

ANT 324L, AFR 322

Fall 2013

INTRODUCTION TO AFRICAN PREHISTORY

PROFESSOR: DR. JAMES DENBOW

OFFICE HOURS: Th 1-3:30 and by appointment.

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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—the period when 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 is 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 longer and less "Eurocentric" view of the continent and its historical development. No prior knowledge of Africa or of archaeology is assumed.

This course carries the Global Cultures flag. Global Cultures courses are designed to increase your familiarity with cultural groups outside the United States. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from assignments covering the practices, beliefs, and histories of at least one non-U.S. cultural group, past or present.

Prerequisites: None.

Required Textbooks:

David Phillipson, 2005. African Archaeology. Cambridge University Press. **Make sure you have the 3rd Edition, published in 2005**, NOT the 2nd edition first published in 1994. ISBN 0521832365. While dry, this is the only book to cover the archaeology of the entire continent from the Stone Age to the Iron Age

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 mid-term essay (30%). Grading will be on a +/- basis.

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
 McBreaty & 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

