Unit Descriptions

School of Humanities

Department of Historical Studies (History)

Special Topic

The Creation of Modern Africa

Dr Rob Skinner
Teaching Block 2
Unit Code HIST14010, 20 credits

Unit Description
This course introduces some of the major themes in modern African history south of the Sahara. Conceptual and methodological questions have been vigorously debated by historians of Africa, challenging whether thematic, regional or chronological approaches are most appropriate to the history of the continent. The unit will tackle such issues in order to establish a broader understanding of the range and complexity of African history. It is structured around a number of themes that at the same time reflect the chronology of modern Africa: starting with the dramatic impact of late-nineteenth century imperial expansion, we will then examine the contours of colonial power, its influence on African economic and social life, on gender roles and “ethnic” identities, and the move towards decolonisation and independence in the years following WWII. Finally, we shall consider the problems and challenges faced by post-independence states.

Contact Hours and Mode of Teaching:
10 x 2 hour seminars, taught in parallel with the associated Special Topic Project

Methods of Assessment:
1 x 2 hour exam (100%)

Essential Reading:
John Iliffe, The Africans
Bill Freund, The Making of Contemporary Africa
P. Curtin, et al., African History
B. Davidson, The Africans
R.O. Collins (ed), Historical Problems of Imperial Africa
Chinua Achebe, Things Fall Apart (1958)

Further Information
There will be a Blackboard site for this unit

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