http://www.sfsu.edu/~dprc/facultyfaq.html#1>)

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism is a form of cheating or fraud; it occurs when a student misrepresents the work of another as his or her own. Plagiarism may consist of using the ideas, sentences, paragraphs, or the whole text of another without appropriate acknowledgment, but it also includes employing or allowing another person to write or substantially alter work that a student then submits as his or her own. Any assignment found to be plagiarized will be given a "0" grade. All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Dean of the College, and may be reported to the University Judicial Affairs Officer for further action.

Student disclosures of sexual violence

SF State fosters a campus free of sexual violence including sexual harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, and/or any form of sex or gender discrimination. If you disclose a personal experience as an SF State student, the course instructor is required to notify the Dean of Students. To disclose any such violence confidentially, contact:

The SAFE Place - (415) 338-2208; http://www.sfsu.edu/~safe_plc/

Counseling and Psychological Services Center - (415) 338-2208; <http://psyservs.sfsu.edu/>

Texts (Required)

- *African Histories*, by Esperanza Brizuela-Garcia and Trevor R. Getz, (Pearson Prentice Hall, 2011).
- *Abina and the Important Men*, by Trevor R. Getz and Liz Clarke, (Oxford University Press, 2015). 2nd edition.

Course Marking Guidelines

Workshop assignments (13)... 10 highest grades.	question worksheets	10x10% = 100%
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Workshop Assignments

- Assignments are worksheets attached to the chapters from Getz & Brizuela-Garcia or *Abina and the Important Men*.
- Source assignments must be typed and are due on the day of the discussion at the beginning of class. Wholly hand-written assignments will not typically be accepted (although partial credit will be given for additions/changes made in class).
- Assignments are due every Tuesday by mid-class break and *all* questions must be answered.
- Every week, I will grade several question from the submitted assignment.
- I will only count your 10 highest grades in calculating your final grade. However, if you receive a 0 for not submitting an assignment points will be deducted, *so do all of your assignments!*

Recording of lectures

Recording of lectures is strictly not allowed without the instructor's written permission.

History 609 & Anthropology 609

Date	Topic	G&B-G chapters	Other readings
Aug 25	Introduction: the academy and Africa		
Aug 27	L: Food production and consumption		
Sep 1	Workshop 1: Archaeobotany and cultivation	1	
Sep 3	L: Building enduring societies in N/NE Africa		
Sep 8	W2: Early written sources from Africa	2	
Sep 10	L: The movement of peoples		
Sep 15	W3: Linguistics and the Bantu diffusion	3	
Sep 17	L: Building enduring societies in W Africa		
Sep 22	W4: Archaeology and the African city	4	
Sep 24	L: Networks of commerce and intellectual exchange		
Sept 29	W5: Islamic written sources from East Africa	6	
Oct 1	L: The Atlantic slave trade		
Oct 6	W6: Memory and oral sources from the AST	5	
Oct 8	L: Pre-colonial European and African interactions		
Oct 13	W7: Cultural nationalism and African intellectuals	7	
Oct 15	L: Colonialism I – power and authority		
Oct 20	W8: Architecture, photography, and colonial power	8	
Oct 22	L: Colonialism II – the African experience		
Oct 27	W: Abina parts 1-4	<i>Abina assignment 1</i>	<i>Abina parts 1-4</i>
Oct 29	(no class)		
Nov 3	W9: Abina part 5	<i>Abina assignment 2</i>	<i>Abina part 5</i>
Nov 5	L: The end of empires in Africa		
Nov 10	W10: Paintings and ethnography	9	
Nov 12	L: Decolonization and postcolonialism		
Nov 17	No class: African Studies Association meeting		
Nov 19	No class: African Studies Association meeting		
Dec 1	W11: Literature & decolonization	10	
Dec 3	L: Texts and tribunals		
Dec 8	W12: Textbooks and tribunals (optional)	11	