HISTORY 97J
African Historical Methods: The Chronicles of Timbuktu and other Early African Sources

(Tentative Syllabus)

Mondays 3:30 –5:50 in A60 Kaplan Hall

Ghislaine Lydon, UCLA Department of History
Office hours: Mondays 11-12:30 and Wednesdays 11-12:00
7248 Bunche Hall (310-825-4214)

Learning Objectives

- Gain expertise in the field of African historical methods, and in particular the varying approaches to the use of Arabic sources;
- Refine your understanding about the art of historical inquiry and the historical profession;
- Develop analytical abilities to think critically and comparatively;
- Perfect research and interpretative skills by reading primary and secondary material;
- Refine your skills in crafting written assignments;
- Improve oral communication skills through participation in guided discussions and in-class presentations.

**Books (to be consulted online via the Young Research Library site):**


**Course Requirements and Grading:**

25%: Participation & attendance  
25%: Critical Book Review (02/10/20)  
50%: Term paper due via turnitin (03/16/20)

* **Participation:** You are expected to complete the readings for a particular week prior to the meeting of the Monday class. This will facilitate your grasp of the lecture material and your participation in class discussions. Note that regular attendance will be taken.

* **Critical Book Review:** This assignment is a short essay (5-6 pages) in which you critically evaluate the main book for this class (Hammer’s *Bad-Ass Librarians*).

**Term Paper Guidelines**

* The term paper will on the general subject of Arabic literacy and manuscript cultures in African history. In consultation with me, you will choose a pertinent research focus and write an essay which will include a critical review of the scholarly literature (articles and books). More information on the paper topic will be provided in class.

* The paper should be 12-15 pages in length, typed in 12-point font, double-spaced with one-inch margins, include page numbers, a title, footnotes or endnotes, and a bibliography. Papers will be graded on originality, structure and style.

* Your term paper is via turnitin on **03/16/20**.

**Schedule of Lectures and Readings**

**WEEK ONE: Introduction and General Discussion**  
01/06/20

* **Reading of interest for our first meeting:** [Timbuktu manuscript culture](#)
In-class viewing of documentary “The Lost Libraries of Timbuktu” (Aminatta Forna, BBC 2017).

WEEK TWO: “Doing” African History: Written, Spoken & Excavated
01/13/20
Readings:

WEEK THREE: MLK Day - No Class
01/20/20
(start reading Hammer’s book)

WEEK FOUR: Timbuktu Chronicles: The Sources
01/27/20
Readings:

WEEK FIVE: Timbuktu Chronicles: The Debate
02/03/20
Readings:
Paul Fernando de Moraes Farias
Mauro Nobili
Michael Gomez, African Dominion: A New History of Empire in Medieval West Africa.

WEEK SIX: Bad-Ass Librarians of Timbuktu: The Legacy
02/10/20
Readings: Hammer, Bad-Ass Librarians.
Short Paper Due at the Beginning of Class.

WEEK SEVEN: President’s Day - No Class
02/17/20
(work on your term papers)

WEEK EIGHT: Muslim Women’s Writings
02/24/20

WEEK NINE: ‘Ajami Sources
03/02/20
Readings :
- Review online archival material in ‘Ajami.

WEEK TEN: Paper Presentations
03/09/20

Terms Papers Due Monday 03/16/20 via Turnitin