

Geography of Africa Syllabus

GEA 3600 14079 GA36

AFS 3930 1841 14447

Fall 2021

Instructor: Brian Child

Class Time: M,W,F | **Period:** 4. 10:40 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Classroom: MAEA0303 (Mechanical and Aero Building)

Office Hours: Immediately after class

Email: bchild@ufl.edu

In this large class, please ask your questions about class administration and content at the beginning or end of each class or in office hours. It is extremely difficult to respond to emails.

GEA 3600 Course Description

This course assess the Geography of Africa from an environmental and economic development perspective. The course has four components.

- We start by understanding how Africa formed, many millions of years ago, and how its landscape and climate affects today's natural environments and how people live in them.
- Second, we trace the evolution of humankind in Africa from early hominids and ancient civilizations, through the ages of exploration and colonialism, to the current circumstances.
- We then discuss how African use their land, including for agriculture and for wildlife conservation. Africa is home to many iconic wildlife species, and is pioneering new approaches to conserving them, not least through some of the world's most famous parks and through community conservation.
- Finally, we discuss the challenges of demography on the World's youngest and fastest growing continent, together with the challenges of economic development and public health.

The course requires critical thinking about how environment, politics, and economic interact, and will require students to think of these through a multi-disciplinary and historical lens. Students will be required to write an essay about each of the four primary subject areas, and a final exam will assess their overall understanding of the course.

GEA 3600 provides 3 Credit Hours of General Education Requirements (GER):

S=Social Science **N=**International **Gordon Rule: 6,000 words** Communication

Recommended Textbook ► Aryeetey-Attoh, S. *Geography of Sub-Saharan Africa. 3rd Edition.* Prentice-Hall Publisher. ISBN 0136056318.

The primary source of materials will be the lectures and Power Point presentations. In the absence of an ideal textbook, the above recommendation provides a reasonable, though far from perfect, overview of the subjects.

GEA 3600 Canvas e-Learning System. ELS allows you to see your scores & grades on assignments, quizzes & exams; course calendar; announcements; class internal email; instructions; resources; course updates. <http://lss.at.ufl.edu/>

Accommodations for students with disabilities. Students must register with the Disability Research Center in Reid Hall and bring forms to the instructor.

UF Honor Code: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcode.php>

Grade Legend

| | | | |
|----|------|-----------------|-------|
| A | 4.0 | | 90+ |
| A- | 3.67 | Excellent | 85-89 |
| B+ | 3.33 | | 80-84 |
| B | 3.0 | Good | 75-79 |
| B- | 2.67 | | 70-74 |
| C+ | 2.33 | | 66-69 |
| C | 2.0 | Barely adequate | 63-65 |
| C- | 1.67 | | 60-62 |
| D+ | 1.33 | | 56-59 |
| D | 1.0 | Not good enough | 53-55 |
| D- | .67 | | 50-52 |
| S | 0 | | |

Basis for Grading

The grade for this class will be based on four essays and a final exam.

| Basis for Grading | Points (100) | Due Dates |
|---|--------------|---|
| 1. Countries and capitals quiz | 0 | Cancelled this year |
| 2. 4 Section essays (1,500 words; +- 3 pages) | 80 | 21 September Physical Geography 12 October African Civilizations 2 November Environment 23 November Health / Development |
| 3. Exam | 20 | 3 December |
| 4. Attendance | 10 | Extra points |

Students will be expected to be familiar with course content, which will be derived mainly from lectures. Essay marketing will assess student knowledge of content (60%), the student's ability to write an essay including introduction, main body, conclusions, sub-headings and citations (20%), and critical thinking and reading that goes beyond that provided in class (20%). A word of advice - non-attendance of lectures is strongly reflected in essay quality, and therefore in your final grade.

Gordon Rule:

One goal of this class is to give you the opportunity to improve your writing. This obviously requires reading, but also that you do all your writing assignments in your own words and style. Please submit all writing assignments via Turnitin. DO NOT cut and paste from the web; this is “**plagiarism**”.

- First time caught plagiarizing – 0 marks
- Second time caught plagiarizing – referred to UF

UF Honor Code

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcode.php>

6. **Plagiarism.** A student shall not represent as the student's own work all or any portion of the work of another. Plagiarism includes (but is not limited to):

- a. Quoting oral or written materials, whether published or unpublished, without proper attribution.
- b. Submitting a document or assignment which in whole or in part is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment not authored by the student.

Covid learning environment

~~Our class sessions may be audio-visually recorded for students in the class to refer back and for enrolled students who are unable to attend live. Students who participate with their camera engaged or utilize a profile image are agreeing to have their video or image recorded. If you are unwilling to consent to have your profile or video image recorded, be sure to keep your camera off and do not use a profile image. Likewise, students who un-mute during class and participate verbally are agreeing to have their voices recorded.~~

~~If you are not willing to consent to have your voice recorded during class, you will need to keep your mute button activated and communicate exclusively using the "chat" feature, which allows students to type questions and comments live. The chat will not be recorded or shared.~~

~~As in all courses, unauthorized recording and unauthorized sharing of recorded materials is prohibited.~~

Essays

You will be required to write one essay for each of the four topic areas in this class, or four essays in total. I have spaced these at three-week intervals, to be handed in on Monday by midday (not midnight).

For each topic area, two essay titles are provided, of which you must choose one. The titles require you to describe the general area of knowledge that I expect you to cover, but also leave considerable flexibility for you to write an essay that interests you.

I am open to you submitting an essay on the subject area that matches your own interests more closely, PROVIDED that you clear the title with me before hand.

Each essay should be +/-1,500 words (about 3 pages, 11 font) (20 marks each).

Chose one of the topics for each assignment

Assignment 1: The genesis of the African continent, climate, and vegetation zones

Due: 13 September 2021

1. Describe how the formation of Africa in geological time affected today's landforms, and give an example of how this affects life today in one particular place.
2. 2: Describe the drivers of Africa's climate and how climate interacts with landforms to cause major vegetation zones, and variations in them. For one of these zones explain how climate, landforms, and/or ecological features affect the way people live today. (Also note, this is a class about geographical patterns, and I am far more interesting in knowing how climate, landforms, etc. work and interact. Please avoid excessive biological details about species and habitats)

Assignment 2: Human evolution and Africa civilizations

1. Hominids emerged as frail scavengers on the savannas of Africa, and humans now dominate the earth's systems. In broad terms, describe the five stages of human evolution and how the way that hominids or people lived was influenced by the environment and technology (such as stone tools, etc.). (Please note that I am NOT asking for a detailed description of hominid species such as *Homo habilis*, *Homo erectus*, etc.)
2. In broad strokes, described the major external factors that affected Africa after 1200, and how does Africa live with the legacy of these today?

Assignment 3: Humans and Environment in Africa

1. Comment on how humans interact with the environment in Africa, mentioning farming, deforestation, desertification and urban life. What do you think are the major challenges?
2. Describe how agricultural practices and human livelihoods in Africa vary with climate. Thinking critically, can we resolve poverty through farming (i.e. is agricultural development an oxymoron?).
3. Describe the differences between a wildlife conservation approaches in North America (public good) and southern Africa (sustainable use/governance approach). Should Africa encourage hunting and the trade in wildlife? Make you case either way.

Assignment 4: Health and/or Development

1. Africa suffers from diseases of poverty. What does this mean, and why is it different from the USA? In the context of Africa's challenges, clarify the differences between public health and clinical medicine, and describe health and health care systems in Africa.
2. What is "development" and how would you measure it? How well is development proceeding in Africa? Describe how development models have changed over time, and provide your thoughts on which are most effective and why (or why not).

Presentation of Essays

On all written assignments:

- Full name
- UFID
- Assignemnt number
- Date submitted
- Question you are addressing
- Title of Paper (this is your own title)
- Standard layout
 - Times New Roman, 11-12 font,
 - 1.5 spacing
 - 1" margins

What are we looking for in your essays?

While we are not mechanical in grading your work, and will provide feedback on your papers, we nevertheless have in our minds an assessment rubric that includes:

- basic essay planning, resulting in a paper that is logical and laid out neatly with sub-headings, and uses sound grammar and spelling,(see below).
- Your understanding of the topic, including source materials

- Whether you can think critically, and/or extend yourself beyond the basics that you learn in class.
- Please use three to five readings per essay, and demonstrate that you know how to include in-text citations and a reference list at the end of your essay.

When I am marking, I intuitively use the following marking rubric, and I can include it so you can see how I think about this task. This is not a mechanical task, and I will not be returning this exact form with your essays.

Essay planning, layout, grammar, spelling, and citations (4 points / 20% of grade)

This is a Gordon Rule Class, and requires:

- A well-structured essay that introduces the topic (beginning), then lays out the key facts and arguments (middle, and most of the paper), and then bring it to a conclusion.
- I strongly advise you to:
 - Use your notes, readings, etc. to understand each topic
 - Once you have a good idea of the subject, sketch out an essay plan, with headings and bullet points before you start writing.
 - Write the essay in broad terms
 - Edit and re-edit the paper several times.
 - Check spelling, grammar, citations, etc.
- From your essay plan, lay out your essay. Choose a title, and use headings and sub-headings
- Use active, not passive, language; avoid meaningless superlatives, write formally/scientifically but not pompous or casual/conversational
- Cite references properly, paraphrasing and quoting sources appropriately, and avoiding plagiarism – see

Knowledge and comprehension of course materials (60%, 12 points)

This is the meat of the essay (and the class). Do you understand the course materials, and can you explain them in a logical and interesting way? Are you beginning to use scientific source materials including the lectures, text books, and readings, as well as your own research that includes journal articles, web-sites and so on.

A warning. Use websites judiciously, understanding their motivations, likelihood of accuracy, how to assess their credibility, and so on.

Critical thinking, academic curiosity and extending yourself (20%, 4 points)

Are you thinking critically about the issues? Are you able to go beyond what was taught in class? Have you read around the subject and incorporated additional readings or to recent

events in the news into your essay? Have you made linkages between different issues discussed in class and thought in systems or in an interdisciplinary way?

Essay Marking Rubric

This is what I look for in a good essay:

Basics: (20%)

Proper referencing



Spelling and Grammar



Use of subtitles to organize text



Paper Structure and Content: (60%)

Beginning: The subject was introduced well:



Middle: The paper showed a good general understanding of the topic:



End: The topic was drawn to a conclusion with clarity:



For Excellent: (20%) Knowledge was well applied beyond what was taught in class and linkages to other issues were made:



What was the best thing about this paper?:

Key improvements we suggest?:

Overall impression of this paper?:

Overall impression of the paper:

Horrible → 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 ← Perfect

CLASS OUTLINE and MATERIALS

The primary materials in this class will be provided in the form of Power Points and lectures. From time to time, I will add interesting readings from books that I like and/or from journal articles.

I have, with some hesitation, recommended the textbook – Aryeetey-Attoh, S. *Geography of Sub-Saharan Africa. 3rd Edition*. Prentice-Hall Publisher. ISBN 0136056318.

On the one hand this is not cheap, and the overall quality is middling, though better than the other textbooks I have found. On the other, it does provide a comprehensive reference material.

You will note that these materials are constantly evolving. I incorporate new materials into face-to-face teaching for this class, and am gradually improving the availability of supplementary materials. I am always open to feedback from you about what you like, what you do not, additional materials that you think add value, and so on.

Section 1: The Physical Environment

This section will introduce you to how the world was formed, leading to a discussion about plate tectonics and landforms which we will learn in the context of Africa's mountains, rift valleys, lakes and rivers. Next we will learn how the sun drives the climate, and how this is further affected by ocean currents, the Coriolis affect, winds, landforms and so on. Climate dictates Africa's main vegetation zones – deserts, savannas, tropical forests and the Mediterranean climates – but at a smaller scale these are modified by the age and fertility of rocks, local landforms, and so on. The way humans live in Africa today, is the outcome of age-old geological processes, landforms, climate, minerals, transportation routes and agro-ecological systems.

| Introduction | Recommended reading | Aryeetey-Attoh |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| Tectonics, Landforms, Geology, Rivers | Attoh chap 2 | (p 31-41) |
| Climate and climate change | Attoh chap 2 | (p 41-49) |
| Soils and vegetation | FAO African Soils | (57-60, 50-57) |
| Class exercises | | |

Section 2: The evolution of humankind and the economic history of people

This section will describe the evolution of man in Africa, from his/her first steps onto the African savanna as scavenger, and then hunter-gatherer, farming and the domestication of plants and animals and, finally, to the modern era of sedentary living and large civilizations which influence the institutions and governance that guide us today. We will briefly review the classical age of humankind (Greece and Rome), and our emergence from the Dark Ages through the Enlightenment, Scientific and Industrial Revolutions because understanding the causes of the Rise of Western Civilization has important lessons for us today, including the current state of Africa, including development process and environmental management. More specifically, we will learn about the external influences of Africa starting with Islam, maritime and overland

trade, the eastern and western slave trades, European exploration and colonialization, and independence movements.

| Introduction | Recommended reading | Aryeetey-Attoh |
|--|--|-------------------------|
| Human evolution | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://www.britannica.com/science/human-evolution/The-fossil-evidence • Resnick 2017 major re-write of human evolution, https://www.vox.com/science-and-health/2017/6/7/15745714/nature-homo-sapien-remains-jebel-irhoud | |
| Emergence of Livestock and Agricultural Practices | https://genographic.nationalgeographic.com/development-of-agriculture/ | (p 94-95) |
| A brief introduction to world civilizations, and the importance of institutions and governance | Lecture only | |
| Early civilizations Bantu migrations, modern kingdoms | | (p 95-99) (p 99-102) |
| External influences – Islam and Western Influence | Meredith, chapter 9 | (p102-105) |
| Slave Trade Colonialism | Grant chap 4 | (108-117) |
| Struggle for independence | | |
| Class exercise | | |

Section 3: Humans, Environment, and Wildlife

A major focus of this course will be human-environmental interactions. An introduction to agriculture will be complimented by a discussion of the misuse of forests (deforestation) and of drylands (desertification). My own area of expertise is wildlife conservation, where we will discuss contemporary wildlife management issues including protected area management, poaching and the illegal wildlife trade, and the sustainable use of wildlife including community conservation.

| Introduction | Recommended reading | Aryeetey-Attoh |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Agriculture | Stock chap 20 | |
| Deforestation | | 48-66 |
| Desertification | | 66-74 |
| Parks and protected areas | | |
| Private conservation (movie) | | |
| Community conservation | | |
| Contested ideas in conservation? | Child (2012) | |

Section 4: Population, economic development, and health (p 220-239)

Africa is the youngest continent, with the fastest growing human population. We will learn about population demography in the context of Africa. After this, we will assess the concept of “development” and how to measure it, before looking at different theories of development. Finally, we will touch on health and health care.

| Introduction | Recommended reading | Aryeetey-Attoh |
|---|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Population Geography and migration | Attoh Chap 7 | (p 179-203) |
| Development, poverty and distributional equity | Stock 2013 Chap 28 | (p 207-220) |
| Theories of development and development in Africa | see Economist articles Grant 2015 | |
| Health and healthcare systems | Stock 2013 | |