

SSA 4930: The African Experience

Section 2145

Spring 2017

T-2-3; R 2

MAT 116

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Course Description

This course presents an opportunity to discover the rich and fascinating tapestry of diverse peoples, societies and cultures in an important and little known continent which shares a long history of relations with the Americas.

The course approach will be highly interdisciplinary. We will discuss issues related to the history, culture, arts, politics, and languages of African peoples, as well as to the socio-economic development of their societies. An important theme of the course will be the diversity of Africa: with 55 recognized states, perhaps 2000 languages (about 1/3 of all the languages spoken by humans today), and a wide variety of cultures and religions, it is hard to generalize about Africa. Yet at the same time, there are important commonalities in “the African experience” (the title of this course). These are rooted in some shared cultural norms, a largely shared history of European colonization, and similar positions in the global political and economic order since independence in the 1960s. This course will examine both the commonalities of the African experience, and its variations.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course you should have:

- Acquired a broad knowledge of the African realities,
- Become aware of the diversity of the African experiences,
- Acquired some basic knowledge of African geography, history, politics, religions, societies and cultures,
- Grasped some of the complexity of African contemporary challenges (socio-economic development, uneven patterns of trade and globalization, HIV/AIDS).

Course Requirements

Your final evaluation is based on the following components (with correspondent points):

- Presence and participation (10 points)
- Assignment 1 & 2 (30 points)
- Reaction Paper 1 & 2 (30 points)
- Final Test (30 points)

Total points will be calculated, and the final grade will be assigned according to the table:

Grade	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	E
Tot pts.	93- 100	90- 92	87- 89	83- 86	80- 82	77- 79	73- 76	70- 72	67- 69	63- 66	60- 62	<60

Information on current UF grading policies for assigning grade points can be found at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>.

- **PRESENCE AND PARTICIPATION:** Attendance is mandatory and will be taken at the start of each class – it is therefore important you arrive in class on time. I will take points off for each class absence, unless appropriate written justification is provided, or the absence is due to one of the “acceptable reasons” as per UF policies (see link below). Participation in class discussions is crucial, and you are expected to actively contribute to debates if you want to obtain full score in this component. Un-respectful class demeanor (e.g. talking and texting during the class, using lap-tops for anything else than taking class notes, and studying for other classes) is NOT TOLERATED. After a first warning, you may be asked to leave the class and your grade will be lowered.
- **ASSIGNMENT:** combination of short essay questions. Topics will be posted on line.
- **REACTION PAPER:** You are required to write one paper (about 3 pages long, typed, double-spaced) comparing elements of the *The Dark Child* and one paper on one African film or an African book.
- **AFRICAN AFFAIRS:** you should regularly follow African news and affairs through media, such as: The Economist (<http://www.economist.com/world/middle-east-africa>); the BBC (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world/africa/>); The New York Times (<http://www.nytimes.com/pages/world/africa/index.html>); Al Jazeera (<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/>) and The Guardian (<http://www.theguardian.com/world/africa/roundup>).
- **FINAL TEST** will be based on all course readings, videos and lectures covered during the semester. It will be a combination of multiple choices, fill-in the blank and short essay questions.

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>.

Make-up policy: Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>. Excuses for missing a class test or deadline for assignments will only be accepted for proven and acceptable reasons. You should give me prior notice whenever possible.

Academic Honesty: UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in

doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor.

Campus Helping Resources

Students experiencing crisis or personal problems that interfere with their general wellbeing are encouraged to utilize the university’s counseling resources. The Counseling and Wellness Center provides confidential counseling services at no cost for currently enrolled students. Contact information: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>, 392-1575.

Other useful contacts are also the University Police Department: 392-1111.

Students with Disabilities Act

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter, which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Do you like courses with African content and you want to know more? Then learn about the many opportunities UF offers to increase your knowledge of Africa:

- The Center for African Studies offers many courses with an African content. You can pick up a free booklet with details from 427 Grinter, and ask for more information.
- Many stimulating opportunities exist, such as Semester and Summer Study Abroad Programs (including the prestigious Lumbardi Program). For more info contact the CAS deputy director Todd Leedy (427 Grinter; email tleeedy@africa.ufl.edu).
- Do you want to meet your foreign language requirement in a different and exciting way? Learn one of several African languages taught by AALL department. For more information contact Dr C. Bwenge at cbwenge@africa.ufl.edu.
- Are you taking, or planning to take, other courses in African Studies? If so, you may qualify for a Minor in African Studies. Make sure you declare it: in the past, some students who qualified, failed to declare it! Dr Leedy will be happy to help you make the process even easier: he will send the form for you!

Reading and other course material:

There is one core textbook for this course:

- Gordon A.A. and Gordon D.L. *Understanding Contemporary Africa*, Lynne Rienner, 5th ed. (henceforth *UCA*)

Plus one required text:

- *The Dark Child: The Autobiography of an African Boy* by Camara Laye (first pub. in 1953)

All other class reading and material (including lecture powerpoints) will be made available on the course website on the UF Canvas system. The course site on Canvas can be accessed through <http://elearning.ufl.edu/> by entering your Gatorlink username and password.

Through this site you can also: read assignment instructions, post your assignments, and

check grades. The videos shown in class are part of the class material on which you may be tested. If you miss a class in which a video is shown, it is your responsibility to borrow and watch the video from the West Library, Reserve class desk.

CLASS SCHEDULE:

Please note: the instructor reserves the right to make minor changes to the following schedule during the semester

You are required to do the relevant reading before each class.

Week 1: Introduction

Jan 5: Course overview

Week 2

Jan 10-12: Introduction to Africa. What do you know about Africa?

- Reading: *UC Africa*, Ch. 1

Week 3: History before independence

Jan 17: Slavery and the pre-colonial period Reading:

UC Africa, Ch. 3 (until “Slave trade” section included)

Jan 19: The colonial period

- Reading: *UC Africa*, Ch. 3 (until the end); Ch. 4 (until “Transfer of Power” section)

Week 3: Resources and Geography

Jan 24: African Geography: Lecture by Prof. Abe Goldman

- Reading: *UC Africa*, Ch. 2

Jan 26: The Map of African states

- Study the Africa map resources posted on Canvas

Week 4: History and Politics after independence

Jan 31: The politics during independence and the early post-colonial period

- Reading: *UC Africa*, Ch. 4 (until the)

Feb 1: The postcolonial period

Assignment 1 due

Week 5: Arts Part I

Feb 7: Visit to the Harn Museum of Art: tour led by Dr Susan Cooksey (TBC)

Feb 9: How to read a classic of African Literature.

- Reading: *The Dark Child* by Camara Laye (Chs 1-6)
- Reading: *UC Africa* Ch. 12

Week 6: Arts Part II

Feb 14-16: How to read a classic of African Literature.

- Reading: *The Dark Child* by Camara Laye (Chs 7-12)

Reaction Paper (text) due

Week 7: Languages

Feb 21: The languages of Africa. Lecture by Dr James Esseygbey (CAS/LLC)

- Reading: *UC Africa* Ch. 10

Feb 23: Sahel Conference

Week 8 Economic development

Feb 28: International relations and development aid. Lecture by Dr Serra Economic

- Reading: *UC Africa* Ch. 5
- Reading: *UC Africa*, Ch. 6
- Browse: www.undp.org/africa; www.worldbank.org/africa

March 1: Development practices

Week 9: Spring Break

Reaction paper (film) 2

Week 10: Health and the Environment

March 14: Lecture by Dr Sarah McKune

- Reading: *UC Africa*, Ch. 7 (228-37) and Ch 5 (130-4)
Health and Environment:) Reading: *UC Africa* Ch. 6 (pp. 221-8)
- Browse www.avert.org/aids-hiv-africa.htm

March 16: War, conflicts and international response.

Week 11: Migrations and Diaspora

March 21: Migration and diaspora Lecture by Dr. Abdoulaye Kane (CAS and Anthropology

- Reading: *UC Africa*, Ch. 9

March 23: Family and kinship

Week 12: Gender/religion

March 28: Religion in Africa: Lecture by Dr Terje Ostebo (Religion and CAS)

March 30: Gender/religion

- Reading: *UC Africa*, Ch. 11

Assignment 2

Week 13: African cultural productions

April 4-6: transformations in African cultural productions

Week 14: Challenges and Opportunities for the continent

April 11: Challenges from urban growth

April 13: Reading: *UC Africa* Ch. 14

Week 15: Conclusions

April 18: Conclusions

Final test