

**J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College  
Course Content Summary**

**Course Prefix and Number:** HIS 203    **Credits:** 3

**Course Title:** History of African Civilizations

**Course Description:**

Examines major social, economic, political and religious developments across the African continent from earliest times to the present. The assignments in the course require college-level reading fluency and coherent communication through written reports. Lecture 3 hours. Total 3 hours per week. 3 credits

**General Course Purpose:**

HIS 203 introduces students to the diverse physical and political geography of Africa, the development of African civilizations and global connections from prehistoric societies to the present day. Students will critically examine a variety of perspectives and explore scholarly debates over African identities and contemporary issues in world history with particular focus on experiences of race, gender, class, religion, ethnicity and nationality.

**Course Prerequisites/Corequisites:**

None

**Course Objectives:**

Upon completing the course, the student will be able to:

Civic Engagement

- Contribute to the civic life and well-being of local, national, and global communities as both a social responsibility and a life-long learning process.

Critical Thinking

- Use information, ideas and arguments from relevant perspectives to make sense of complex issues and solve problems.

Human Origins and the physical, social and cultural geography of Africa: Theories of Human origins on the African continent, Diversity of the African landscape, Foundations of African institutions, Bantu Migrations

- Assess sources and theories of human origins on the African continent
- Identify, describe and locate the major physical geographic features.
- Identify the significance of the Bantu Migration

North-East African Societies: Axsum, Egypt, Nubia: Relationships between societies in North Eastern Africa, Inter-relationships between African and the Ancient Near-East

- Examine popular and scholarly depictions of classical North African civilizations, including consideration of 19th century views and interpretations
- Be able to compare and contrast North-east African societies
- Reflect on the changing popular and scholarly depictions of African societies

North Africa in the Mediterranean World: Carthage, Greece and Roman Africa: Networks of trade and culture among Northern and Northeastern Africa and the Mediterranean,

African participation in the classical Mediterranean, Early Christianity in Africa, the influence and leadership of African churches and church fathers.

- Identify and describe networks of trade around the Mediterranean
- Demonstrate knowledge of cultural exchanges between the civilizations of North Africa and the civilizations around the Mediterranean and the Near East through the end of antiquity
- Explain the impact of Africans on Early Christianity

African civilizations and the Rise of Islam: The origins of Islam, Bridging the Sahara, Trade and the expansion of Islam into West Africa

- Identify empires in West Africa
- Discuss the Africanization of Islam

East Africa, Islam and the Indian Ocean World: East Africa before Islam, Creation of Swahili culture, Indian Ocean trade networks and East African city-states

- Describe connections between East Africa and Dar-al Islam
- Discuss the urbanization of the Swahili coast

Africa, Slavery and the Atlantic World: Systems of slavery in Africa, Europe and the New World, Economic systems in the Atlantic World, Slavery in Africa and African responses to European slave traders, Effects of the slave trade on the cultural and political institutions of African societies.

- Compare slave systems across the Atlantic
- Describe the impact of Atlantic world economies
- Identify effects of the African diaspora on American cultures

Diversification of African State Development to 1820: International relations between African states and European and Middle-Eastern empires, European Settler societies in Africa, African responses to foreign territorial threats

- Recognize the diversity of the interaction and impact of foreign empires on African states and societies
- Identify regional diversity of states and societies

Expansion of Colonial Rule after the mid-19th century: Industrialization and Market economies, Diversity of Colonial systems, Impact of Social Darwinism and Victorian racial theories, The Missionary project in Africa

- Describe the differences in colonial administrations, such as Belgian, French, English and German
- Discuss the economic, political and racial basis for European colonialism

Responses to European Colonialism: African strategies of resistance, The exception of Ethiopia, International condemnation of Colonial rule, especially in Congo

- Examine African responses to colonialism and identify perspectives of gender, age, religion and ethnicity.

Africa and the World Wars: African participation in European armed forces, Impact of Pan-Africanism, Africa as a theater of war, The impact of African contributions on the war effort, Africa in a global 20th century

- Describe the roles that Africans played in the World Wars
- Discuss rise and spread of Pan-Africanism

Post-World War II Africa, Decolonization & Race: Major decolonization movements , Strategies for independence and state-building among African nations, Africa and the Cold War, Apartheid in South Africa, Legacies of colonial racial policies in Modern Africa

- Identify major decolonization movements and conflicts
- Compare strategies for state-building among African nations
- Identify events that have their origin in colonialism.

Opportunities and Challenges in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries in Africa:  
 Opportunities and challenges for African societies in the late 20th and early 21st century such as Climate Challenges, Political Instability, Authoritarian Government, Foreign Investment, Music and Popular Culture

- Recognize the diversity of modern African cultures - both achievements and challenges

### Major Topics to be Included:

- **Human Origins and the physical, social and cultural geography of Africa:** Theories of Human origins on the African continent, Diversity of the African landscape, Foundations of African institutions, Bantu Migrations
- **North-East African Societies: Axsum, Egypt, Nubia:** Relationships between societies in North Eastern Africa, Inter-relationships between African and the Ancient Near-East
- **North Africa in the Mediterranean World: Carthage, Greece and Roman Africa:** Networks of trade and culture among Northern and Northeastern Africa and the Mediterranean, African participation in the classical Mediterranean, Early Christianity in Africa, the influence and leadership of African churches and church fathers.
- **African civilizations and the Rise of Islam:** The origins of Islam , Bridging the Sahara, Trade and the expansion of Islam into West Africa
- **East Africa, Islam and the Indian Ocean World:** East Africa before Islam, Creation of Swahili culture, Indian Ocean trade networks and East African city-states
- **Africa, Slavery and the Atlantic World:** Systems of slavery in Africa, Europe and the New World, Economic systems in the Atlantic World, Slavery in Africa and African responses to European slave traders, Effects of the slave trade on the cultural and political institutions of African societies.
- **Diversification of African State Development to 1820:** International relations between African states and European and Middle-Eastern empires, European Settler societies in Africa, African responses to foreign territorial threats
- **Expansion of Colonial Rule after the mid-19th century:** Industrialization and Market economies, Diversity of Colonial systems, Impact of Social Darwinism and Victorian racial theories, The Missionary project in Africa
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- **Opportunities and Challenges in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries in Africa:** Opportunities and challenges for African societies in the late 20th and early 21st century such as Climate Challenges, Political Instability, Authoritarian Government, Foreign Investment, Music and Popular Culture

**Effective Date/Updated:** January 1, 2022