

Overview of South African History
Dr Schalk van der Merwe

Course Outline

This course provides a general overview of South Africa's past, opening with a focus on our 'pre-history': our hominid ancestors, the complex behaviours of early members of our own species, the San and Khoi people, and Mapungubwe. This is followed by a focus on our more modern history, beginning with the rise of European interest in what is today South Africa, beginning with the navigations around the Southernmost tip of Africa by Portuguese explorers such as Vasco da Gama and Bartholomew Diaz. This is followed by a look at our colonial past, including the Cape's slave history, the expansion of the Cape Colony, how settlers came to move into the interior and found new Boer republics, and finally, how these disparate areas came to be united under one flag and government. While the expansion of European settlement, leading to the eventual creation of South Africa's borders as we know them today, is the main focus, the histories of the nation's diverse cultures are also explored. The second term builds on this study to examine the roots and growth of one of the most (in) famous parts of South Africa's history. Here the roots of Afrikaner Nationalism are discussed and how the system of apartheid developed. We also look at the anti-apartheid struggle, the unravelling of apartheid, and the post-apartheid era.

In summary then this course looks at the following historical themes:

(Mis-)conceptions of Africa
South Africa's evolutionary history
First people (San, followed by Khoi)
Mapungubwe
Portuguese mariners (why did they arrive when they did?)
European settlement
Mfecane
Boer republics
South African War
Rise of Afrikaner nationalism
African nationalism
Apartheid
Post-apartheid era

These themes, covered over the duration of a semester, will give international students a greater understanding of the events that shaped South Africa and, by the end, will be able to answer the core question: "How did modern South Africa come to be?" The course also

aims to provide students with the basic skills needed for further historical study. By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Understand that the creation of modern South Africa was not inevitable, but the result of a long series of historical factors,
- Outline the reasons behind the birth of apartheid and the impact that Afrikaner Nationalism had on this,
- Independently research secondary historical sources and examine them for bias,
- Write a historical essay.

Assessments: Two short tutorials (5% each of total module mark) One research paper (45% of module mark) One online test assessment at the end of term (45% of module mark)