African History

Spring 2016

You must do a total of three (3) questions. Section A is MANDATORY. Choose two questions from Section B.

Be sure each essay has a clear line of argument, addresses as many dimensions of the question as possible, and offers relevant, persuasive evidence from specific secondary sources wherever appropriate. Good luck!

**Section A: MANDATORY -- answer this question:**

1. Congratulations! You have been hired to teach African history at a small liberal arts college. Your department chair wants you to develop a semester-long course called “Introduction to African History” at the 100 level, which will attract history majors, and also serve as an elective for majors who have chosen a global studies focus. To describe your course:
   a. Develop a 2-page rationale for the course that addresses your approach to this challenge.
   b. Develop three broad subsections and provide 1-2 page abstracts of what each one will cover
   c. List the major readings will be used in each subsection
   d. Describe one assignment, whether written, oral or digital, that advances your pedagogical aims for the course (1-2 pages).

**Section B: Answer TWO of the following questions:**

2. What have been the major innovations in how historians of Africa have addressed topics of identity, community, and belonging over the past five decades?

3. What are the principal ways in which historians of women and historians of gender have transformed larger narratives of African History over the past four decades? What has been the wider analytical impact of this approach for African historians?

4. Richard Reid has recently argued that ‘the relative demise of precolonial scholarship should be a matter of profound concern, for it has involved the detachment of Africa’s turbulent present – and its recent past – from deeper patterns of both change and continuity’. In the scholarship on pre-colonial Africa, what are the ‘deeper patterns of both change and continuity’ that most saliently define ‘Africa’ as a unit of historical inquiry, and to what extent are these ‘deeper patterns’ pertinent to your own research?

5. How does recent historiography (published since about 2000) challenge and problematize the current popular characterizations of postcolonial East African nations as “failed states”?

6. Identify and discuss two major methodological innovations in the study of African History since the 1970s. To what extent did these innovations emerge in response to local research conditions and priorities, or instead to shifts in wider academic developments outside of Africa? In your
opinion, what are the strengths and weaknesses of these three methodological innovations, and how well suited are they for your own research agenda?