

# Module 4 Overview

## The European Scramble for Africa



It's impossible to overstate the radical impact that colonialism had on the history of both Africa and Europe. Understanding this history will help us analyze the art that was created in both the colonial period, but also what came after. The reading this week goes into detail about this very tragic history. There's also a film to watch about colonialism in the Congo under the infamous Belgian King Leopold. This is but one example of the horrors that colonial exploitation inflicted on the African people, perhaps the most brutal example. But just try to imagine the millions of lives destroyed by the colonial enterprise.

Included is a brief slideshow that touches on the African slave trade, often called the African Holocaust by Africanist scholars. Many millions died, and millions more were displaced in the Middle Passage, the horrendous journey that enslaved Africans were forced to endure while being transported to the New World.

Going back to the reading for this week, the Berlin Conference is a watershed moment in African history that will come up again and again over the course of the semester, and it will be referenced in contemporary African artists' work often. Held in 1884, the conference essentially divided the African continent between a handful of European countries. Each colonial power had reign of the allotted territories, and they were free to subjugate the native peoples, at will. Christian missionaries were also granted permission to work across borders. Territorial lines were drawn with no consideration to traditional or pre-colonial societal organization along ethnic lines in Africa. This disregard for Africans' division and the subsequent policies administered by colonial powers, would later fuel dozens of ethnic wars, like in Rwanda and today's Congo.

The author outlines some very important African resistances in French and British Colonial Africa. He also mentions the first major European plunder of African art, namely of metalwork sculptures from the Kingdom of Benin in 1897. This opened the floodgates for the collection and plunder of African art from the continent by European powers. Many of the artworks ended up in ethnographic museums, or in curiosity cabinets of the European elite. Shelvington, the author, gives a detailed explanation regarding the differences between colonial administrations in Africa, especially between the French system of assimilation, and British indirect rule. While the conditions were very difficult to achieve, the French policy was one of assimilating Africans into the French system, offering conditional citizenship for the highest-educated African-French colonial subjects. The French dismantled African customary law by imposing French law in their colonies.

The British, on the other hand, used indirect rule and took a more hands-off policy regarding their African colonies. The British used existing traditional rulers to carry out basic functions of government, and liberally invented customary law and this idea of tribalism. They were able to use a divide-and-conquer strategy to control their African subjects. It is also important to note that Islam spread during colonialism for a number of key reasons. Since it accepted customary practices like polygamy and was not affiliated with any European power, Islam was able to make inroads in West Africa especially.

On the topic of religion, Christianity has a very complicated history in Africa. Although there were exceptions, many missionary projects were implicated in the horrors suffered by the African people during colonialism. Take time to read

carefully this week, and watch the Bauma (indistinct) film about the Belgian Congo, in order to come to some of your own conclusions about this tragic period in world history.



## Learning Objectives

### Course Learning Objectives Targeted

- Evaluate the historical and global significance of African art by examining its role in shaping cultural identities, resisting colonialism, and influencing international art movements, while considering its socio-political, economic, and cultural implications.
- Identify critical historical moments and art movements in African art by exploring key periods, such as ancient civilizations, colonialism, and contemporary movements, and their influence on artistic expression across the continent

### Module Learning Objectives

- Analyze Colonial Impacts on African Societies
- Identify critical historical moments and art movements in African art
- Analyze the impact of globalization on African art and societies



## Activities and Assignments

### 1. Read

1. [Ch 21, “The European ‘Scramble,’ colonial conquest, and African resistance in east, north-central, and West Africa.” Shillington, Kevin. History of Africa. New York: St Martin’s Press, 1995.](https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/200285/files/31587161/download?wrap=1)  
(<https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/200285/files/31587161/download?wrap=1>)
2. [African Slave Trade – African Holocaust slideshow](https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/200285/files/32328322/download?wrap=1)  
(<https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/200285/files/32328322/download?wrap=1>)

### 2. Watch “Boma – Tervuren, The Journey” by Francis Dujardin, 1999.

- [Part 1](http://online.fiu.edu/videos?vivold=3cc6c6a7d1f546a1ab8f94e89be4201e) (<http://online.fiu.edu/videos?vivold=3cc6c6a7d1f546a1ab8f94e89be4201e>)
- [Part 2](http://online.fiu.edu/videos?vivold=3897c30b14d441bd88103219d3a5db7a) (<http://online.fiu.edu/videos?vivold=3897c30b14d441bd88103219d3a5db7a>)
- [Part 3](http://online.fiu.edu/videos?vivold=2d54aecc9bc4acfa1495b61a265ca9d) (<http://online.fiu.edu/videos?vivold=2d54aecc9bc4acfa1495b61a265ca9d>)
- [Part 4](http://online.fiu.edu/videos?vivold=306e73460be0417f81cb99453657e8a4) (<http://online.fiu.edu/videos?vivold=306e73460be0417f81cb99453657e8a4>)

### 3. Complete **Module 4 Discussion**

### 4. Complete **Module 4 Assignment**

The instructional material listed above will help you understand expectations related to this module's topics, achieve the learning objectives and complete the assignment(s).