

ANT 324L, AFR 322

Fall 2012

## INTRODUCTION TO AFRICAN PREHISTORY

**PROFESSOR: DR. JAMES DENBOW**

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### Course Overview

This course provides an overview of human biological and cultural evolution in Africa. While the roots of humankind go back almost 6 million years on the continent, the earlier materials will only be briefly discussed as the course will focus on the last 200,000 years as modern humans developed and diversified. The African continent is over three times the size of the United States and today there are more than a thousand different languages spoken in Africa; ethnic and ecological diversity are great. Apart from Egypt, Ethiopia, the Swahili coast and North Africa, however, written sources only document the last few centuries and most were written from non-African perspectives. In this class, archaeological data will be used to expand upon anthropological and historical accounts to provide a less "Eurocentric" view of the continent and its historical development. No prior knowledge of Africa or of archaeology is assumed.

Prerequisites: None.

### Required Textbooks:

David Phillipson, 2005. African Archaeology. Cambridge University Press. **Make sure you have the 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, published in 2005**, NOT the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition first published in 1994. ISBN 0521832365. The hardcover book is expensive, but **one can order an e-book version for \$35 - \$40 from Amazon.com or this site:**

**<http://www.cambridge.org/us/catalogue/catalogue.asp?isbn=9780511111846>**

J. Reader. 1999. Africa: biography of the Continent. Vantage Press. ISBN 067973869x.. While it does not focus only on archaeology, many will find this book easier to follow than Phillipson. It provides a very readable, if slightly dated, account of Africa's history and prehistory. It also provides a useful summation of geology, climate, health, languages and many other details not covered in depth in Phillipson. This is a book you would probably keep if you have a general interest in Africa.

**Evaluation:** The grade will be based on a map quiz (15%), class attendance and participation (5%), a **15 page** research paper (50%), and one short 5 page essay (30% each).

## RESEARCH PAPER GRADING RUBRIC

### **ORGANIZATION (10%)**

- Were the basic sections (Introduction, Conclusion, Literature Cited, etc.) adequate?
- Did the writer use subheadings well to clarify the sections of the text?
- Was the material ordered in a way that was logical, clear, easy to follow?

### **CITATIONS (20%)**

- Did the writer cite sources adequately and appropriately?
- Were all the citations in the text listed in the Literature Cited section?

### **GRAMMAR AND STYLE (20%)**

- Were there any grammatical or spelling problems?
- Was the writer's writing style clear? Were the paragraphs and sentences cohesive?

### **CONTENT (50%)**

- Did the writer adequately summarize and discuss the topic?
- Did the writer comprehensively cover appropriate materials available from the standard sources (e.g. readings, appropriate books and other sources)?
- Did the writer make some contribution of thought to the paper, or merely summarize data or publications?

Because lectures will often include material not found in the text, or bring text materials up to date through discussion of new findings, class attendance is important and will be spot-checked using "attendance exams." Please don't think that you will be able to do well by simply doing the readings for the course. The research paper will be due the last class day.

## Course Topics

(Please note that these dates are **approximate**)

### **Weeks 1 & 2:**

#### **Introduction to Africa and its Physiography**

Phillipson: Preface & Chapter 1.

Reader: Chapter 1, Building a continent; Chapter 4, Origins & Climate

(You can also read my account of the social and political aspects of doing archaeology in Africa (Denbow et al. 2008a), which is included under course documents on the course blackboard site.)

### **Week 3:**

#### **The Emergence of early Hominens**

Phillipson: Chapter 2

Reader: Chapters 5, 6, and 7

### **Week 4:**

#### **The Early Stone Age: Acheulean & Sangoan**

Phillipson: Chapter 3

Reader: Chapters 8-12

See also on possible Neanderthal/human mating:

<http://cosmiclog.nbcnews.com/news/2012/08/13/13265954-did-humans-and-neanderthals-do-it-some-experts-doubt-it>

### **MAP QUIZ: Tuesday, Sept. 18**

#### **Weeks 5 and 6:**

#### **Middle and Later Stone Age.**

Phillipson: Chapter 4

Reader, Chapters 13 -15

McBrearty & Brooks, 2000 (pdf on blackboard)

#### **Paper 1: (Due Thursday, Oct. 11)**

*Use the archaeological record to discuss and critique the "Sudden/late" or "Rubicon" hypothesis of Richard Klein, Spencer Wells, and others that modern human cognition, language abilities, and the ability to construct and use symbols appeared suddenly around 60-70 thousand years ago and well after the first appearance of physically modern-appearing Homo sapiens in Africa between 160 – 200 ka.*

#### **Week 7:**

#### **Rock Art and Transitions from foraging to food production**

Phillipson: Chapter 5

Reader, Chapters 16-18

#### **Weeks 8 and 9:**

#### **The Nile valley: early farming communities in North Africa**

Phillipson, Chapter 6

Reader, Chapters 19 - 22

#### **Week 10:**

#### **Metallurgy and the first expansion of metal-working technologies and farming in sub-Saharan Africa**

Phillipson: Chapter 7

Reader, Chapters 23-26

Alpern, 2005 (pdf on blackboard)

Denbow, 2012 (pdf on blackboard)

#### **Week 11:**

#### **The Chifumbaze Complex and the expansion of herding, farming, and metal-working into eastern and southern Africa**

Phillipson: Chapter 7 & class notes.

Coelho 2009 DNA and archaeology (pdf on blackboard)

Mitchell 2010 DNA & archaeology (pdf on blackboard)

#### **Week 12 and 13:**

#### **The emergence of Complex societies in eastern and southern Africa: The Indian Ocean trade, early Swahili states, Bosutswe, Mapungubwe, and Great Zimbabwe**

Phillipson: Chapter 8 & class notes.

Denbow et al. 2008b (pdf on class blackboard)  
Reader, Chapters 30 – 32

**Week 14:                      The African Slave Trade**

Class notes.

**TERM PAPERS: (DUE THURSDAY, DECEMBER 6TH). THERE IS NO  
FINAL EXAM**