



Dear Students

Welcome to the *African Civilizations Up to 1870* online Summer 2026 eight-week course that commences on June 8<sup>th</sup> and ends on July 31<sup>st</sup>. 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, a comprehensive guide to the course, will provide more details on the course layout and other important information. It's crucial that you read it in its entirety to understand the course requirements and expectations.

Often, "Africa" conjures 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 their issues have developed and changed. This course offers a unique perspective, challenging the popular belief in the "primitive" and "dark" continent. It explores how ancient African communities developed and interacted with others, providing a continental overview and a deeper understanding of African history beyond the stereotypes.

It is important to remember that no single course can cover more than a sliver of the complexity and variety of "Africa," the second-largest continent on Earth. However, students completing this course will be able to write about and discuss major themes in early African history. They will also be challenged to engage with the African past in a way that fosters empathy and helps them become citizens of the world in the twenty-first century.

There are no assigned textbooks for this course. Short readings, internet articles, PowerPoints with detailed notes, and documentaries/movies will be posted in the weekly folders. These materials are as important as the required books and will play a key role in class discussions. 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 each week. The weekly folder on the course home page content tab will walk you through the weekly materials and expectations.

The first week will include a course introduction to familiarize you with the technological tools we will use, an overview of the course, and introductions for everyone in the 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 titled All About Me. Read the instructions for completing this assignment and the other Week 1 assignments. The remaining weeks of the course will follow the Week 1 format. Please read the weekly expectations, as some weeks have different assignments.

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

Assignments drop box. All written individual assignments (excluding discussion posts) must be submitted as Word documents via Brightspace Assignments. Assignments are due on the date and time specified in 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 successful only when we take time to prepare thoughtfully, participate in discussion, and create conditions that enable others to participate. Disagreements and discussions are important for learning, but we must engage with respect. I reserve the right to remove posts and/or address students individually if I determine that such action is necessary.

Sincerely,

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