

Prof. John Galaty (Tel. 1336)
Office: Leacock 724
Office Hours: MW 3:30-5:00 p.m.

Fall Term 2012
Class: STBIO N2/2
Schedule: MW 5:35-6:55 p.m.

SYLLABUS, AFRI 200: INTRODUCTION TO AFRICAN STUDIES

***AFRI 200** is a required course for program students in African Studies, but also can serve as an introduction for those generally interested in the study of Africa. The course examines diversity in the African experience from the perspectives of academic disciplines, geographical regions, states and societies, and problems and topics concerning the African experience. Approaches will include reading from the Text, lectures, and discussions that consider perspectives on Africa.

* **Disciplines.** Readings and presentations examine how disciplinary concepts and perspectives shape our understanding of Africa; relevant disciplines within African Studies include Anthropology, Art and Aesthetics, Economics, Geography, History, Literature (often in English or French), Philosophy, Political Science, Religion, and Sociology, while some relevant multi-disciplinary fields include Agriculture, Education, Environmental Studies, International Development Studies, and Health Studies, among others.

* **Geography and society.** While no course could possibly cover the geographical, historical, political and social diversity that characterizes Africa, the material we will read and discuss ranges across the regions of North, West, East and Southern Africa, and review the experiences proper to the immense geographical diversity on the continent and the distinctive experiences of African states and societies.

* **Problems.** The text on “Perspectives on Africa” and the course itself are organized by problems, topics and perspectives. The field of Africa Studies and the disciplines are constructed around core problems that frame, focus, and bring perspective to how we understand Africa. We will discuss these in class.

***Aims and Issues.** Perhaps more than other regions of the world, Africa has been subjected to profound stereotypes and misconceptions that even today color the ways the continent is understood. For that reason, we will begin with the question of the “representation” of and “discourse” on Africa, keeping questions of “perspective” in mind throughout all of our subsequent points of discussion. Conventional understanding of Africa – its poverty, political instability, endemic corruption, violence – are not so much wrong as often ill-conceived through “essentialization” and simplification. While bringing nuance and depth to such questions, the course will also seek to humanize our understanding of Africa, emphasizing forms of daily experience and understandings we can all share: of family life, love and joy, the life cycle, faith and belief, livelihood aspirations, hopes for the future, development aims and achievements, and sense of global belonging.

***Assessment.** Students are responsible for assigned readings, lectures, and Web CT materials. All readings can be found in *Perspectives on Africa: A Reader in Culture, History, and Representation*, which is available for purchase in Paragraph Bookstore. I also encourage participants to reach out to African materials available beyond the course, in the media (newspapers, magazines, films, internet sites), museum exhibits, and festivals. Your active participation is invited via discussion of key issues each week, shared with the class, in more formal review sessions, and through online discussions and debate. Work can be submitted in either English or French.

***Academic Integrity.** McGill University values academic integrity; 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 <http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity/>).

***Course Evaluation**

* Essay topic sent to TA by October 10th (under Participation mark)

* Mid-Term Exam, October 24th, 25%

* 6-7 pp Essay, Due November 16th, 30% (Late assignments lose 5% of the paper grade per day)

* Final Exam, Date/Place TBA, 40% (25% last half of course, 15% cumulative)

* Participation (In-Class discussions, review sessions, Web-CT exchanges), 5%

For more information on the Essay assignment, see bottom of syllabus.

[Sept.5] Introduction to the Course: Perspectives on Africa

“Perspectives” & “representations”: Africa as objective reality and as concept; disciplines, approaches and problems in African Studies.

**SECTION A.
AFRICAN SOCIETIES, ECONOMIES AND RELIGIONS**

[Sept. 10, 12] Part I. Representation and Discourse

“Frames” and images for interpreting Africa; “imagined landscapes of Africa”.

Focus: South Africa; Problem: The force of discourse

J&J Comaroff (South Africa)

Cheikh Anta Diop (Egypt)

Kwame Anthony Appiah (Africa)

V.Y. Mudimbe (Africa)

[Sept. 17, 19] Part II. From Tribe to Ethnicity: Kinship and Social Organization

Who has tribes & who has ethnicity? ‘Inventions’ of African society.

Focus: Sudan; Problem: The power of identity

E.E. Evans-Pritchard (Nuer/Sudan)

Aidan Southall (Eastern Africa/Comparative)

Leroy Vail (Afrikaners/South Africa)

[Sept. 24, 26] Part III. Economics as a Cultural System

Livelihoods, cultures, markets and states; Economic ideas in Africa.

Focus: Congo; Problem: The social embedding of economic life

Mary Douglas (Lele & Bushong/Congo)

Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch (West Africa/Comparative)

Sharon Hutchinson (Nuer/Sudan)

[Oct. 1, 3] Part IV. Hunter-Gatherers in Africa

Foragers as ancestors or people? Explaining the persistence of hunter-gatherers and modernity.

Focus: Southern Africa/Kalahari; Problem: Livelihoods in ecological and political context

Colin Turnbull (Mbuti Pygmies/Congo)

Roy Grinker (Lese & Efe/Congo)

Edwin Wilmsen (‘Bushmen’/Southern Africa)

Jacqueline Solway and Richard Lee (San of Kalahari/Southern Africa)

Oct. 8th, No Class (Thanksgiving)

[Oct. 10, 15] Part V. Witchcraft, Science and Rationality: The translation of Culture

Understanding cultural difference: multiple rationalities and “games” we don’t know.

Focus: Central Africa/Sudan-Congo-CAR; Problem: The relativity of rationality

David Livingstone (Bakwain/Lake Tanganyika)

E.E. Evans-Pritchard (Azande/Central Africa)

Peter Winch (Azande/Central Africa)

Ralph Austen (Comparative)

[October 10th, Final Date for sending Essay topics to course TA]

[Oct. 17, 22] Part VI. Ancestors, Gods, and the Philosophy of Religion

Belief, divinity and the social order; religion and cultural creativity.

Focus: Mali; Problem: African unities and diversity

Marcel Griaule (Dogon/Mali)

Paulin Hountondji (Comparative)

Igor Kopytoff (Suku/Congo)

Wednesday, October 24th, Mid-Term Exam

SECTION B.

AFRICAN CULTURE, HISTORY, AND POLITICS IN GLOBAL CONTEXT

[Oct. 29, 31] Part VII. Arts, Aesthetics, and Heritage

Cultural creativity and political play in art, literature, drama and music.

Focus: East African coast; Problem: If it's innovative, is it 'tradition'?

Simon Ottenberg (Afrikop Igbo/Nigeria)

Olu Oguibe (Comparative)

Kelly Askew (Swahili/Kenya and Tanzania)

Bayo Holsey (Cape Coast/Ghana)

[Nov. 5, 7] Part VIII. Sex and Gender Studies in Africa: Economy and Society

Women and men in culture and life; polygamy, sexuality, domination and autonomy.

Focus: Nigeria; Problem: Are gender institutions in Africa oppressive?

Ester Boserup (Comparative)

Judith Van Allen (Igbo/Nigeria)

Suzanne Leclerc-Madlala (Zulu/South Africa)

[Nov. 12, 14] Part IX. Europe in Africa: Colonization

Strategies of Imperialism and colonialism: intersections of domination and resistance.

Focus: Kenya; Problem: How so few controlled so many

Frederick Lugard (Nigeria)

Walter Rodney (Comparative)

Terence Ranger (Comparative)

Ngugi wa Thiong'o (Kikuyu/Kenya)

[Nov. 19, 21] Part X. Nations and Nationalism

Identity and the symbolic underpinnings of the State, from resistance to culture.

Focus: West Africa; Problem: Do African states constitute nations?

Leopold Senghor (Senegal)

Frantz Fanon (Comparative)

Bruce Berman (Kenya)

Christopher Steiner (Ivory Coast)

Monday, November 19th, Essays Due

[Nov. 26, 28] Part XI. Violent Transformations: Conflict and Displacement

Rituals of rebellion and conflict: Fragmenting and problematizing the State

Focus: Rwanda; Problem: Are African states too weak or too strong?

Max Gluckman (Southeastern Africa)

Paul Richards (Sierra Leone, Liberia)

Christopher Taylor (Rwanda)

Stephen Lubkemann (Mozambique)

[Dec. 3, 4] Part XII. Development, Governance, and Globalization

Internationalization of African politics through global flows and flaws.

Focus: Africa; Problem: Why doesn't development work? How does Africa work?

James Ferguson (Zambia)

Peter Uvin (Rwanda)

Daniel Smith (Nigeria)

Jean-Francois Bayart (West Africa)

Harry West (Mozambique)

Dianna Shandy (Nuer/American)

Review Session, TBA

Final Examination, Time/Place TBA

The Essay Assignment

By **October 10th** (and ideally before!), email the essay topic to the course TA for approval. Please feel free to discuss the topic with the TA and the course instructor before then.

Due November 16th in class: 5-6 page essay, normal margins, 12 point, double-spaced; with full referencing that indicates the sources of information you have used. Please note comments on Academic Integrity above, and consider all aspects of plagiarism.

The Essay is intended to provide you an opportunity to explore a topic in depth. An essay should be a creative exploration and reflection on an issue, which presents a "thesis" or an "argument" regarding the issue being explored, drawing on a body of information and factual material. Essays are not full research papers and in this regard can make use of course materials as well as draw on library and other media sources beyond course readings. Issues or themes to be explored could include misunderstandings of Africa, discovery of an aspect of African life previously given little attention, a controversy, an issue in current public debate, or a predicament a country or society faces. Essays should show awareness of the larger setting of the society, country, or region being examined.

Some illustrative topics include: debates over female circumcision, role of the extended family in urban Africa, the implications of the 'democratization' process in particular countries, sources of civil conflict in particular regions, contrasting forms of the family, how music functions in several societies, sources of poverty, the effects of micro-credit projects on women's empowerment, changing forms of religion, strategies of community conservation of wildlife, the effects of the spread of Islam or Christianity, the secession of Eritrea, the geographical split in Mali, the 'failure' of the Somali state, youth experience and globalization, class conflict among South African miners, liberation struggles, and many more. This list of topics is intended to give you some hints about the possible "sorts" of topics you might choose.