MORSE ACADEMIC PLAN  
NEW YORK UNIVERSITY  
V55.0505 WORLD CULTURES:AFRICA  
Spring 2004

Professor Richard W. Hull  
Teaching Assistants: Bantu Ndung’u, Toja Okoh, Michelle Thompson.  
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Hours: Mondays, 1-1:30 P.M. & Wednesdays, 3:30-4:15 P.M.

Course Objectives

Welcome to the beginning of a vicarious adventure into Africa! This spring we will explore some of the main trends and problems confronting modern Africa, primarily through widely-acclaimed novels and award-winning film documentaries. It is hoped that by the end of the semester you will have a clear understanding and appreciation of the historical roots of key problems and challenges facing Africa and its peoples as they move into the 21st century. You will develop skills in critical analysis and you will also deepen your knowledge of the role Africa has played in the main currents of global history since 1900.

Course Structure

Each week we will deal with specific themes. Professor Hull will present formal lectures on the topic, often complemented with a film. In the weekly recitations you will cover the topics at hand basing your discussions on the book that was assigned the previous week and also on the topic and issues covered in the lectures. Be sure you have read the book for recitation discussion before the recitation!

Course Requirements

Students will take a map quizz at the beginning of the semester to help familiarize them with the countries and regions of Africa that the course lectures/discussions will focus on. There will also be two essay examinations, one at mid-term and the other at the semester’s end. You will also write two brief (3-page) ‘Position Papers’ in your recitation section. In assessing your final course grade, we will count the examinations equally at 40% each and your recitation participation at 20%. Everyone must pass the map quizz before mid-semester. Students will have an opportunity to participate in the construction of the examinations.
Required Readings

Chinua Achebe. Things Fall Apart.
Mariama Bâ. So Long A Letter
Okot p’Bitek. Song of Lawino/Song of Ocol.
Frederick Cooper. Africa since 1940.
April A. Gordon&Donald L. Gordon (eds) Understanding Contemporary Africa.
Philip Gourevitch. We Wish to Inform You that Tomorrow We Will Be Killed.
Okey Ndibe. Arrows of Rain.

Themes and Lecture Topics

I. Searching Africa’s Deep Past: Myths, Legends and Oral Traditions

January 26: The African Landscape: Imaginations and Constructions’

January 28: ‘The Emergence of Humanity and Human Empowerment’

February 2: ‘The Emergence of Civilizations and Cultural Empowerment’

February 4: ‘Magic and Mystery: The Great Epics and their Meanings’

II. Traumas of Conquest and Domination: Imperialism and Colonialism

February 9: Imperialism: Motives and Means
Read: Achebe in entirety. Tordoff, chaps 1,2.

February 11: Resistance and Rebellion

February 18: Colonialism: Mentalities and Methods
Read: Gordon, pp. 58-68; 143-150. Tordoff, chaps 3,4.

February 23: Colonialism: Resistance, Accomodations, Legacies

III. The Struggle for Self-determination and Identity

February 25: Pan-Africanism and Nationalism
Read: Cooper, chaps 1-4.

March 1: Postwar Africa: Decolonization and Structural Development
Read: Bitek in entirety.

March 8: Mid-term Essay Examination

IV. The Role and Status of Family, Women and Men in Traditional and Modern Society

March 10: Men, Women and Familyhood: Past and Present

March 15: Vacation
March 17: Vacation

March 22: Gender Tensions: Women, Men and Islam in Modern Africa
Read: Ndibe in entirety. Tordoff, chaps 5-7.

V. The Challenge of Nation-Building

Read: Cooper, chaps. 5-6; Gordon, 4-5; Tordoff, 8.

March 29: Empowering the People: Democratization, Transparency, Accountability
Read: Gourevitch in entirety.

VI. Racial, Ethnic, and Religious Turmoil

March 31: Genocide: The Case of Rwanda

April 5: Film
Read: Cooper, chap. 7; Tordoff, 10.

VII. The Crisis of Debt and Sustainable Development

April 7: Origins and evolution of the crisis
Read: Gordon, chap. 8.

April 12: Film

April 14: Human Agency and Environmental Change: The Epidemic of Malnutrition
Read: Cooper, 8; Gordon, 14; Tordoff, 10.

April 19: Sustainable Development: Can It Be Achieved?
VIII. **Public Health and Disease**

April 21: The AIDS Catastrophe and Its Implications for Africa’s Future  

IX. **Urbanization and Demographic Explosions**

April 26: film  
View: film in Bobst Library’s Avery Fischer Center  
Read: Tordoff, 9. Cooper, 8.

April 28: The Impact of Urbanization and Population Growth on Contemporary Africa

May 3: Prospects for African Unity

Final take-home essay examination to be handed out.