

Race in Islamic Africa

Katrina Yeaw

Upper-Level Undergraduate – Approximately 10-15 students

DESCRIPTION:

How do Africans understand race? Traditionally, historians have attributed racial thinking in Africa to ideas imported from Europe and to the influence of scientific racism during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but a recent shift in scholarship makes it clear that racial thinking in Africa cannot be seen as an exclusively foreign implant. Instead, the Islamic Africa has its own specific history of racial thought rooted in the complex relationship between ideology, status, religion and identity.

This course is an undergraduate colloquium exploring the role of race in the construction of categories of difference by communities in Islamic Africa from the Maqrib to the Swahili Coast. Starting with a theoretical introduction on race as an analytical concept, this course will introduce students to debates about race, ethnicity and slavery within the Islamic tradition. It will then investigate recent scholarship on non-European and precolonial racial thought and the way in which these categories helped mediate between communities and shaped identities. It then will explore debates about the contribution of European thinking to concepts of race and the way colonialism brought about dramatic shifts in these categories. Finally, the course will evaluate the lasting impact of racial thinking in Africa and its contribution to recent conflicts from Sudan to Mauritania.

GOALS

1. Introduce students to literature and debates on the construction of race in Islamic Africa
2. Motivate students to identify historical trends that have shaped understandings of race, including religion, ethnicity, institutions, identity, class, kinship gender and foreign intervention.
3. Teach students to think like historians and use the tools of historians to evaluate the past.
4. Encourage students to hone their reading, writing, and oral communication skills.

ASSIGNMENTS

The assignments for this class are designed to help students meet the goals of the course. First, students will develop their writing and analytical skills and deepen their knowledge of the role of race in Islamic Africa by preparing a well-written research paper. Students will also improve their writing skills over the course of the semester by submitting two short reading response papers. In addition, students will have an opportunity to develop their oral communication skills through in-class discussions and an oral presentation.

WEEK 1: RACE AND THEORY

Holt, Thomas C. *The Problem of Race in the Twenty-first Century* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2002), 20-1

Hall, Stuart. "Race, Articulation and Societies Structured in Domination," in *Race Critical Theories Text and Context*, ed. Philomena Essed and David Theo Goldberg (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), 38-68.

WEEK 2: ISLAM, RACE AND SLAVERY

Lewis, Bernard. *Race and Slavery in the Middle East: An Historical Enquiry* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 1-71.

Clarence-Smith, W. G. *Islam and the Abolition of Slavery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 1-21.

El Hamel, Chouki. *Black Morocco: A History of Slavery, Race, and Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 17-69

WEEK 3: MOROCCO

El Hamel, Chouki. *Black Morocco: A History of Slavery, Race, and Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 1-16, 60-240.

WEEK 4: PRE-COLONIAL RACIAL THOUGHT

Hill, Bruce. *A History of Race in Muslim West Africa, 1600-1960* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 1-104.

WEEK 5: COLONIALISM AND RACE

Glassman, Jonathon. "Slower than a Massacre: The Multiple Sources of Racial Thought in Colonial Africa." *The American Historical Review* 109.3 (2004): 720-754.

Hill, *A History of Race in Muslim West Africa, 1600-1960*, 105-172.

WEEK 7: RACE AND GENDER

Ahmad A. Sikainga, "Shari`a Courts and the Manumission of Female Slaves in the Sudan, 1898-1939," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, vol. 28, no. 1, 1995, 1-24.

McMahon, Elisabeth. *Slavery and Emancipation in Islamic East Africa: From Honor to Respectability* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 71-156.

Zilfi, Madeline C. *Women and Slavery in the late Ottoman Empire: The Design of Difference* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 96-152.

WEEK 8: SLAVERY AND ABOLITION IN NORTH AFRICA

Brower, Benjamin Claude "Rethinking Abolition in Algeria: Slavery and the "Indigenous Question". *Cahiers D'études Africaines*. 49 (2009): 805-827.

Montana, Ismael Musah, and Ehud R. Toledano. *The Abolition of Slavery in Ottoman Tunisia* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2013), 74-95.

El Hamel, *Black Morocco*, 241-269.

WEEK 9: SLAVERY AND ABOLITION IN SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

Clarence-Smith, W. G. *Islam and the Abolition of Slavery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 98-150.

McMahon, *Slavery and Emancipation in Islamic East Africa*, 157-192.

WEEK 10: EGYPT AND SUDAN

Powell, Eve Troutt. *A Different Shade of Colonialism: Egypt, Great Britain, and the Mastery of the Sudan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 1-167.

WEEK 11: ZANZIBAR

Glassman, Jonathon. *War of Words, War of Stones: Racial Thought and Violence in Colonial Zanzibar*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011)

WEEK 12: DECOLONIZATION, RACE AND THE POST-COLONIAL CONDITION

Hill, *A History of Race in Muslim West Africa, 1600-1960*, 273-326.

El Hamel, *Black Morocco*, 270-286.

Powell, *A Different Shade of Colonialism*, 168-216.

WEEK 13: TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY CONFLICTS

Mamdani, Mahmoud, *Saviors and Survivors: Darfur, Politics and the War on Terror* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2009).

WEEK 14: Paper Workshop