

AFRI 598: Power and Politics in Contemporary Africa



WINTER 2013

McGill University
African Studies Program

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:35 – 3:55
Birks Building, Room 017

Instructor: Jennifer Glassco
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 10:30 – 12
Peterson Hall 114
jennifer.glassco@mail.mcgill.ca

As a “capstone”, this course offers African Studies degree students the opportunity to meet together to discuss issues related to Africa in an integrated, interdisciplinary context. The theme of this year’s course, “Power and Politics”, draws attention to the ways in which negotiations of agency and rights by different groups in society are contested in various African states, the tools citizens use to critique governments, and how these negotiations are viewed and interpreted by international and academic observers. The course will focus on contemporary issues starting in the post-colonial period, but with a focus on events and phenomena of the last twenty-five years. Topics discussed will include literary critiques of the post-colonial state, governance, globalization and transnationalism, environmental conservation, and human rights discourses. The politics of African representations will be a cross-cutting topic for critical reflection. Throughout the course, special attention will be given to voices and perspectives from groups whose opinions are under-represented among African policy makers and academics such as writers, women, youth, and the LGBT community.

The course will take the form of a small, interdisciplinary seminar. The seminar will be discussion-based, and requires consistent in-class participation from all students. Class discussions will draw on weekly assigned readings, information derived from other courses, and knowledge of African history and current events. Readings and other course materials originate from a variety of disciplines within the social sciences and humanities, and include academic, literary and journalistic sources. Most degree students in African Studies are also pursuing another discipline, and students are encouraged to contribute these perspectives to the group. Students are also encouraged to keep up-to-date on African current affairs, and to bring timely issues and topics to class discussions so that the seminar becomes a dynamic setting for engaging with African realities.

Learning Outcomes:

The goals of this course revolve around the development of three core skills which will be evaluated over the semester. Primarily, students will gain confidence in presenting their critical analyses of given readings in informal class discussions. Picking out key themes, making connections and comparisons between different texts, and responding to differing or opposing viewpoints in a clear and constructive manner will be practiced in each class. Second, group presentations will allow students to improve their formal presentation skills, as well as further develop their ability to give constructive and insightful feedback. Third, students are expected to apply their critical insight, and polish their academic writing skills in the preparation of an original and critical research paper.

Books and Readings:

Two required books are available for purchase at Paragraph Bookstore on Ave. McGill College (listed below and denoted in the syllabus with an asterisk *). All other readings are available for download on Web CT, or online. Students should complete all assigned readings for a given week before the Tuesday class so that discussions can compare and contrast the different texts.

Books to purchase:

* Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. 1978. *Petals of Blood*.

* Mariama Bâ. 1981. *So Long a Letter*.

EVALUATION:

Participation	30%
Group presentation	20%
Paper proposal	10%
Final paper	40%

Course Assignments:

Participation

Because this is a small seminar, participation is crucial, and a substantial portion of each student's mark will be based on in-class and online participation. The participation grade will consist of four components:

1. Class Attendance: Class attendance is *MANDATORY*. All absences must be approved in advance by the instructor or justified with a doctor's note or other proper documentation. Students missing class without approval or documentation will be docked 2% or their participation mark per class missed. Students should also be aware that in a small seminar, arriving late is highly disruptive, and repeated significant lateness may also compromise the class attendance grade.
2. Weekly Reading Response Questions: Students must post 2 comments or questions on the upcoming week's readings on the Web CT discussion board by 9 a.m. on Tuesday before class. These posts will be used to guide the week's class discussions. Comments and questions need not be long (a few sentences will suffice), but should demonstrate substantive intellectual engagement with the week's texts.

For instance, if the assigned reading was *The End of Poverty* by Jeffrey Sachs, the following would be a bad discussion question:

- How does Sachs argue that we can "end poverty" in Africa?

The following would be a good discussion question:

- Sachs views the tighter integration of "impoverished communities" into global capitalism as "the key to ending poverty" (p. 242). Yet Sachs describes local people in a way that gives them little agency or power over their lives (see, for instance, his discussion of the Kenyan Millennium Villages project on page 227), repeatedly stating that it will be increased support from the West that will "save" Africa. How does Sachs' prescription for development differ from those of the Pan-Africanist thinkers that we read during Week 4? Nkrumah and Cabral, for instance, believed

that African development would be facilitated precisely by limiting engagement with the West. How can we account for these different positions?

Students do not need to treat every assigned reading in their questions and comments, but should make an effort to identify general themes and make connections, rather than focusing all questions on a single text. *Students should read one another's posts online before class and come prepared to offer responses and comments.*

3. Class Participation: Students are expected to come to class having done the assigned readings and prepared to offer specific insights or ask specific questions. Students should be attentive in class and participate actively in class discussions. At the beginning of class each student is expected to speak briefly about their general reaction to the week's readings, and give one topic or question they would most like to discuss in the class.
4. Web CT Participation: Students are also encouraged to participate in the class through the Web CT discussion board. Students can use the discussion board to share links to interesting articles or other resources with their classmates, as well as to comment on one another's posts and discussion questions. Students are expected to make at least one post, or one response to another student's post, per week.

March Conference: On March 21 and 22, the Institute for the Study of International Development is organizing a conference on The Challenge of Developing Countries from the Bottom Up. There will be one session taking place on Thursday March 21st (16:00-18:00) and four sessions on Friday March 22nd (9:00-10:45, 11.15-13:00, 14:00-15:45, and 16:00-17:45). Attendance to any session of the conference will earn students extra credit (2.5%) that will count toward their participation grade. Please note that participation is never to exceed the 20% established for the course. At the conference there will be a sign up sheet at each session. Students should put their name, student ID, and signature. Needless to say, students leaving early from a session will not receive the extra credit.

Group Presentation

In groups of three, students will present a specific issue or event in African current affairs that is not covered in the course syllabus. Presentations should provide background and explanation of the issue, and then undertake a detailed analysis of at least two different sources describing the issue. These sources should provide diverse viewpoints and opinions about the issue. At least one source must be from Africa, and presentations should compare the viewpoints of different Africans involved in the story as well as an international or outsider perspective. Students may pursue more "typical" stories relating to conflict, crisis, underdevelopment, etc., or explore issues that are not usually discussed in the mainstream Western press, such as cultural and sporting events, local politics, etc. Presentations should be 15-20 minutes maximum in length, with another 10 minutes allotted for class questions, feedback and discussion. **It is important to practice timing the presentation beforehand to ensure you can fit everything into the allotted time.** Students are encouraged to use visual aids such as multimedia clips and PowerPoint presentations to enhance their work. A group mark will be allotted based on the thoroughness and innovativeness of the presentation and discussion of the chosen topic, the insightfulness of the critique of media representations of the topic, the quality of visual aids and other supporting materials, and poise in answering classmates' questions.

Final Paper (and Paper Proposal)

Students will submit a final, 12-15 page paper. Because of the wide range of topics covered, the various types of sources used, and the general interdisciplinary nature of the course, the scope of possible research questions is nearly unlimited. The only stipulation is that the paper topic must relate to the theme of the course by focusing on the political dimensions or the overt or implicit power relations present in a given situation. Papers should also focus on contemporary phenomena that have developed in the post-colonial period or more recently.

A 2-3 page paper proposal must be submitted by email to the instructor by the beginning of class on **Thursday, February 14th**. The proposal should discuss the key question or problem to be addressed, the aims and objectives of the student's research, and the strategy and methods that will be used. The proposal should also include a preliminary bibliography of at least eight academic sources.

The final paper and paper proposal must conform to the formatting and citation guidelines (in-text, author-date style) specified in the *Chicago Manual of Style, 16th edition* (Available as an e-book through the McGill library website).

Final papers must be submitted by email to the instructor by *11:59 p.m. on Wednesday, April 17th*.

Late papers and paper proposals will be docked one third of a letter grade per day or portion of a day late unless prior arrangements are made with the instructor. For example, an A paper becomes an A- if it was submitted one day late.

Academic Integrity: *"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."*

Language of Assignments: *"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."

Resources for news on African Current events (and relevant course topic):

- AfroBarometer: national public attitude surveys on democracy and governance in Africa. <http://www.afrobarometer.org> (State Power in Africa)
- *Africa is a Country* (blog). <http://africasacountry.com/> (Representations of Africa)
- Africa: The Good News. www.africagoodnews.com (Re-branding Africa)
- This is Africa: Africa for a New Generation. Blog. <http://www.thisisafrika.me/> (African Youth)
- www.allafrica.com (General current events news)
- <http://www.africanews.com/>
- <http://www.world-newspapers.com/africa.html>
- <http://afripod.aodl.org/> (History and current events pod-casts)
- <http://www.galz.co.zw/> (Human rights and sexualities)

SYLLABUS

Week 1 (January 8 & 10): Introduction – State Power in Africa

- Hagmann, T and Péclard, D. 2010 'Negotiating Statehood: Dynamics of Power and Domination in Africa', *Development and Change* 41(4):539-562.
- Bayart, Jean-Francois. 1993. *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly*. Introduction: The Historicity of African Societies. pp. 1-37.

Recommended:

- Jeffrey Herbst. 2000. "The Past and the Future of State Power in Africa" in *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control*. Princeton University Press.

Week 2 (January 15 & 17): The Politics of African Representation

In Class Film: Uncovering the Secrets of "Dark, Mysterious" Austria. 1994. Walter Wippersberg (dir.) Austria. 45 mins.

- Jan Pieterse. 1995. *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture*. Introduction. pp. 18-29.
- Kimani Njogu and John Middleton, eds. 2009. *Media and identity in Africa*. Chapter 6: Representations of Africa in the Western Media: Challenges and Opportunities. John Kiarie Wa'njogu. pp. 76-83, and, Epilogue: In the Name of Similitude. Valentin Mudimbe. pp. 308-324
- Binyavanga Wainaina. 2005. "How to Write about Africa". *Granta*92. <http://www.granta.com/Magazine/92/How-to-Write-about-Africa/Page-1> and "How to Write about Africa II: The Revenge". *Bazaar II* 21. <http://www.bidoun.org/magazine/21-bazaar-ii/how-to-write-about-africa-ii-the-revenge-by-binyavanga-wainaina>

Week 3 (January 22 & 24): Post-colonial Critiques

- Kwame Nkrumah. (1965). *Neo-Colonialism; the Last Stage of Imperialism*. London: Nelson. (pp. ix-xx, introduction)
- *Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. 1978. *Petals of Blood*. 344 pgs. (entire novel)

Recommended:

- Amílcar Cabral. 1970. "National Liberation and Culture". Speech delivered at Syracuse University. February 20. 14 pp.

Week 4 (January 29 & 31): Re-branding Africa

In Class Film: Africa Open for Business. 2006. Carol Pineau, dir. (USA, 58 mins)

- The Economist (magazine article). 2011. "The Hopeful Continent: Africa Rising"

- Thandika Mkandawire. 2010. "From maladjusted states to democratic developmental states in Africa," in Omano Edigheji ed. *Constructing a democratic developmental state in South Africa: Potentials and Challenges*. Cape Town: HSRC Press, pp. 59 - 81.

Week 5 (February 5 & 7): African Capital Cities – East and West

- Ben Okri. 1999. *Stars of the New Curfew*. (selected short stories)
- Meja Mwangi. 1976. *Going Down River Road*. Heinemann. 215 pgs. (Chapters 1-6, ~75pgs.)

Week 6 (February 12 & 14): Politics of Environmental Conservation

***** FINAL PAPER PROPOSALS DUE THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 14th BY THE BEGINNING OF CLASS*****

In Class Film: *Taking Root: The Vision of Wangari Maathai*. 2008. Alan Dater and Lisa Merton, dirs. (USA, 81 mins).

- Garrett, Hardin. "The Tragedy of the Commons". *Science*. 162:3859 (Dec. 1968): 1243- 1248.
- Melissa Leach and Robin Mearns. 1996. "*The Lie of the Land: Challenging Received Wisdom on the West African Environment*." In Melissa Leach & Robin Mearns, eds. *Environmental Change and Policy* Oxford: James Currey, pp. 1-33.
- John Galaty. 2012. "Land Grabbing in the East African Rangelands". In Andy Catly et al. *Pastoralism and Development in Africa: Dynamic Change at the Margins*. Routledge.

Week 7 (February 19 & 21): Governance

- Wrong, Michaela (2009). *It's Our Turn to Eat: The Story of a Kenyan Whistle-Blower*. (selections)
- De Waal, Alexander. (1997). *Famine Crimes: Politics & the Disaster Relief Industry in Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. (Chapter 9, pp. 179-203)
- J.P. Olivier de Sardan. (1999). A Moral Economy of Corruption in Africa. *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 37 (1), 25-52.

Recommended:

- Berman, Bruce. 2010. *Ethnicity and Democracy in Africa*. Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Working Paper No. 22 November 2010.
<http://repository.ri.jica.go.jp/dspace/bitstream/10685/42/1/Ethnicity+and+Democracy+in+Africa+.pdf>

Week 8 (February 26 & 28): Globalization

- Surprising Europe. Documentary Television Series. Al Jazeera English. Selected clips. <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/surprisingeurope/>
- James Ferguson. 2006. *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order*. Chapter 4: Transnational Topographies of Power: Beyond “the State” and “Civil Society” in the Study of African Politics. pp. 89-112.
- Azarya, Victor. 2004. “Globalization and International Tourism in Developing Countries: Marginality as a Commercial Commodity” *Current Sociology*. 52:6 (Nov. 2004): 949-967.

Recommended:

- John Mbaku and Suresh Saxena, eds. 2004. *Africa at the Crossroads: Between Regionalism and Globalization*. Introduction.

***** READING WEEK *****

Week 9 (March 12 & 14): Contemporary African Development and the Politics of Intervention.

In Class Film: *ABC Africa*. 2001. Abbas Kirostami, dir. (Iran, 85 min.)

- Large, D. 2008 ‘Beyond “Dragon in the Bush”’: The Study of China-Africa Relations, *African Affairs* 107(426):45-61.
- Charles Adjasi. 2012. “China in Africa – Are we really losing out?” How we made it in Africa. <http://www.howwemadeitinafrica.com/china-in-africa-%E2%80%93-are-we-really-losing-out/17124/>
- Dorothy Hodgson (1999) "Images and Interventions: The Problems of Pastoralist Development." in Anderson, D.M. and Broch-Due, V. eds., "The Poor are not us": Poverty and Pastoralism in East Africa. Bloomington: Indiana University Press; London: James Currey, pps.221-239.

Recommended to watch:

- Hernando de Soto, Dambisa Moyo, Stephen Lewis, and Paul Collier. 2010. “Be it Resolved Foreign Aid Does More Harm than Good” (video). Munk Debates. <http://www.munkdebates.com/The-Debates/Foreign-Aid>.

Week 10 (March 19 & 21): Women’s Voices in Development

- *Mariama Ba. 1989. *So long a letter*. Heinemann. 89 pgs. (entire novel)
- Griffiths, Claire. 2011. *Globalizing the Postcolony: Contesting Discourses of Gender and Development in Francophone Africa*. Chapter 17: Writing Gender and Development— The Birth of a Literary Voice pp. 251-262
- Obioma Nnameka, “Urban Spaces, Women’s Places— Polygamy as Sign in Mariama Ba’s Novels,” in *The Politics of (M)Othering, Obioma, Nnameka, ed. 1997. London: Routledge*.

Week 11 (March 26 & 28): Human rights and gender

- Dorothy Hodgson. 2011. "These are not our Priorities': Maasai Women, Human Rights and the Problem of Culture." In Dorothy L. Hodgson, ed., *Gender and Culture at the Limit of Rights*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, pp. 138-157.
- Caroline Archambault. 2011. Ethnographic Empathy and the Social Context of Rights: "Rescuing" Maasai Girls from Early Marriage. *American Anthropologist*. Vol. 113, Issue 4, pp. 632–643.
- Ama Ata Aidoo. 1997. *The Girl Who Can*. (selected short stories)

Week 12 (April 2 & 4): Human Rights and sexualities

March 28th: Guest Speaker Katherine Dearham. East Africa Program Manager at None on Record: a digital media project that collects the stories of LGBTI Africans. www.noneonrecord.com.

- Marc Epprecht Ed. 2008. *Heterosexual Africa? The History of an Idea from the Age of Exploration to the Age of AIDS*. Chapter 2: The Ethnography of African Straightness. pp. 34-64.
- Jennifer Browdy de Hernandez, ed. 2010. *African Women Writing Resistance: Contemporary Voices*. "I am Kasha". Pps 90-92.
- Interpress News Service. November 5, 2012. "Kenyan Candidate Running Against Homophobia". <http://www.ipsnews.net/2012/11/kenyan-candidate-running-against-homophobia/>

Recommended:

- Jacklyn Cock. 2003. "Engendering Gay and Lesbian Rights: The Equality Clause in the South African Constitution" *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol. 26, No. 1, pp. 35 – 45.

Week 13 (April 9 & 11): African Youth in Music and Politics

In Class Film: *Amandla! A Revolution in Four Part Harmony*. 2002. Lee Hirsch, dir. (Australia, 108 mins).

- Short Film: *Kenya Boys*. 2011. Alvin Shen (dir.) 10 mins.
- Mwenda Ntarangwi. 2009. *East African Hip-Hop: Youth Culture and Globalization*. Chapters 1 and 2. pp. 1-43.
- Jon Abbink. 2005. *Being Young in Africa: The politics of despair and renewal*. Pp. 1-31. Introduction in: *Vanguard or Vandals: Youth Politics and Conflict in Africa*.

***** FINAL PAPERS DUE BY 11:59PM ON WEDNESDAY, APRIL 17th*****