

**AFRI 598 Research Seminar in African Studies**  
**The Contested Conceptions and Realities of Africa's Past, Present, and Future**  
**Winter 2018**

**Time:** Tuesdays and Fridays, 4:05-5:25pm

**Place:** Birks 205

**Instructor:** Dr. Philip Gooding

**Email:** philip.gooding@mcgill.ca

**Office Hours:** Thursdays at 1:00-3:00pm

**Office:** Peterson Hall 236

### **COURSE OVERVIEW**

This course uses an interdisciplinary approach to address themes that link Africa's 'past' trajectories with its 'present' and 'future' political, social, and environmental realities. Specifically, it links the legacies of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, colonialism, and the period of African independence to issues and challenges that are prominent in contemporary Africa. Important themes include Africa's relationships with the wider world, long-term competitions for land and resources, urbanisation and the emergence of distinct urban identities, the dynamics of cross-border networks, competing conceptions of gender and sexuality, and issues of governance in the African context.

As a research seminar, this course is driven by student participation. Students are required to complete the readings before seminar sessions and to use them to inform a discussion about the prescribed topic. The role of the instructor is to facilitate and direct the discussion when necessary (it is not to lecture). Each seminar session will be designed so that its theme is analysed from a range of disciplinary perspectives, including anthropology, development studies, economics, environmental studies, history, political science, and others. Students will then use the interdisciplinary techniques used in seminar sessions to design, present, and conduct their own research project.

The course is split into three sections. The first section (covering the first eight weeks) tackles pre-determined topics that are prominent in Africa's current affairs and its academic discourses. In the second section (covering weeks 9-13), students present their own research projects. Finally, the final week of the semester is reserved for an interdisciplinary analysis of an as-yet-determined event that is prominent in the news.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- Students will develop the tools to analyse Africa's past, present, and future from a range of disciplinary perspectives.
- Students will develop research skills so that they can present, conduct, and write-up their own independent research.
- Students will be introduced to a research environment that prepares them for a potential future career in research.

## INSTRUCTIONAL METHOD

This course is a series of seminar sessions, held on Tuesdays and Thursdays between 4:05pm and 5:25pm. Students are required to read the set readings before each seminar with the discussion topic in mind. Students are also expected to participate in the course outside of prescribed seminar times by interacting via the MyCourses discussion board. This will act as a forum to discuss current themes and methods in African studies.

## COURSE MATERIALS

As far as is possible, all assigned readings will be made available electronically on MyCourses on the Friday before the relevant classes (e.g. readings for week 2 will be uploaded by the end of Friday of Week 1). Limited copies of most books are also available in the library. Readings may change as the course goes on, depending on their availability.

## EVALUATION

Students are assessed on their participation in different aspects of the course and on their independent research projects.

### **Participation: 20%**

- **Participation in Seminars:** Attendance of each seminar session is **mandatory**. Absences must be approved in advance or justified with relevant documentation. Students will be assessed on the quality of their contributions to class discussions and on their presentations of assigned readings (**10%**).
- **Participation in MyCourses Discussion Forum:** Students should share interesting articles, perspectives, and sources to provoke discussion and debate. This will serve as the basis from which to interact with fellow students about contemporary issues in Africa. A list of potential sources for articles will be shared with students in the first seminar of the semester (Students should not feel limited by this list however). (**10%**).

### **Independent Research Project: 80%**

Students will design and conduct their own research projects in response to the key theme of this course: the contested conceptions and realities of Africa's past, present, and future. This theme is broadly conceived, and so students have the opportunity to interpret it in numerous ways or from a variety of case studies. Nevertheless, the topic should be approved by the instructor before the student embarks on the project. Meetings to this effect will be organised in the second and third weeks of the semester. Students' research projects are evaluated in three stages:

- **Research Proposal:** The proposal should be up to 1500 words in length, and should outline the key debates, themes, and questions that the research project addresses. The format of this proposal will be outlined in the first session of the course. Students' proposals should be submitted via MyCourses **by 11:59pm on Friday 16 February 2018 (20%)**.
- **Research Presentation:** Students will present their research proposal along with their initial findings to their peers in seminar sessions allocated between weeks 10 and 13. Presenters should circulate 1-2 relevant readings to students **on the Friday before they are due to present**. The presentation itself should be 15-20 minutes in length. It will be followed by a discussion based on the presentation and the circulated readings **(20%)**.
- **Final Paper:** Students will submit a 4,000-6,000 word paper based on their research project. It should be submitted to the instructor via MyCourses **by 11:59pm on Monday 16 April (40%)**.

### **OFFICIAL POLICIES**

**Language:** 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. This does not apply to courses in which acquiring proficiency in a language is one of the objectives. (Approved by Senate on 21 January 2009 – see also the section in this document on Assignments and Evaluation).

**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 <http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/> for more information). (Approved by Senate on 29 January 2003).

**Late Penalties:** There will be no extensions for written work unless a student has made prior arrangements with the instructor. There will be a 2% penalty per each day that a piece of graded work is submitted late (inclusive of weekends).

**Formatting Style:** Please abide by the following guidelines for all submitted work:

- Use Times New Roman font, size 12, double-spaced, and with normal margins.

- Use a widely accepted citation style (for example: Chicago, Harvard, APA, or MLA).
- Footnotes should be size 10 and single-spaced, and are included in the final word count.
- Attach a bibliography (bibliographies do not count towards the word count).
- Submit work in either doc, docx, or pdf format.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### *Week 1: Introduction to Africa.*

**Tuesday 9 Jan:** Introduction to the course.

**Thursday 11 Jan:** The multiple, changing, and competing conceptions of ‘Africa.’

#### Readings

- Derricourt, *Inventing Africa: History, Archaeology and Ideas* (2011), Ch. 1, 6.
- Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (2001), Introduction: Time on the Move.

#### Optional Additional Media

- Podcast: *Africa: Past and Present*, Episode 67: ‘Africanizing History and Society.’
- Poetry: Césaire, *Return to the Native Land*, trans. John Berger and Anna Bostock (1969; first published in French, 1939).

### *Week 2: Africa’s place in the ‘modern’ world.*

**Tuesday 16 Jan:** Long-term legacies: Slave trades, colonialism, post-colonialism.

**Thursday 18 Jan:** Development and ‘Modernity’ in Africa

#### Readings

- Ellis, *Season of Rains: Africa in the World* (2012), Ch. 1, 2.
- Cooper, *Africa Since 1940: The Past and the Present* (2002), Ch. 1.
- Ferguson, *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order* (2006), Ch. 1, 7.

#### Optional Additional Media

- Film: *Bamako* (2006).
- Podcast: *Africa: Past and Present*, Episode 104: ‘Development Dreams in Lesotho.’

### *Week 3: Governance and Democracy in Contemporary Africa*

**Tuesday 23 Jan (ADD-DROP DEADLINE):** The Institutions of Governance

**Thursday 25 Jan:** Political participation from below

### Readings

- Vengroff and Magala, ‘Democratic Reform, Transition, and Consolidation: Evidence from Senegal’s 2000 Presidential Election,’ *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 39, 1 (2001).
- Van de Walle, “Meet the New Boss, Same as the Old Boss? The Evolution of Political Clientelism in Africa,” in Herbert Kitschelt and Steven Wilkinson, (eds.) *Patrons, Clients, and Policies* (2007).
- Bayart, *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly* (1993), Ch. TBD.
- Zeilig, ‘The Student-Intelligentsia in Sub-Saharan Africa: Structural Adjustment, Activism and Transformation,’ *Review of African Political Economy* 119 (2009).

### Optional Additional Media

- Podcast: *Africa: Past and Present*, Episode 87: ‘Black Politics in South Africa.’
- Podcast: *Africa: Past and Present*, Episode 106: ‘The 2016 Zambian Elections.’
- Podcast: *Africa: Past and Present*, Episode 63: ‘Noise and Silence, War and Peace in the Politics in DR Congo.’
- Film: *An African Election* (2011).
- Film: *African Underground: Democracy in Dakar* (2009).

### **Week 4: Human-Environment Interaction**

**Tuesday 30 Jan:** Land and resource exploitation and their responses.

**Thursday 1 Feb:** Africa in the era of global climate change.

### Readings

- Carmody, *The New Scramble for Africa* (2011), Ch. 1 (pp.14-33).
- Melber and Southall, ‘Introduction: A New Scramble for Africa,’ in Melber and Southall (eds.), *A New Scramble for Africa?: Imperialism, Investment, and Development*, (2009).
- Archer et al. “‘Farming on the Edge’ in Arid Western South Africa: Climate Change and Agriculture in Marginal Environments,’ *Geography*, 93, 2 (2008).
- Armah et al. ‘Assessing Barriers to Adaptation to Climate Change in Coastal Tanzania: Does Where You Live Matter?’ *Population and Environment*, 37, 2 (2015).

### Optional Additional Media

- Podcast: *Africa: Past and Present*, Episode 99: ‘Artisanal Mining in Tanzania.’
- Film: *Virunga* (2014).

### ***Week 5: Borders and Borderlands***

**Tuesday 6 Feb:** International and inter-state approaches to the border.

**Thursday 8 Feb:** ‘Borders’ from the perspective of those who live near them.

#### Readings

- Nugent, ‘Arbitrary Lines and the People’s Minds: A Dissenting View on Colonial Boundaries in West Africa,’ in Nugent and Asiwaju eds., *African Boundaries: Barrier, Conduits and Opportunities* (1996).
- Feyissa and Hoehne, ‘State Borders & Borderlands as Resources: An Analytical Framework,’ in Feyissa and Hoehne (eds.), *Borders and Borderlands as Resources in the Horn of Africa* (2010).
- Seymour, ‘Sovereignty, Territory and Authority: Boundary Maintenance in Contemporary Africa,’ *Critical African Studies*, 5, 1 (2013).
- Asiwaju, ‘Transfrontier Regionalism: The European Union Perspective on Post-Colonial Africa with Special Referenes to Borgu,’ in Nicol and Townsend-Gault (eds.), *Holding the Line: Borders in a Global World* (2005).

#### Optional Additional Media

- Podcast: *Africa: Past and Present*, Episode 113: ‘East African Borderlands: Somalia, Kenya, and Belonging.’

### ***Week 6: Demographic Considerations***

**Tuesday 13 Feb:** Africa’s population boom since WWII.

**Thursday 15 Feb:** The growth of urban spaces.

#### Readings

- Canning et al. *Africa’s Demographic Transition: Dividend or Disaster?* (2015), Overview.
- Sippel et al. *Africa’s Demographic Challenges: How a Young Population can make Development Possible* (2011), Executive Summary, Ch. 2.
- Freire, Lall, and Leipziger, *Africa’s Urbanization: Challenges and Opportunities* (2014).
- Davis, *Planet of the Slums* (2006), Ch. 3.

#### Optional Additional Media

- TV Series: BBC, *Welcome to Lagos* (2010).

### ***Week 7: Subaltern and Rebellious Cultures***

**Tuesday 22 Feb:** Urban Identities.

**Thursday 24 Feb:** Youth and Youth Cultures.

#### Readings

- Waller, 'Rebellious Youth in Colonial Africa,' *Journal of African History*, 47, 1 (2006).
- Abbink, 'Being Young in Africa: The Politics of Despair and Renewal,' in Abbink and van Kessel (eds.), *Vanguard or Vandals: Youth Politics and Conflict in Africa* (2005).
- Glaser, *Bo-Tsotsi: The Youth Gangs of Soweto, 1935-1976* (2000), Ch. 1.
- Salo, 'Mans is ma soe: Ganging Practices in Manenberg, South Africa, and the Ideologies of Masculinity, Gender, and Generational Relations,' in Bay and Donham (eds.), *States of Violence: Politics, Youth, and Memory in Contemporary Africa* (2006).

#### Optional Additional Media

- Podcast: *Africa: Past and Present*, Episode 115: Youth Struggles.
- Film: *Hip Hop Colony: The African Hip Hop Explosion* (2006).
- Film: *Tsotsi* (2005).

### ***Week 8: Gender and Sexuality***

**Tuesday 27 Feb:** Shifting and contradicting conceptions of femininity and masculinity.

**Thursday 29 Feb:** LGBTQIA+ discourses and Africa.

#### Readings

- Amadiume, *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society* (1987), Introduction.
- Epstein, *The Invisible Cure: Why We are Losing the Fight Against AIDS in Africa* (2008), Ch. 4.
- Murray and Roscoe (eds.), *Boy-Wives and Female Husbands: Studies in African Homosexualities* (1998), esp. Introduction and Conclusion.
- Kendall, 'Women in Lesotho and the (Western) Construction of Homophobia,' in E. Blackwood and S. Wieringa (eds.), *Same-sex relations and female desires: Transgender practices across cultures* (1999).

#### Optional Additional Media

- Podcast: *Africa: Past and Present*, Episode 97: 'Reproductive Rights in South Africa.'
- Podcast: *Africa: Past and Present*, Episode 65: 'A Female King: Gender and Oral History in Eastern Nigeria.'

**Week 9 (Tuesday 6 Mar & Thursday 8 Mar):** No Sessions – Study Break

**Week 10-13 (Tuesday 13 Mar – Thursday 5 Apr):** Student presentations of their research projects.

**Week 14 (Tuesday 10 Apr – Thursday 12 Apr):** Interdisciplinary analysis of a case study in Africa's current affairs.

Topic and Readings TBD.