

History Major Field

AFRICA

Field Description

Africa has been called the “mother continent” of humanity. Home to 1/4 of the world’s land area, 1/4 of its countries, 1/3 of its languages, and 1/2 of human existence on earth, Africa has a long and rich history. For many years, that past was regarded as peripheral to the rise and fall of major civilizations, but increased scholarly attention has revealed tremendous creativity, resilience and complexity in the efforts of Africans to survive difficult situations over the centuries. Study of African history at Kenyon College provides an opportunity to learn more about people’s capacity to confront and overcome numerous environmental, economic and political obstacles, adapting their culture and society in response to changing circumstances and acting as key players in human history.

Among the fundamental questions explored in African history are: How much unity or diversity exists in Africa? How have African societies been shaped by their natural environments? What are the main sources of knowledge for learning about early African history? How did many early African societies achieve order and prosperity without strong central governments? Why have religious/spiritual beliefs consistently been of central importance in Africa? How have Africans been impacted by trade with other regions of the world, particularly by the trans-Atlantic slave trade? What role did the African diaspora play in the development of “African” identity? Did the era of European colonial rule mark a major break with the past, or was there also much continuity, with Africans able to absorb European influence on their own terms? How accurate or useful is it to use the terms “traditional” and “modern” when describing African societies? Why have many current African countries experienced great difficulty in establishing effective governments and economies? And, finally, can knowledge of African history help contribute to an “African renaissance”?

Courses

HIST 145 – Early Africa

HIST 146 – Modern Africa

HIST 242 – Americans in Africa

HIST 246 – Urban Africa

HIST 341 – African Women in Film and Fiction

HIST 349 – Contemporary West Africa through Fiction and Film

HIST 350 – Race, Resistance and Revolution in South Africa

HIST 444 – Faith and Power in Africa