



School of Liberal Arts

Department of History

Fontaine Hall Poughkeepsie NY 12601

845-575-3295 phone

<https://www.marist.edu/history>

Dear Students

Welcome to the *African Civilizations Up to 1870* online Summer 2023 eight-week course that commences on June 5th and ends on July 28th. If you are going away this summer, ensure you have internet access. I will not accept the excuse that I did not have internet access. After all, this is an online course. The course is set up on Brightspace and the syllabus will give more details of the course layout and other important information. Please read it in its entirety.

Often, “Africa” conjures up certain predictable, negative images: poverty, disease, tribalism, warfare, and corruption. While much attention is paid to Africa’s problems, the World rarely gets a sense of how African societies and the issues they face have developed and changed over time. Contrary to popular belief of the “primitive” and “dark” continent, African states in the extended period before European conquest were the products of sophisticated cultural, social, and material systems. The primary themes in this course concern how ancient African communities developed and interacted with others. After a continental overview and exploration of Africa, we will consider several regional developments successively but not always in chronological order, beginning with early African civilizations and ending with the initial European conquest.

It is important to remember that no single course can cover any more than the tiniest sliver of the complexity and variety of “Africa”—the second-largest continent on Earth—but students completing this course will be able to write upon and discuss major themes in early African history. Students will also be challenged to engage with the African past in a way that will contribute to making them empathetic citizens of the world in the twenty-first century.

There are no assigned textbooks for this course. Short-selected readings, internet articles, PowerPoints accompanied by detailed notes, and documentaries/movies will be posted in the weekly folders. These materials are just as important as the required books and will play a key role in our class discussions. So, read them and take detailed notes. Because we will be covering a lot of material in a relatively short time, it’s very important that you keep up with the material weekly. The weekly folder located on the course home page will walk you through the weekly materials and expectations.

The first week will be a course introduction intended to familiarize you with the technological tools we will use, an introduction to the course, and everyone in this course. I will post a video introducing myself and you will be required to introduce yourself to the class by responding to the Discussion tab on Brightspace entitled All About Me. Read the instructions on how to complete this assignment and other assignments for Week 1. The remaining weeks of the course will follow the Week 1 format, but just be sure to read the weekly expectations as we have different assignments in some weeks.

We will use Brightspace Discussion as a forum for class dialogue. Class discussions will be student-led, but I will offer support, guidance, and evaluation. Be sure to regularly reference both syllabi to stay up to date on your assignment deadlines. For individual writing assignments, we will use the Brightspace



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Assignments drop box. All written individual assignments (excluding discussion posts) must be submitted as Word documents to Brightspace Assignments. Assignments are due on the date and time specified on Brightspace and the syllabus.

Some of the issues we will discuss in this course may be controversial. Given this possibility, we must respect each other's needs, values, and views. The class is only successful when we take time to thoughtfully prepare, participate in the discussion, and create conditions for others to participate. Disagreements and discussions are important for learning, but we must do so with respect. I reserve the right to remove posts and/or address students individually if I determine such action is necessary.

Sincerely,

Dr. Fungisai Musoni-Chikede,

Assistant Professor of History & Director African Studies Program.

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