McGill University
African Studies Research Seminar
AFRI 598
(Winter 2020)

Mondays and Wednesdays, 8:35am to 9:55am
Leacock Building 808

Instructor: Dr. Nii Addy
Email: afri598@mcgill.ca
Office Hours (236 Peterson Hall): Mondays 10-11am/Wednesdays 2-3pm

**Prerequisite:** An introductory course in any of the disciplines studying Africa
**Restriction:** Open to final year Program students, and to others by permission of Program Adviser

**Course Description**
This is an interdisciplinary graduate-style research seminar on Africa and its Diaspora. It is not a lecture course. It is important that all students participate fully in discussion and come prepared for class. The course material, writing, and participation requirements are designed for advanced undergraduate students interested in a survey of important themes in Africa’s development, including history, politics, organizations and society. Starting from an institutional perspective, we will explore institutional change and inertia in Africa, and the role of individual and collective agency. We will draw on concepts such as *Sankofa* (Akan: return to the source and learn, for moving into the future) and *Ubuntu* (Bantu: I am because we are), in integration with other temporal perspectives on agency. We define agency as “an actor’s engagement with the social world that, through the interplay of habit, imagination, and judgment, can both reproduce and transform an environment’s structures” (Battilana and D’Aunno, 2009; Lawrence, Suddaby, and Leca, 2009). From the temporal approach that we take, students will have the chance to explore agency in Africa and its Diaspora over three periods – pre-colonial, colonial to present, and future – while also engaging with, and in research that draws on the perspectives of multiple generations (children/youth, adults, elderly). We use a framework that posits three dimensions of agency: iterative, oriented towards the past; projective, oriented towards the future; and practical-evaluative, oriented towards the present. The course will include presentations, individual and group exercises, as well as virtual interactions with students in at least one African university, and in-person interactions with multiple generations outside the classroom.

**Learning Outcomes**
By the end of the course, students should:

- Have greater knowledge about the tools to analyse issues in Africa and its Diaspora from a temporal perspective (the past, present, and future), and from a range of disciplinary perspectives;
- Have had the chance to integrate their understanding of the temporal perspective on agency, by applying such perspectives to analysis of how institutional change and inertia occur in Africa and its Diaspora;
- Be more aware of multiple sources of data to develop diverse narratives about institutional change and inertia in Africa and its Diaspora;
- Have improved research skills so that they can design, conduct, write-up, and disseminate their own independent research; and
- Be better equipped to communicate research findings to a wide range of audiences, including children/youth, adults, and elders who are concerned with issues in Africa and its Diaspora.
Course Requirements

1. Attendance, Professionalism, Participation (APP) in Discussions: Students will be expected to keep up with assigned readings and to come to the seminar prepared to participate in discussion. Students are expected to lead and participate in discussion based on several assignments designed to encourage a deeper understanding of the course material. Participation will also include engaging in virtual interactions that the instructor will organize with students at least one African University. More details about the virtual interactions will be provided later. MyCourses will be used as a platform for initiating or following up on discussions in class as well. This will be 10% of final grade.

2. Reading Response Paper: Each student is required to write 4 reading response papers of the assigned readings for 4 different weeks. You can choose the weeks, but you must distribute the workload evenly. The paper should be between 2-3 double spaced pages. Do NOT summarize the week’s readings, but rather focus on answering the following questions:
   1. What is the author trying to convey to his/her audience?
   2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the argument or point of view he/she is presenting?
   3. What is confusing or unsatisfying about the reading?
   4. What themes emerge from the week’s readings?
   5. How do the arguments compare and contrast with the view of other authors you have read in the course or elsewhere?
   6. Pose three discussion questions for the class to consider, including those related to (a) inertia or change in structures, and (b) agency of actors in the readings.

Each student will lead at least four class discussions based on his/her reading response papers. For each reading response paper, a draft must be developed a week before the relevant class, shared with a session partner assigned to critique (not criticize) the response, with final version due 11:59pm on the day before class, and must incorporate the relevant comments of the session partner. This will be 20% of final grade.

3. Outside Class Interactions and Journal: Each student will identify an audience outside of class with an interest in Africa and its Diaspora: children/youth (e.g. in a school or organization serving children/youth), adults (e.g. in an organization), and elderly (e.g. in a retirement residence), who are from, or have experience in Africa and its Diaspora. You will engage in interactions with the selected audience to pose questions and develop ideas for your topic of focus for the seminar. You will discuss with me at the beginning of the term which audience(s) you will engage. For students who are available from 11:45AM - 1:45PM on Wednesdays January 15, 22, 29, and February 5 & 12, this aspect of the course will be with an intergenerational study group that I will co-moderate at the McGill Community for Lifelong Learning (MCLL), in the School of Continuing Studies (SCS). The study group is entitled “Intergenerational Learning Initiative on Africa’s Development.” Participants are recently retired seasoned professionals, as well as students and recent alumni, including other African Studies and International Development Studies students, and MasterCard Foundation (MCF) Scholars/recent alumni entrepreneurs. I will work with students for who this schedule does not work to identify other audience(s) for their interactions. Students will submit a written journal about their interactions on MyCourses. This will be 10% of final grade.

4. In Class Group Oral Presentation: Students will present their individual research proposal along with their initial findings to groups of their peers, and then each group will work collectively to provide a group presentation that integrates various ideas in seminar sessions allocated between weeks 10/11 and 13/14. Presenters should circulate 1-2 relevant readings to their group members on the Friday before they are due to present. Each presentation itself should be 15-20 minutes in length. It will be followed by a discussion based on the presentations and the circulated readings. This will be 20% of final grade.
5. Research Project: A major objective of this course is to have students improve their research, analytical, writing and creative skills through the development of an original research output related to Africa and its Diaspora. The research question (or questions) must be narrow, but based on offering a deeper understanding of a theme/trend relevant to Africa and its Diaspora, with a focus on institutional change and inertia in Africa, and the role of agency in such change or inertia.

You will produce a research output on your topic, which can take the form of an essay, a publication to be submitted to a journal, letter, op-ed, story, or other form you will discuss with me to engage your audience for disseminating your research. The final research output should be 20 double spaced pages, including bibliography, 12 pt font, standard margins.

Note: The research project proceeds in 3 phases. First, each student must individually schedule a meeting with me at the beginning of the term to discuss a research topic and project (including target audience, potential sources of data, etc.), and type of research output planned. Second, you will engage in initial consultations as part of requirements 1 and 3 above, and you will turn in a short research design paper (1 to 3 pages), which sketches your research question, your tentative answer (or hypotheses), and what kind of evidence you will collect to evaluate your propositions/hypotheses. You should also include a working bibliography of sources you will investigate. Third, students will hand in an initial draft of the paper or project no later than the 10th week of class, and give an oral presentation of their findings to the class in groups (as part of requirement 4 above). The final version of the project is due during the exam period and must incorporate the relevant comments of a partner assigned to critique (not criticize) your project. This will be 40% of final grade.

Class Policies

Policy on Research Project: Late projects will be penalized at the rate of 1/3 grade per day (e.g. an A- will be downgraded to a B+). All papers should be titled. Papers must be typed, double spaced with one-inch margins, twelve point font, with approximately 250 words per page. Extensions will be granted only in cases of genuine emergency.

Office Hours: Students are strongly encouraged to come to office hours with or without specific questions. I am available at regular office hours as well as by appointment. Kindly schedule an appointment to discuss research paper proposals as soon as possible.

Final Grades: Students are required to complete all assigned course work in order to receive a passing grade. No incompletes will be given except in cases of genuine emergency.

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/integrity for more information).

About the Schedule:
Although it is my intent to cover the material outlined in the following schedule, it is possible that unforeseeable events will necessitate minor changes to, or deletions from, the schedule.

Please Note:

“McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures.”
Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information).”

“L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l’honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/). »

“In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.”

“Conformément à la Charte des droits de l’étudiant de l’Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l’un des objets est la maitrise d’une langue). »

“McGill University is located on land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabeg nations. McGill honours, recognizes and respects these nations as the traditional stewards of the lands and waters on which we meet today.”

“L’Université McGill est sur un emplacement qui a longtemps servi de lieu de rencontre et d’échange entre les peuples autochtones, y compris les nations Haudenosaunee et Anishinabeg. McGill honore, reconnaît et respecte ces nations à titre d’intendant traditionnel des terres et de l’eau sur lesquelles nous nous réunissions aujourd’hui. »

Readings

All the journal articles and some excerpts of selected texts noted in the syllabus will be made available on MyCourses.

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<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Material (read/watch prior to class)</th>
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<td>Readings and videos in <strong>BOLD</strong> are REQUIRED. All others are supplemental.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I. Establishing a context</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>6/8-Jan</td>
<td>Introductions and course overview</td>
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<td><strong>Initial reflections</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Course outline</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<td><strong>Lawrence, T. B., Suddaby, R., &amp; Leca, B. (2009). Introduction: theorizing and studying institutional work. In T. B. Lawrence, R. Suddaby, &amp; B. Leca (Eds.), Institutional work: Actors</strong></td>
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- Carmody, Pádraig Risteard (2011). *The New Scramble for Africa,* Ch. 1 (pp.14-33), [https://mcgill.on.worldcat.org/oclc/669751128](https://mcgill.on.worldcat.org/oclc/669751128)  
### IV. Imaginations of the “Future”

#### 6 10/12-Feb

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#### 7 17/19-Feb

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### V. Integration for overcoming Dichotomies of “Past” and “Future”

#### 8 24/26-Feb

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<th>Topic</th>
<th>Material</th>
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- African Union Commission (2014). *AUC Chairperson's E-mail from the Future:* [https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/33126-doc_02_email_from_the_future.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/33126-doc_02_email_from_the_future.pdf)  

#### 9 2/4-Mar

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<td>Study Break</td>
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#### 10 9/11-Mar

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<td>11</td>
<td>16/18-Mar Review</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>23/25-Mar Review</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>30-Mar/1-Apr Review</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>6/8-Apr Interdisciplinary analysis of a case study</td>
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