Africa: An Introductory Survey

A. Course Goals:
This survey of the cultures and societies of Africa is designed to be a broad interdisciplinary introduction to the study of this extraordinary continent. And because we shall examine Africa from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, each of you will have registered for one of the following: African Languages and Literature 277; Afro-American Studies 277; Anthropology 277; Geography 277; History 277; Political Science 277; or Sociology 277.

Since one goal of this course is to introduce students to Africa from a variety of different disciplinary perspectives, we assume no prior knowledge. Nonetheless, your responsibility in this course is slightly different than in most others you have taken. The format requires you regularly to reconcile the different approaches, styles, and perspectives of the course materials (readings, lectures, discussions, video clips, films), making linkages among their various subjects and orientations. You will have plenty of material to work with, and help from the instructor and your teaching assistant, but ultimately it is up to you to weave a coherent understanding of Africa out of the material presented.

For example, when listening to a lecture or reading an assignment, as you are concentrating on the material at hand, at the same time try to think of how the ideas being presented connect to other lectures or readings, either supporting them or, perhaps, contradicting them. Always try to compare and contrast readings, lectures, discussions, and films with each other. Remember throughout that a second goal of the course is for each of you to come away with some understanding of the complexities and diversities of contemporary and historical Africa. You will discover, for example, that generalizations about “Africa” — whether by the media, academics, policy makers, or even the instructor — rarely hold across the entire continent.

By long custom, this interdisciplinary course draws on occasional guest lectures from a variety of Wisconsin faculty members engaged in the study of Africa because the continent’s history, politics, cultures, and societies are so rich, diverse, and complex no single individual can possibly hope to know everything there is to know about the continent — even in an introductory
course. I have therefore carefully selected a variety of guest specialists from various disciplines in the social sciences and humanities to cover subjects that they know far better than I do. There will be enough guests to ensure the interdisciplinary orientation this course is known for, but not so many that the course loses focus or coherence. A third goal of the course, therefore, is to whet your appetites to learn even more about Africa after you complete this course by enrolling in some of the other Africa-centric courses that this university, and especially its African Studies Program, are known for.

B. Course Requirements:

1. Lectures and Discussion Sections:

I expect faithful attendance at all lectures and discussion section meetings. Lectures meet from 2:30 – 3:45 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays in Chamberlin 2103. Please note that in order to facilitate a comfortable learning environment for all, recording devices of any sort will be permitted only with the instructor’s consent. All cell phones, pagers, ipods, ipads, and other electronic devices should also be turned off during class sessions. Students wishing to use laptop computers to take notes may do so, but please stay focused on the course: surfing, gaming, or updating “Facebook” entries will detract from your performance and will distract those seated around you. During certain periods laptops will be prohibited (during exams or films, for example), so please respect those times.

In addition to lectures twice a week, each student will attend a weekly discussion section. You must be formally enrolled in one of the eight scheduled discussion sections and attend that section every week. If you are not enrolled in a discussion section, you are not enrolled in the course. Please be aware that the assigned readings for any given week will generally be discussed in section the following week.

Each discussion section will be the responsibility of one of our two teaching assistants. The teaching assistants are graduate students who have had considerable experience in Africa and are carrying out Africa-related research toward a Ph.D. degree. They have been selected for their extensive knowledge, their experience of life in Africa, and their disciplinary diversity. In discussion section they will help you review and sort out ideas presented in lectures, lead discussion and debate, help you analyze your readings, evaluate the written work you submit, and help you prepare for exams. Please note that no discussion section meetings will be held during Week 1, Week 7, or Week 13 (as noted on the course schedule below).

Your teaching assistants are:

Mr. David Bresnahan, Department of History, dpbresnahan@wisc.edu; and
Ms. Kathleen Klaus, Department of Political Science, kklaus@wisc.edu.

Their office hours will be posted and announced.
2. Assignments and Grades:
There will be a map quiz, administered in discussion section, during Week 4 (12, 13, or 14 February 2014). You will be given a blank map and asked to identify where various African countries, and major cities are located.

A mid-term examination will be held on Tuesday, 4 March 2014. It will consist of both identifications and essay questions chosen from among several possibilities. The first format (short ID) will call on you not only to identify, but to demonstrate what you have learned about a particular person, concept, idea, or subject that has been treated in either lecture, discussion section, or the readings. The second format (essay question) will ask you to demonstrate your mastery of the course materials from lecture, reading, and discussion section by integrating them into a coherent essay on a major theme or themes of the course. A copy of last year’s exam will be distributed prior to the exam for you to use as a study guide.

By university fiat, the final examination will be on Sunday, 11 May 2014, from 10:05 a.m. - 12:05 p.m. The final will be comprehensive and cover the entire course, but there will most likely be an emphasis on materials treated since the mid-term. The format will be announced later in the semester, but it will probably be the same as the mid-term. (Sorry, the scheduling of the final on Mother’s Day was definitely not my idea. Please note well that since you have been alerted to this awkward and inconvenient bit of university scheduling on day one of the semester, requests to take the final at alternative times because of fear of sorcery, obligations to your “big man,” your mother’s wrath, or summer break travel arrangements will not fall on sympathetic ears.)

In addition, every student will write a five-page paper that will be due in lecture on Tuesday, 22 April 2014. Students taking the course for honors credit will write a ten-page paper. The precise assignment for the paper will be distributed in February.

Grades for the course will be weighted as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Map quiz</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-term exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Section grade</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td>30%</td>
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</tbody>
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Section grades will be determined on the basis of both your attendance and on the quality of your contributions to the collective deliberations of the group. Obviously, if you are not present it will be impossible to contribute to the group discussions. Quality of contribution is measured by the usefulness of your in-class statements and the evidence you employ to support them. In addition, from time to time you may also be responsible for demonstrating knowledge of content in brief in-class writings and other small written assignments.
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Please note that all required work must be submitted to be eligible to receive a passing grade. (Students affiliated with the McBurney Center are warmly and strongly encouraged to see their teaching assistant as soon as possible if they will need alternate arrangements of any sort.)

The list address for this course is: polisci277-1-s14@lists.wisc.edu

3. Required Reading:
The following books will be used extensively. In theory, the University Book Store and the reserve reading room of the College Library in Helen C. White Hall should have copies available. They may also be purchased at other book stores or, of course, on-line.


In the course outline which follows, all readings are required. Required books should be on three-hour reserve in the College Library at Helen C. White Hall. In addition, if required articles do not have their own web link, then they may be accessed either through Learn@UW or the following web link: http://users.polisci.wisc.edu/schatzberg/ps277. (Throughout the remainder of this syllabus this will be abbreviated as [web].) Some of the recommended articles may also be accessed through other indicated links. You may need to access these from a UW email or web address, but the relevant journal articles or book chapters should then be accessible. To facilitate easy access, I will send electronic copies of this syllabus (in WordPerfect, Word, Adobe pdf, and html) to the classlist. A copy of this syllabus named “277 syllabus” will also be accessible through [web] and Learn@UW.

C. Course Outline and Reading Assignments:


***No Sections This Week***

Gordon & Gordon, Africa, Chapter 1 (“Introduction”), 1-7.
2–African Diversities, 1  
30 January 2014


3–African Diversities, 2  
6 February 2014


4–Precolonial Africa: Politics, Economics, Society, 1  
13 February 2014

***Map Quiz in Section***


5–Precolonial Africa: Politics, Economics, Society, 2  
20 February 2014

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, “Power Daemons” [web].

6–Colonial Rule, 1  
27 February 2014


7–Analytical Interlude, 1  
6 March 2014

***MID-TERM EXAM: TUESDAY, 4 MARCH 2014***

***No Sections This Week***
8–Colonial Rule, 2
13 March 2014

Hochschild, *King Leopold’s Ghost*, 1-139.

*Spring Break*

9–Nationalism: Cultural & Political, 1
27 March 2014


10–Post Independence Politics, 1
3 April 2014


11–Post Independence Politics, 2
10 April 2014


12–The Political Economy of Development
17 April 2014


13–Analytic Interlude, 2
24 April 2014

***TERM PAPER DUE: TUESDAY, 22 APRIL 2014***

***No Sections This Week***
14–Everyday Life: Leisure, Society, & Culture, 1  
1 May 2014


15–Everyday Life: Leisure, Society, & Culture, 2  
8 May 2014


***FINAL EXAMINATION:***
*SUNDAY, 11 MAY 2014, FROM 10:05 a.m. - 12:05 p.m.; LOCATION: T.B.A.***