

HI177 A History of Africa Since 1800

Interim Module Feedback 2019-20

10 respondents (out of 57 students enrolled on the course).

The overall feedback for the module was positive. 90% of respondents think that the module is well-organised (1 respondent had no firm opinion and none disagreed). One student stated that 'the structure of the course has positively impacted my learning as I have been able to follow content a lot easier than in my other modules'. 90% of respondents also think that the module offers the appropriate level of intellectual challenge (1 respondent had no firm opinion and none disagreed).

Feedback on teaching was also positive. 90% of respondents think that the module was delivered in an engaging way (1 respondent had no firm opinion and none disagreed). One student highlighted the lectures as being of a very high standard. Many respondents enjoyed the seminars and felt that they helped to consolidate their knowledge. One student praised the 'excellent coverage of each individual topic, always very well self-contained and in great detail. I always feel comfortable in a topic before moving on the next'.

Several students noted that they appreciated having the chance to engage with different approaches to history. One student noted, 'the strong emphasis on an open-minded approach was interesting... as being objectively aware of European bias in understanding African history and culture and experiencing it in our own reading are vastly different issues'. The same student highlighted the importance of working with primary sources: 'first-hand African accounts, while understandably difficult in cases where source material of that kind does not necessarily exist, is especially helpful'.

100% of respondents felt that appropriate support was available from their tutors. 100% also felt that the feedback provided had enhanced learning. We are very glad that you feel supported and that helpful feedback has been provided through seminars and through individual discussions.

Several students acknowledged that they had found the content challenging at times, particularly as the course addresses many places and issues which students have never previously studied. One student noted that, 'Sometimes the amount of unfamiliar names (groups/societies, places, individuals, etc.) and power relations can be confusing, especially when previously unfamiliar with African history; for the more dense source texts it would be helpful to go over them or possibly have a chart to refer to make sense of all existent actors. This could also reinforce a sense of continuity'. Another student concurred, stating 'I think some aspects of the course need to be explained more thoroughly, as I have never studied History of Africa before and so far this module is by far the most challenging'. We appreciate receiving this feedback and will think carefully about what we can do to improve student understanding of the wide range of actors and places involved in the course.

A small number of students were unhappy that the lectures weren't recorded. While we appreciate this feedback, we will not be adopting Lecture Capture on this module. It is not

standard practice to record lectures for first-year optional modules, not least because there is no exam and no need for students to revise the entire course. There is also concern amongst some staff (though not the official view of the University) about the university 'owning' the material that we deliver in lectures (e.g. will this reduce the need for lecturers in future and increase the precarity of employment for some staff within the higher education sector?) These issues notwithstanding, if you have a medical condition which means that you require additional support or adjustments, do get in touch with your tutor and we will do everything we can to support you.

It must be noted that the feedback received via this interim module evaluation process, and the above comments, are based on a relatively small sample size and may not reflect the opinion of the cohort overall. The gathering of interim module feedback took place during the period of strike action in November and December 2019, with students contacted by email and asked to complete the feedback forms in their own time rather than in seminars as per usual practice. This likely accounts for the low level of engagement with this feedback exercise.

Taking all of the above into account, we will continue to think about ways to improve teaching and learning on this module and welcome continued feedback from students at any point during the rest of the year.

- Sacha Hepburn and Christian Velasco, 10 January 2020.