Course Structure

This lecture and recitation course focuses on sub-Saharan Africa from the late 19th century to the present. The two weekly lectures attempt to view the development of African cultures and societies through a fascinating and intellectually challenging series of themes. In the complementary once-weekly recitations, or colloquia, the themes are broken down into key issues which will be posited by the preceptor and debated by you. The themes and issues will grow out of the lectures, readings, and films.

Course Objectives

It is hoped that you will acquire a keen awareness and understanding of the vital issues facing contemporary African cultures through an exploration of their genesis. Students will critically examine each issue by utilizing the tools used by scholars and other professionals in the various disciplines. Thus, students will come to appreciate the rich and exciting diversity of African societies and cultures through exposure to a wide array of leading authorities and eyewitnesses in the field. You will develop skills at exploring issues widely, deeply, critically and, hopefully, with passion and empathy. Thus, the course will introduce you to various modes and methods of inquiry and analysis rather than to survey a vast corpus of material. Africa is simply too large and complex to cover everything in the space of a few months. You will gain skills in identifying and critically analyzing issues and how different people approach them.

Requirements
Energy, motivation, intellectual curiosity, an appreciation of cultural diversity, and an adventuresome mind. You'll have opportunities to express your thoughts and theories in the recitations orally and through four recitation quizzes, a mid-semester in-class exam, and a final essay examination. There will also be a brief map quiz at the start of the semester to acquaint you with the political contours of the continent.

Attendance in the recitations and lectures is extremely important and more than four unexcused absences will carry a penalty. Class participation constitutes approximately 20% of your course grade. You must receive at least an 80% on the map quiz or re-take it until you do. The mid-term exam counts 30% and the final 30%. The recitation quizzes collectively count 20%.

Readings and Screenings

The following books are required and are available for purchase at the NYU Bookstore or online. Occasional additional readings of articles in journals or newspapers will either be passed out in class, found on Jstor or in Bobst Library Reserve. Films can be accessed from Bobst’s Avery Fisher Center for Music and Media.

Mariama Ba. So Long A Letter.


Adam Hochschild. King Leopold’s Ghost.


Okey Ndibe. Arrows of Rain.

Sembene Ousmane. God’s Bits of Wood.
Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings

January 22  The African Landscape: Imaginations and Constructions
        Readings: Conrad. Gordon, 1,2.

January 24  Antiquity: The Emergence of Humanity and Culture
        Readings: Map study, Hochschild. Gordon, 3. Moseley issues 1,2. Hand-out

January 29  Imperialism: Motives and Means
        Readings: Hand-out

January 31  European Intentions and African Responses
        Readings: Moseley, issue 3.

February 5  The Legacy of Imperialism

February 7  Colonialism: Mentalities and Methods

February 12 Colonialism: Development & Underdevelopment

February 14  Mid-term Examination

February 19 Sustainable Development: The Debt Trap
        Readings: Moseley, issues 6&7.

February 21 Sustainable Development: Strategies
        Readings: Moseley, issue 5. Gordon, 5.

February 26 Sustainable Development: Agriculture
        Readings: Moseley, issues 8&9.

February 28: Sustainable Development: The Environment
        Readings: Gordon, 8. Moseley, 12.

March 4:  Urbanization and Demographics
        Readings: Gordon, 7. Moseley, 10

March 6  The Family in Transition
March 11 Women and Men in Economic and Cultural Development
Readings: Moseley, 13, 14.

March 13 Disease in African History
Readings: Iliffe.

March 18 & 20 Vacation

March 25 Film on AIDS

March 27 The Elusive Quest for African Unity
Readings: Bobst Reserve Room

April 1 Empowering the People: Political Culture
Readings: Gordon, 4. Moseley, issues 17, 18, 19.

April 3 Leadership and Civil Society

April 8 The Individual and the State
Readings: Ndibe.

April 10 Islam and Islamism
Readings: Gordon, 11. Bobst Reserve Room

April 15 Christianity in Transition

April 17 Warfare, Genocide and Human Rights

April 22 Restoring Peace and Security: Truth and Reconciliation
Readings: Moseley, 20.

April 24 Africa and the World: The New Globalism
Readings: Gordon, 6, 13.

April 29 Africa and the Great Powers: Asia, Europe, America
Readings: Bobst Reserve Room

May 1 Africa’s Future