

## **Rwanda: Gender Politics and Women's Rights I**

**AFRS-3000 (3 credits)**  
**Online seminar: (July 13<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup>)**

*This syllabus is representative of a typical semester. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from semester to semester.*

### **Course Description**

Rwanda is currently depicted as a model of quick growth and success in many areas including gender equality. In fact the country leads the world with women holding 61.3% of seats in the lower chamber of national legislature. In 2011, the Royal Commonwealth Society and Plan-UK, a British NGO, in its report published on March 14<sup>th</sup>, ranked Rwanda as the 10<sup>th</sup> best country to be born a girl among 54 commonwealth countries. According to the same report, Rwanda was the 2<sup>nd</sup> country on the African continent after Seychelles. In 2020, Rwanda ranked 9<sup>th</sup> worldwide in the gender gap index between men and women in the four key areas of health, education, economy and politics (World Economic Forum Report on global gender gap index, 2020). This course is all about understanding what these apparently tremendous achievements mean in the everyday life of female citizens of Rwanda. Drawing on critical African women's studies, contemporary feminist theories and theories of social change and social transformation, the course will examine the contemporary political, economic, legal, social as well as cultural reforms that have been influencing Rwanda's gender politics and impacting women's rights in all aspects of life.

This is an online seminar that will be delivered from July 13<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> 2020. Lectures on selected topics will be facilitated by local Rwandan scholars, practitioners and activists who have extensively worked in the field of gender and women's rights. The course aims to enable students to rise above the simplistic explanations of gender equality by discovering some factors that shape the elaboration and successful implementation of gender policy. Through this, they will be equipped with more knowledge and skills to understand gender-related issues in different contexts and be able to propose adequate solutions.

### **Learning Outcomes**

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Critically interpret Rwanda's recent changes in the field of gender equality through the lenses of different feminist theories;

- Outline the Rwandan cultural beliefs and traditions that influence the current pursuit of gender equality in Rwanda;
- Analyze the challenges as well as opportunities offered by the post-genocide context in relation to women empowerment and women's rights in general; and
- Develop a (mini) study project proposal that will be conducted later (in December-January) during the in-country portion of the program.

### **Language of Instruction**

The course will be taught in English. Discussions sessions will be held in English and assigned readings drawn from selected journals and book chapters are also in English.

### **Instructional Methods**

SIT's teaching model is student centered and it is grounded in the experiential learning theory. The program content and the teaching process consider the distinct learning needs, interests, aspirations, as well as the cultural backgrounds of individual students. To accomplish that a wide variety of educational methods, assignments and instructional strategies will be used. Students will be encouraged to fully participate in different scheduled learning activities and through a thorough reflection on that experience, they accept to have their own assumptions and beliefs challenged in order to generate new knowledge, skills and values. The course will be taught via Moodle platform and we assume that students will have a laptop/computer with internet connection to allow communication.

### **Assignments and Evaluation**

#### Assignment Descriptions and Grading Criteria

#### **Assignments description**

##### **1) Weekly reflection paper (30% of grade)**

Students will write three short reflections about what they learn each week. Each reflection paper should be two double-spaced pages in length and should draw from course activities/materials of the week (e.g., lecture, reading, trip, etc.). Reflections will be due at the end of each week and will be submitted electronically to the academic director.

##### **2) Participation (10% of grade)**

Contribution to class discussion, active listening, attentiveness, conduct within the classroom, respect for staff and program resources, time keeping, timely completion of assigned readings, and adherence to program rules.

### *3) Reading presentation and leadership of discussion (20% of grade)*

Summarize the assigned reading(s), identify key arguments or issues that the article raises and, possibly, the assumptions that the author(s) makes, and identify key questions that you note, in ways that will provoke discussion.

### *4) Study project proposal (40%)*

Every student will write a 6-page research proposal, presenting and justifying the need to study a certain research problem related to the course content. The proposal should contain an extensive literature review and detailed methodology with a clear description of the practical ways in which the study should be conducted. It must provide persuasive evidence that a need exists for the proposed study.

## **Grading**

Papers and discussions will be graded on style and form, content, depth of analysis, and understanding of readings, lectures and other course activities as demonstrated by their appropriate incorporation into assignments. Participation will be graded by observing attendance, attitude, preparation, active involvement in class discussions, and culturally appropriate behavior on excursions.

### Grading Scale

94-100%	A
90-93%	A-
87-89%	B+
84-86%	B
80-83%	B-
77-79%	C+
74-76%	C
70-73%	C-
67-69%	D+
64-66%	D
below 64	F

## **SIT Policies and Resources**

Please refer to the [SIT Study Abroad Handbook](#) and the [Policies](#) section of the SIT website for all academic and student affairs policies. Students are accountable for complying with all published policies. Of particular relevance to this course are the policies regarding: academic integrity, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), research and ethics in field study and internships, late assignments, academic status, academic appeals, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and misconduct, and the student code of conduct.

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad Handbook and SIT website for information on important resources and services provided through our central administration in Vermont, such as [Library resources and research support](#), [Disability Services](#), [Counseling Services](#), [Title IX information](#), and [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion](#) resources.

## Course Schedule

*\*Please be aware that topics and excursions may vary to take advantage of any emerging events, to accommodate changes in our lecturers' availability, and to respect any changes that would affect student safety. Students will be notified if this occurs*

### Module 1: Introduction to contemporary African feminist theory, other main theories of change and the Rwandan culture

This first module will introduce students to some theoretical frameworks that can help understand Rwandan cultural beliefs and traditions around gender identity, gender roles and equality between men and women. The module will place Rwanda into global context but will also draw attention to some local particularities. This will lay the foundation to later interpret changes and reforms that have been happening in Rwanda to promote gender equality.

#### Readings:

Ihle A. (2008). A critical discussion of African Feminism as an exponent of Feminist Theory, Munich, GRIN Verlag, <https://www.grin.com/document/123938>

Yaba Amgborable B. (2008). All the "Africans" are men, all the "Sistas" are "American", but some of US Resist: Realizing African Feminism(s) as an Aficological Research Methodology. African Studies & Women's Studies, Lehigh University.

Elaine S. (2001) Talking about feminism in Africa, Agenda, 16:50, 58-63, DOI: [10.1080/10130950.2001.9675993](https://doi.org/10.1080/10130950.2001.9675993)

### Module 2: Gender Aspect of the 1994 Genocide against Tutsis and its aftermath

The events of 1994 genocide against the Tutsi and the civil war that happened in Rwanda between 1990 and 1994 have caused many changes in the life of every Rwandan. This module will look at the history that led to the genocide and a special focus will be put on aspects of gender. The module will also analyze the aftermath of the genocide and its impact on gender roles and women's rights.

#### Readings:

Hintjens, Helen (1999). "Explaining the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda." *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 37, 2, 241-286.

Munro J. (2000). Gender and Peacebuilding. Peacebuilding and Reconstruction Program Initiative. International Development Research Center.

Boutros-Ghali, B. (1992). An Agenda for Peace: Preventative Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peacekeeping, United Nations, New York.

Sandole D.H. & Auerbach C.F (2012). Dissociation and Identity Transformation in Female Survivors of the Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda: A Qualitative Research Study. *Journal of Trauma and Dissociation*. Sperling C. (2006). Mother of Atrocities: Pauline Nyiramasuhuko's Role in the Rwandan Genocide. *Fordham Urban Law Journal*, Vol. 33, p.637.

Hogg N. (2010). Women's participation in the Rwandan genocide: mothers or monsters? *International Review of the Red Cross*. Vol 92, number 877.

Sperling, C. (2006). "Mother of Atrocities: Pauline Nyiramasuhuko's Role in the Rwandan Genocide". *Fordham URB*, Vol XXXIII 637-664

Nkomo S. M. & Ngambi H. (2009) African women in leadership: Current knowledge and a framework for future studies, *International Journal of African Renaissance Studies - Multi-, Inter- and Transdisciplinarity*, 4:1, 49-68, DOI: [10.1080/18186870903102014](https://doi.org/10.1080/18186870903102014)

Burnet J. E. (2008). Gender Balance and the Meanings of Women in Governance in Post-Genocide Rwanda, *African Affairs*, Volume 107, Issue 428, July 2008, Pages 361–386, <https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adn024>

Burnet J.E. (2012). Genocide lives in Us: Women, Memory, and Silence in Rwanda. The University of Wisconsin Press.

Burnet J.E. (2012). Situating Sexual Violence in Rwanda (1990-2001): Sexual Agency, Sexual Consent, and the Political Economy of War. *African Studies Review*. Cambridge University Press.

### **Module 3: Women's rights in Rwanda: Current status**

This module will look at the current status of women's rights in Rwanda. Students will analyze different international and national reports and illustrate the changes that took place in Rwanda in the last two decades. They will also assess the extent to which Rwandan women are benefiting from those changes. Class activities under this module will allow students to identify the gaps that are yet to be filled.

#### **Readings:**

Abbott P. & Mulunda D. (2016). The promise and the Reality: Women's Rights in Rwanda. *African Journal of International and Comparative Law* Edinburgh University Press.

(More reading materials will be assigned)