

Sociology 39
African World Perspectives
Spring 2006
T/TH 3-4:20

Prof. Zine Magubane
509 McGuinn
2-8984

magubane@bc.edu

Office Hours: Tuesdays 12:30-3pm and by appointment

TA: Chris Kelly

Christopher.kelly.6@bc.edu

Office Hours: TBA

This course examines some of the key events in African history, told through the means of African autobiographies. Each of the readings is written by an African person, who intertwines the events of their own lives with major historical events such as apartheid, the genocide in Rwanda, civil war in the Sudan, and political corruption in Nigeria. As a core course the class will include the following:

Perennial Questions: We begin the course by examining apartheid in South Africa and asking the question: How have Africans managed to maintain cultural integrity and build societies in spite of the impact of racism? We also use apartheid as a way of asking what is the relationship between faith and social action? We move on to look at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa with an aim to understand what is the nature of human freedom and what are the limits of our ability to withstand oppression and forgive? We then move into looking at survivors of civil war in Sudan and genocide in Rwanda in order to ask what is the impact of culture on behavior and what is the relationship between our basic needs as human beings and the societies we create. What strategies, both personal and political, have individuals used to withstand hardship? Finally we look at political and economic change on the continent by examining politics and society in Nigeria and Liberia. Through personal narratives we grapple with the questions: What is the meaning of progress? and How have human beings attempted to realize their dreams, despite living in oppressive economic and social environments?

Cultural Diversity: All of the readings for the course were written by African people—rich and poor, urban and rural, male and female, black and white, old and young, gay and straight. Through engaging with their words and their lives you will come to appreciate the incredible diversity of opinions, experiences, and perspectives that African people have.

Historical Perspective: No study of Africa can proceed without looking at the historical events that produced the wars, famines, and poverty that are such an intrinsic part of life on the Continent today. We will look at the relationship between larger socio-historical events such as the slave trade, colonialism, and the Cold War and the trajectory of individual African lives. We will also look at specific events (e.g. the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Rwandan genocide) as manifestations of larger socio-historical trends.

Methodology: The books we will read represent a variety of sociological perspectives and research methodologies. We will examine the ways in which various theoretical perspectives (Marxist, liberal, free market) shape the worldviews of our authors.

Writing component: During the course of the semester you will write a paper through which you will be encouraged to compare and contrast the different ways in which African peoples have dealt with the challenges posed by colonialism, racism, poverty, and underdevelopment.

Creating a personal philosophy: The aim of this course is to help you develop a greater awareness of and appreciation for how diverse life in Africa really is. You will be challenged to examine what stereotypes you previously held about life in Africa and to begin to think about Africans differently and appreciate the many ways in which Africans hold values that are both similar to and different from the values you hold.

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Required Texts:

- Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela. **A Human Being Died that Night**
- Monique Maddy. **Learning to Love Africa**
- Nelson Mandela. **Long Walk to Freedom**
- Marie Beatrice Umutesi. **Surviving the Slaughter**
- Benson Deng. **They Poured Fire on Us From the Sky**
- Ken Wiwa. **In the Shadow of a Saint**

Grading:

- Attendance and Class Participation: 10%
- Midterm: 30% (March 2nd)
- Paper: 30% (Due May 2nd)
- Final: 30% (May 9 at 12:30)

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Jan. 17th: Introduction

Topic I: Perspectives on Apartheid

Jan 19th: Lecture on S. African history and apartheid

- *Long Walk to Freedom* Ch. 11-14

Jan. 24th: Film **The Long Walk of Nelson Mandela (part 1)**

- *Long Walk to Freedom* Ch. 17, 20, 23, 24

Jan. 26th: Film: **The Long Walk of Nelson Mandela (part 2)**

- *Long Walk to Freedom* Ch. 28, 36, 39, 41, 42, 43

Jan. 31st :

- *Long Walk to Freedom* Ch. 49, 51, 54, 56, 57, 76, 78

Feb 2nd :

- Rian Malan. *My Traitor's Heart* pp. 19-72 [electronic reserve]
- Christopher Hope. *White Boy Running* pp. 48-60 and 260-270 [electronic reserve]
- Nadine Gordimer. *The Essential Gesture* p. 31-37 (“Where do Whites Fit In” and pp. 261-284 (“Living in the Interregnum”) [electronic reserve]

Feb 7th : Film: **Long Nights Journey Into Day**

- *A Human Being Died That Night* Ch. 1-4

Feb 9th:

- *A Human Being Died That Night* Ch. 5-Epilogue
- Antjie Krog. *Country of My Skull* Ch. 14 and 15 [electronic reserve]

Topic II: Perspectives on the Rwandan Genocide

Feb 14th: Lecture on history of Rwanda and genocide

- *Surviving the Slaughter* Ch. 1-4

Feb 16th: Film: **The Ghosts of Rwanda** (part 1)

- *Surviving the Slaughter* Ch. 5-8

Feb 21st : Film: **The Ghosts of Rwanda** (part 2)

- *Surviving the Slaughter* Ch. 9-11

Feb 23rd :

- Jean Hatzfield. *Machete Season: The Killers in Rwanda Speak* [electronic reserve]

Topic III: Perspectives on Economic Development and Underdevelopment

Feb. 28th : **Midterm Exam**

March 2nd : Film: **Our Friends at the Bank**

March 7th: **NO CLASS SPRING BREAK**

March 9th: **NO CLASS SPRING BREAK**

March 14th:

- *Learning to Love Africa* Ch. 1-3, 4, 5, 8

March 16th:

- *Learning to Love Africa* Ch. 12-Epilogue

Topic IV: Perspectives on War in the Sudan

March 21st : Film: **A Great Wonder**

- *They Poured Fire on Us From the Sky* (Part I)

March 23rd : Film: **The Lost Boys of Sudan**

- *They Poured Fire on Us From the Sky* (Parts II and III)

March 28th :

- *They Poured Fire on Us* (Part IV and Epilogue)

Topic V: Perspectives on Ethnic Conflict in Nigeria

March 30th : Film: **Ken Saro Wiwa An African Martyr**

- *In the Shadow of a Saint* Ch. 2, 4, 6, 8

April 4th :

- *In the Shadow of a Saint* Ch. 9-14

Topic VI: Perspectives on Gender and Sexuality

April 6th: Film: **Woubi Cheri**

- *Boy Wives and Female Husbands* (“Male Lesbians and other Queer Notions in Hausa”) and (“West African Homoeroticism”)[online reserve]

April 11th: Film: **Everything Must Come to Light**

April 13th: NO CLASS EASTER WEEKEND

April 18th: Film: **AIDS in South Africa: The Silent Killer**

April 20th:

- Rian Malan “Africa is Not Dying of Aids” [electronic reserve]
- Charles Gesheker. “Outbreak, AIDS, Africa, and the medicalization of Poverty” *Transition* No. 67 (1995): pp 4-14 [electronic reserve]
- Paula Treichler. “Aids Africa and Cultural Theory” *Transition* 51 (1991): pp. 86-103 [electronic reserve]

Topic VII: Africans and African-Americans

April 25th:

- Phillipe Wamba. *Kinship: A Family's Journey in Africa and America* (Ch. 3 and 5) [electronic reserve]
- Dawoud Bey. “Welcome to America.” *Transition* Vol. 8 No. 2 issue 78 [electronic reserve]

April 27th:

- Dympna Ugwu-Oju. *What Will My Mother Say* (“The Undoing of Mama’s Handiwork”) and (“Not Quite American, Not Quite Ibo”) [electronic reserve]
- Monique Maddy. *Learning to Love Africa* (Ch. 10 and 11)

May 2nd: NO CLASS FINAL PAPER DUE

May 4th: Course wrap up-reflection

