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GEOG 277S.01: Geography of Africa

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THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

Geography of Africa (GEOG 277S)

General Information

Time Autumn Semester, 2000; TR, 11:10-12:30

Place Jeannette Rankin Hall, Room 204

Instructor Jeffrey A. Gritzner, Professor

Office Social Sciences Building, Room 303

Office Hours T, 4:00-5:00; W, 9:00-12:00; R, 2:30-3:30; or by appointment

Telephone 243-5626 (office); 273-0665 (home)

Required Textbooks Achebe, Chinua. *Things Fall Apart*. New York City: Doubleday, 1959; Anchor Books, 1994.

Chinua Achebe, born in 1930, experienced many of the social consequences of the colonial period. Hence, *Things Fall Apart* provides insight into the impacts of colonization from a Nigerian perspective. Mr. Achebe is a graduate of University College, Ibadan; served as director of External Broadcasting in Nigeria until the Biafran War; and has taught at the University of Nigeria at Nsukka, Northwestern University, the University of Massachusetts, the University of Connecticut, and, currently, Bard College in New York City.

Grove, A. T. *The Changing Geography of Africa*. 2d ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.

A. T. Grove is an emeritus fellow of Downing College and a senior research associate in the Department of Geography at the University of Cambridge. He is a highly respected Africanist with research emphases in physical and agricultural geography. Among his publications is *Rural Africa*, co-authored with Frances Klein.

Ramsay, F. Jeffress. *Global Studies: Africa*. 8th ed. Guilford, Connecticut: Dushkin/McGraw-Hill, 1999.

Jeffress Ramsay serves as the principal of Legae Academy in Gaborone, Botswana; is the vice-chairman of the Botswana Chapter of the Media Institute of Southern Africa; and is secretary of

the Botswana Society. He recently received Botswana's Presidential Order of Honour. Dr. Ramsay's *Ph.D.* was conferred by Boston University.

Optional
Publications

Christian Science Monitor (Boston, Massachusetts).

The *Monitor* enjoys a world-wide reputation for accuracy, fairness, and integrity. Its coverage of environmental and social issues in Africa exceeds that of other daily newspapers in the United States. A variety of student subscriptions are available: ten weeks (\$24.00); three months (\$27.00); four months (\$36.00). Subscriptions include a "heads-up" service that alerts subscribers by electronic mail to *Monitor* articles on topics that they have assigned; permits students to read a *Monitor* article, quiz its author through electronic mail, and expect a personal answer within forty-eight hours; articles online include direct links to the article's primary sources, where one can go for more information and insight; and subscribers have unlimited access to the most complete newspaper archive on the internet—every *Monitor* article, complete, back to 1980. Subscription order forms will be available in the classroom.

Gritzner, Jeffrey A. ***The West African Sahel: Human Agency and Environmental Change.***
Geography Research Paper no. 226. Chicago:
The University of Chicago Press, 1988.

Jeffrey Gritzner has conducted research focussing upon issues of policy and environmental and socio-economic change in Africa; served as technical director of Agricola du Tchad; directed the Africa programs of the National Academy of Sciences and the World Resources Institute; and has served as an advisor to agencies of the United Nations concerned with the environment, agriculture, and social change. His *A.B.* was conferred by the University of California at Berkeley; his *A.M.* and *Ph.D.* by The University of Chicago.

McCann, James C. ***Green Land, Brown Land, Black Land: An Environmental History of Africa, 1800-1990.*** Portsmouth, New Hampshire:
Heinemann, 1999.

James McCann is a professor of history at Boston University, and serves as director of the university's African Studies Center. He has also

served as an advisor to several organizations, including the International Livestock Centre for Africa, Oxfam, the United Nations Development Programme, and the United Nations Environment Programme. Professor McCann's A.B. was conferred by Northwestern University; his A.M. and Ph.D. by Michigan State University.

Course Description

Geography of Africa will systematically, and sequentially, examine (i) the physical geography of the continent; (ii) ecological systems; (iii) pests and disease; (iv) African prehistory; (v) ancient and medieval history; (vi) ethnicity; (vii) traditional livelihood systems; (viii) the colonial period and the advent of independence; (ix) African political systems; (x) issues of population, migration, and urbanization; (xi) mineral extraction and petroleum production; (xii) water-resource development; (xiii) industrialization; and (xiv) agriculture.

In discussing the physical geography of Africa, emphasis will be placed upon the evolution of geological structures and relief; rock weathering, residual crusts, and stripped landscapes; coastlines; climate (atmospheric pressure, wind systems and patterns of precipitation); tropical cyclones; evaporation; climatic variability; and discussion of lakes and rivers.

Discussions of ecology will be organized with respect to the continent's principal biomes (tropical forest, tropical savannah, steppe and desert, high montane regions, and Mediterranean North Africa). Particular attention will be devoted to vegetation; soils; plants and soils as indicators; soils and topography; and fauna—with particular emphasis upon mammals, birds, and fish. Jeffrey Gritzner's *The West African Sahel* and James McCann's *Green Land, Brown Land, Black Land* will serve as the basis of a case study in environmental change. Copies of the former are available in the Reserve Book Room of the Mansfield Library.

Consideration of pests and disease will be a continuation of the discussions concerning ecology. Together, they will provide a clearer sense of the constraints and opportunities that have influenced African social systems from prehistory to the present. Specific discussions will examine the impacts of locusts; termites; the mosquito, malaria, and other mosquito-borne diseases; the tse-tse fly and trypanosomiasis; parasitic worms; river blindness; schistosomiasis; and *Rinderpest*.

Discussions concerning prehistory will examine human evolution in Africa and the archæologically defined cultures of early man. Discussions of ancient and medieval history will variously focus upon the kingdoms of the Sudano-Sahelian zone of

West Africa, North Africa, and East Africa; Asian and European exploration and influences (including Chinese, Hungarian, Danish, and other neglected influences); the slave trade; the settlement history of South Africa; and nineteenth-century colonial competition.

Issues of ethnicity form the core of *Peoples and Cultures: Africa* offered by the Department of Anthropology and will, therefore, be deemphasized in *Geography of Africa*. However, some time will be devoted to discussions of racial tension, language and culture, society, and religion. Greater emphasis will be placed upon the examination of livelihood systems. Particular attention will be devoted to hunting and gathering; fishing; pastoralism; and cultivation—including oasis, savannah, and forest systems.

Discussions concerning the Colonial Period, the advent of independence, and contemporary political systems will assess the impacts of socio-economic change upon African livelihood systems and human welfare. Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* will contribute to this discussion. A case study in neo-colonialism will be based upon developments in Somalia. Considerations of population, migration, and urbanization will include population distribution and growth; the analysis of regions of dense and sparse settlement; labor migration; and the rôle of the city in African society.

The course will conclude with considerations of modern economic activities:

The section on mineral extraction and petroleum production will focus upon the mining industry of southern Africa and the petroleum industry elsewhere in Africa.

Water-resource development will focus upon river-basin development schemes—comparing, for example, the Zambezi, Juba, Tana, Niger, and Senegal schemes. A case study will be drawn from the Juba Valley of Somalia

Considerations of industrialization will focus upon developments in mineral-rich countries such as South Africa and Zimbabwe; industrialization in oil-producing countries such as Egypt, Algeria, and Nigeria; and industrialization in countries with economies based upon agriculture, such as Kenya, Tanzania, Ghana, and Côte d'Ivoire.

Discussions of agriculture will stress traditional land tenure; introduced tenure systems; "villagization;" changes in land tenure in pastoral areas; the scale and management of modern farming systems (both with regard to large-scale farmers and small-holder schemes); and the indigenous contributions to modern African agriculture.

Evaluation

Course grades will be based upon the following:

Quizzes. Announced map quizzes will account for ten per cent of the course grade.

Critical Essay. A critical essay of approximately three double-spaced pages, including notes and references, will be due no later than **Thursday, November 30th**—but may be submitted at any time prior to the 30th. It should be related to topics discussed in class, and should draw upon at least four sources other than the assigned readings. Stylistically, the essay should conform to the conventions contained in Kate L. Turabian's *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 6th ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996). The essay will account for roughly ten per cent of the course grade.

Examinations. There will be a mid-term examination and a final examination. The examinations will be equally weighted, each accounting for forty per cent of the course grade. The mid-term will cover chapters 1-6 of *The Changing Geography of Africa*, the West African Sahel case study, films, and class discussion. It is scheduled for **Tuesday, October 24th**. The final examination will cover chapters 7-13 of *The Changing Geography of Africa*, Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, films, case studies, and class discussion. It is scheduled for **10:10-12:10, Monday, December 18th**.

Reading Assignments and Significant Dates

Week One (September 3-9, 2000)

- A. T. Grove, *The Changing Geography of Africa*, 2d ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), ch. 1: "The Physical Environment."
- James C. McCann, *Green Land, Brown Land, Black Land: An Environmental History of Africa, 1800-1990* (Portsmouth, New Hampshire, 1999), pt. 1: "Patterns of History." (optional)

Week Two (September 10-16)

- Grove, ch. 2: "Ecology."
- Jeffrey A. Gritzner, *The West African Sahel: Human Agency and Environmental Change*, Geography Research Paper no. 226 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), pt. 1: "The Nature of Sahelian Environmental Systems."

Week Three (September 17-23)

- Gritzner, pt. 2: "The Impact of Human Activity upon

Sahelian Ecosystems."

- Gritzner, pt. 3: "An Approach to the Rehabilitation of Sahelian Ecosystems." (optional)

- McCann, ch. 4: "Desert Lands; Human Hands." (optional)

- F. Jeffress Ramsay, *Global Studies: Africa*, 8th ed. (Guilford, Connecticut: Dushkin/McGraw-Hill, 1999), pp. 25-27 (Burkina); 33-34 (The Gambia); 45-46 (Mali); 47-48 (Mauritania); 49-51 (Niger); 56-58 (Senegal); and 75-77 (Chad).

Week Four (September 24-30)

- Grove, ch. 3: "Pests and Diseases."

Week Five (October 1-7)

- Grove, ch. 6: "Africa before the Colonial Period."
- Ramsay, 195-197 (Elikia M'Bokolo, "Who Was Responsible? Africans Were above All Victims of the Slave Trade, but Some of Them Were Partners in It") and 176-178 (Howard W. French, "A Century Later, Letting Africans Draw Their Own Map").

Week Six (October 8-14)

- Grove, ch. 4: "Ethnicity."
- Ramsay, 199-203 (Marina Ottaway, "Africa's 'New Leaders': African Solution or African Problem?") and 212-216 (Harvey Glickman, "Tanzania: From Disillusionment to Guarded Optimism").

Week Seven (October 15-21)

- Grove, ch. 5: "Traditional Ways of Life."

Week Eight (October 22-28)

Tuesday, October 24th: Mid-Term Examination

- Grove, ch. 7: "The Colonial Era and the Coming of Independence."

- Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (New York City: Doubleday, 1959; Anchor Books, 1994).

Week Nine (October 29-November 4)

- Grove, ch. 8: "Population, Migration, and Urbanization."

- Ramsay, 186-191 (Shanti R. Conly, "Sub-Saharan Africa At the Turning Point").

Week Ten (November 5-11)

Tuesday, November 7th: Election Day (no class meeting)

- Grove, ch. 9: "Mineral Extraction and Oil Production."
- Ramsay, 206-208 (Abdi Ismail Samatar, "Warlord Games").

Week Eleven (November 12-18)

- Grove, ch. 10: "Water Resource Development."

Week Twelve (November 19-25)

- Grove, ch. 11: "Industrialization in Africa."

Thursday, November 23rd: Thanksgiving Day (no class meeting)

Week Thirteen (November 26-December 2)

- Grove, ch. 12: "Modernizing Agriculture"
- McCann, ch. 6: "Food in the Forest: Biodiversity, Food Systems, and Human Settlement in Ghana's Upper Guinea Forest, 1000-1990." (optional)
- Ramsay, 208-210 ("Rwanda—Return to Hope?") and 210-211 (Ilene R. Prusher, "Inside an African Famine").

Thursday, November 30th: Deadline for Critical Essays

Weeks Fourteen and Fifteen (December 3-16)

- Grove, ch. 13: "Crisis in Africa."
- Ramsay, 193-194 (Chris Simpson, "Fighting Talk), 203-206 (Dan Connell, "From Alliance to the Brink of All-Out War: Explaining the Eritrea-Ethiopia Border Crisis"), and 227-233 (Johanna McGeary and Marguerite Michaels, "Africa Rising: A New Spirit of Self-Reliance is Taking Root among Many Africans As They Seize Control of Their Destiny. What Are They Doing Right?").

Week Sixteen (December 17-23)

Monday, December 18th (10:10-12:10): Final Examination