This course explores the history of Western Africa, a world region uniquely positioned at the meeting of the Sahara, the Mediterranean Sea, and the Atlantic Ocean. West Africa’s riches are many: material wealth in gold, enslaved workers, palm oil, and petroleum, and cultural riches in hundreds of ethnolinguistic groups, diverse religions, and world-renowned cultural creativity in the arts, textiles, novels, and films. This course will use these lenses to examine transformations in Western Africa from 1500 to the present. We will explore the rise of early civilizations, encounters with Arabs and Europeans which set off the slave trade and conquest of the Americas. In addition to these topics, we will examine how West Africans contended with the European scramble for colonies in Africa and emerged from colonialism to create new nations of Ghana, Mali, Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal, and others from 1957 onward.