CULTURE, WEALTH, AND POWER IN AFRICA

Course Description

How are we to understand calamities such as the 1994 genocide portrayed in the popular film *Hotel Rwanda*? What stories of hope emerge from these tragedies? What vital additional dimensions of Africa become visible if we look past the media headlines? This course explores both popular and scholarly understandings of contemporary and colonial Africa. With a focus on intersections of culture, wealth, and power, we will analyze Africa as discursive and imaginative object, everyday life in cities and countryside, popular culture, ethnicity, gender relations, political violence, political ecology, conservation, and spirituality. Readings are drawn from a variety of disciplines, including anthropology, history, literature, political science, and geography. In addition, we will examine African and other media representations of the continent. The format of class meetings will include lectures, group discussions, films, music, and slides.

Course Objectives

- To provide students with concrete knowledge about life in Africa today and in the past, with a focus on intersections of culture, wealth, and power.
- To explore modes of ethnographic research in Africa.
- To introduce students to fundamental concepts and debates in the anthropology of Africa.
- To help students develop critical analytical skills for interpreting contemporary and historical events in Africa as portrayed in both mass media and scholarship.

Requirements include regular attendance, completing assigned readings on time, participation in class discussions, a map quiz (week 3), two in-class examinations (weeks 6 & 11), a 30-minute quiz (week 14), and pop quizzes. Quizzes and exams will cover assigned readings, lectures, and films. **Make-up exams will not be allowed except in emergencies, which must be documented by your Dean.** If you miss an exam you must notify the instructor of the reason no more than 24 hours later. (Such notification should be by both phone/voice mail and email.) **Travel plans are not an acceptable reason for missing an exam.** Make your travel arrangements so that you will be in class when exams are given. Pop quizzes will be given during the first 10 minutes of some class meetings. These quizzes cannot be made up and cannot be taken by those who arrive late to class. The single lowest of the pop quiz grades will be dropped. [Note that the 30-minute quiz on Thursday, April 29 is not included among those for which the lowest score will be dropped.]

Grades will be determined as follows:

- Pop quizzes = 15%
- Map quiz = 5%
- In-class exam #1 (Feb. 25) = 25%
- In-class exam #2 (April 8) = 25%
- 30-minute quiz (April 29) = 15%
- Attendance and participation = 15%

Attendance and reading: Attendance is required. Students are expected to arrive to class on time, to complete assigned readings on time, and to come to class prepared to discuss the readings. **Points will be deducted from the attendance and participation portion of your grade for class absences.**
as follows: 3 points will be deducted (from a possible 15) if two classes are missed; 8 points will be deducted if three classes are missed; 15 points if four classes are missed. Anyone who misses three or more class meetings is advised to drop the course.  

**Be sure to review the syllabus before scheduling travel, job interviews or appointments, since these are not acceptable reasons for missing a class.**

Cell phones, laptop computers, and all other electronic device must be turned off during class unless you have made special arrangements with your instructor.

**Do not record any classroom lectures or discussions.**

**Classroom atmosphere:** We are all responsible for creating a friendly, relaxed, and productive classroom atmosphere. That requires listening respectfully to everyone, phrasing comments constructively and politely, turning off cell phones and other electronic devices, coming to class on time, and refraining from working on other assignments during class or sleeping in class. *How well you practice these common courtesies will be reflected in the class attendance and participation portion of your grade.*

**Communication:** All students are responsible for timely attention to email and Sakai postings for this course and therefore should check the Sakai site and their Rutgers "eden" email accounts regularly. Dates and assignments may change; all changes will be announced in class or posted on Sakai or both. To access Sakai go to https://sakai.rutgers.edu/portal; log in with your Rutgers userid and password; and use the course membership tool to access class materials.

**Ethics/Academic Integrity:** Be careful to avoid plagiarism and cheating. See the Rutgers academic integrity policy at http://etaar.rutgers.edu/integrity/policy.html. You are responsible for knowing what plagiarism is. A clear explanation, with examples of different types of plagiarism, is available on the website of Georgetown University's Honor Council: http://gervaseprograms.georgetown.edu/hc/plagiarism.html

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**Required texts** (available for purchase at Cook/Douglass Bookstore):


**Other required readings are available electronically on the Sakai website for this course.**

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**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:** see last pages of syllabus.

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**SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS**

Week 1/ Jan. 21  
**INTRODUCTION**

Week 2/ Jan. 28  
**DOING ANTHROPOLOGICAL FIELDWORK IN AFRICA**


FILM: Seven-Up in South Africa (excerpts)

**MAPS** of Africa:
http://www.africa.upenn.edu//Home_Page/africaMap.html
http://www.nationsonline.org/maps/africa_small_map.jpg
http://www.library.northwestern.edu/africana/map/africa2.gif
http://www.sul.stanford.edu/depts/ssrg/africa/map.html

Blank map of Africa, with national boundaries:

Week 3/Feb. 4 COLONIAL RULE & THE ILLUSION OF “TRADITIONAL” AFRICA


**MAP QUIZ**

FILM: This Magnificent African Cake (Basil Davidson)

Week 4/Feb. 11 COLONIAL KENYA: "MAU MAU," Part I

-Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 1964, Weep Not, Child, pp. 1-64 (chapters 1-7 and "Interlude")


FILM: Mau Mau and excerpt from White Man's Country

Background on Kenya (browse):
http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Country_Specific/Kenya.html

Kenya news media sources (see list under week 12)

Other sources on "Mau Mau" (not required)


Week 5/Feb. 18

**COLONIAL KENYA: "MAU MAU," Part II**


**FILM: Kitchen Toto**

Week 6/Feb. 25


**EXAM #1, Feb. 25**

Week 7/March 4  **SUFFERING, FAITH, AND MORAL PASSION IN URBAN BOTSWANA**


Week 8/March 11

**GENOCIDE IN RWANDA, PART I**


**FILM: Valentina’s Nightmare**

**SPRING BREAK: March 13-21**

Week 9/March 25  **GENOCIDE IN RWANDA, PART II**


**Extra Credit**

**FILM:** The Triumph of Evil

**Background on Rwanda** (browse):
http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Country_Specific/Rwanda.htm

**Other sources on Rwanda** (not required):
  http://www.hrw.org/reports/1999/rwanda/
- Philip Gourevitch, 1998, We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our families: Stories from Rwanda. New York: FarrarStraus and Giroux.
- Johann Pottier, 2002, Re-Imagining Rwanda: Conflict, Survival and Disinformation in the Late Twentieth Century. Cambridge University Press.

Week 10/April 1  ENVIRONMENTAL MYTHS, ENVIRONMENAL ACTIVISM


**FILM:** Second Nature

Week 11/April 8  EXAM #2
Week 12/April 15  CULTURAL POLITICS OF CONTEMPORARY KENYA


Browse Kenya news websites:
http://www.onlinenewspapers.com/kenya.htm
(5 national and regional newspapers)
http://allafrica.com/kenya/
http://kenyaelections07.marsgroupkenya.org/
http://kenyaimagine.blogspot.com/

Browse New York Times coverage of 2008 Kenya crisis:

Brows BBC coverage of 2008 Kenya crisis:
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_depth/africa/2008/kenya/default.stm

Background (not required):


Week 13/April 22  LANGUAGE MATTERS: WRITING ABOUT AFRICA


-Extra Credit

Week 14/April 29  WRAP-UP  **30-MINUTE QUIZ**


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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

**African News Media Sources** (see also listings under week 12)

http://www.kidon.com/media-link/africa.php

http://dmoz.org/Regional/Africa/News_and_Media/

http://allafrica.com/

http://www-sul.stanford.edu/depts/ssrg/africa/media.html


**Country Profiles**


**Music**


**Statistics**


**Two Recent Overviews of Africa**

http://www.commissionforafrica.org/english/home/newsstories.html

Africa Task Force, Council on Foreign Relations
http://www.cfr.org/publications/9302/more_than_humanitarianism.html

**Bibliography on Africa** (regularly updated online)

Sources organized by chapter in Frederick Cooper's book, *Africa Since 1940*, Cambridge University Press, 2002:
http://www.cambridge.org/resources/0521776007/1096_biblio.pdf

**Books on Africa by Anthropologists.** (Additional suggestions welcome.)


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