

South Africa: Politics of Race, Racism, and Social Justice

AFRS-3500 (3 credits)

South Africa: Politics of Race, Racism, and Social Justice

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

This course explores the politics of race and racism in the South African context through engaging with the theoretical and historical constructions of race during colonialism and apartheid and examining their ongoing impact after 1994 on contemporary social life and issues. Using the intersections of not only class and gender, but also space, culture, ethnicity and language, the course seeks to expand on how these have been politicized and mobilized in order to ensure white supremacy and black oppression as well as frame the resistance to these systems. Using a combination of academic literature, documentaries, local experts and contemporary opinion pieces and social media the course seeks to present a complex, multi-layered and rich engagement, foregrounding South African voices. Please note that the subject matter of this course is sensitive and deals with issues of violence. The material is emotional, distressing and for some traumatizing. The course will also provide tools and resources that would assist you with processing.

Learning Outcomes

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

- Describe the ways in which the global colonial project influenced the constructions of race, and how these were reified during apartheid into a racist legal system of white domination and black oppression, and the multiple resistances to these;
- Compare and contrast the constructions and mobilization of race and racism in their structural formulation, and personal impact during colonialism, apartheid and after 1994;
- Illustrate the ways in which this past is present in contemporary social life and social issues pertaining to class, culture, language, ethnicity and space; and
- Apply theoretical and contextual conceptions of race and the politics of racism in the South African context to the development and completion of a secondary research paper on a theme or topic.

Work during the course consists of a combination of direct class contact hours with local staff; small group work; academic reading; documentaries; films and reflection, learning, and synthesizing sessions in written forums and group calls.

Language of Instruction

This course is taught in English, but students will be exposed to vocabulary related to course content as well as the nuances of politics, race, and racism in the South African context.

Instructional Methods

SIT's teaching and learning philosophy are grounded in the experiential learning theory developed by Kolb (1984; 2015) and informed by various scholars, such as Dewey, Piaget, Lewin, among others. Experiential learning theory recognizes that learning is an active process that is not confined to the formal curriculum; "knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 2015, p. 49). Learning involves both content and process. Learning is holistic and happens through various life experiences upon which students draw to generate new ways of knowing and being. Learning involves a community and is a lifelong endeavor. Learning is transformational. The suggested four step-cycle of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation embedded in the experiential learning model is not linear and might not always happen in that specific order, as any learning is highly context-dependent. These stages of taking part in a shared experience; reflecting on that experience by describing and interpreting it; challenging their assumptions and beliefs to generate new knowledge; and ultimately applying new knowledge, awareness, skills, and attitudes in a variety of situations and contexts are important for students to engage in to become empowered lifelong learners.

To this end, we use a variety of methods including guest lectures, in-house lectures, excursions, readings, assignments, and reflection sessions to generate a complex engagement and deeper understanding.

Required Texts

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS. (2019). In Satgar V. (Ed.), *Racism After Apartheid: Challenges for Marxism and Anti-Racism* (pp. ix-X). Johannesburg: Wits University Press. doi:10.18772/22019033061.4

Blakeley, G., & Bryson, V. (2002). Introduction. In Blakeley G. & Bryson V. (Eds.), *Contemporary Political Concepts: A Critical Introduction* (pp. 1-13). LONDON; STERLING, VIRGINIA: Pluto Press. doi:10.2307/j.ctt18fs3n8.4

Hirschmann, D. (1990). The Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 28(1), 1-22. Retrieved April 21, 2020, from www.jstor.org/stable/160899

Posel, D. (2001). Race as Common Sense: Racial Classification in Twentieth Century South Africa. *African Studies Review*, 44(2), 87-113. doi:10.2307/525576

Wilson, A., & Wilson, K. (2002). 'Ethnicity', 'Race' and Racism. In Blakeley G. & Bryson V. (Eds.), *Contemporary Political Concepts: A Critical Introduction* (pp. 126-144). LONDON; STERLING, VIRGINIA: Pluto Press. doi:10.2307/j.ctt18fs3n8.11

Additional readings and articles as assigned.

Assignments and Evaluation

Assignment Descriptions and Grading Criteria

ASSIGNMENT ONE: Student led seminar (20%)

The student led seminars require groups of students to work together to present and facilitate a class seminar based the prescribed readings. Every student will be part of at least one facilitating group during the semester. All students are expected to come to the session having read the prescribed readings, and ready to bring their academic and experiential learning related to the topic to the class discussion. The purpose is not to dissect or critique the readings (and they do have their flaws), but rather to use the readings to assist in contextualizing, learning, making sense of and reflecting on student's experiences (both past, present and future). Readings have been chosen because of the information they convey, as well as an attempt to expose you to a variety of voices, ideologies and approaches (this is one way of exploring the theme of the course). Interesting discussions can be sparked by bringing readings into conversation with each other. Facilitators are encouraged to use creative and facilitative processes to generate group discussions rather than present information.

ASSIGNMENT TWO: Seminar paper (40%)

Reading, thinking, and writing are essential components within education. Critically exploring what others have written on a topic can help to suggest potential frameworks for both understanding what one experiences in the world, as well as interpretations that can be "tested" on your own work later in life. The seminar paper offers you the time and space to explore the professional literature on a topic of your choice relevant to issues of politics, race and racism in South Africa. The seminar paper must be structured along the lines of a standard academic paper – clear introduction, thesis (i.e. central question/argument/area of engagement), engaging and rigorous argument (i.e. you need to use existing literature to answer your central question, refute or support your argument, in other words it requires pulling together relevant pieces of other people's academic work into an academic narrative of your own), insightful conclusions (i.e. has the information you've presented answered your central questions/supported your argument or refuted it/expanded your area of engagement) and recommendations, and consistent APA referencing. The page requirement is approx. 3000 words (about 8-10 pages, 12-point font, double spaced).

ASSIGNMENT THREE: Reflective essay on the course experience (30%)

Using materials presented in this course and your own experience as a participant write a reflective essay. You are required to write about past events and the experiences you got out of them. The main aim of the essay is to help you learn to analyze events that had impacts on you, as well as help draw conclusions about something you took part in. Reflective essays are always thrilling to write, as most of them are associated with repeated emotional experiences. The structure of reflective essays is traditional; your paper should contain an opening paragraph, a main body, and a conclusion. You have the freedom to express what you want to say the way you consider the most appropriate. You also are to analyze your behavior and state how hindsight has made you think about it differently. It is necessary to show how the described experience changed you or made you who you are, be reflexive!!

Participation (10%)

This includes active involvement in lectures, readings, discussions and excursions using the following criteria:

- Attendance - promptness to class and positive presence in class.
- Active Listening - paying attention in class and during virtual excursions, asking appropriate questions, showing interest and enthusiasm (this includes body language), entertaining contradictory perspectives, taking notes.
- Involvement in Class Discussions - either in small or large groups, sharing knowledge. This means challenging yourself to speak up if you usually don't, and also means allowing others to speak if you are a person who tends to dominate class discussions.
- Group Accountability – positive participation in the group during classes and discussions
- Displaying Respect – culturally appropriate interaction with hosts, SIT program staff, SIT lecturers and communities.]

Assessment

Student led seminar – 20 %

Seminar Paper - 40%

Reflection Paper - 30%

Participation - 10%

Attendance and Participation

Due to the nature of SIT Study Abroad programs, and the importance of student and instructor contributions in every class session, attendance at all classes and for all program excursions is required. Criteria for evaluation of student performance include attendance and participation in program activities. Students must fully participate in all program components and courses. Students may not voluntarily opt out of required program activities. Valid reasons for absence – such as illness – must be discussed with the academic director or other designated staff person. Absences impact academic performance may impact grades and could result in dismissal from the program.

Late Assignments

SIT Study Abroad programs integrate traditional classroom lectures and discussion with site virtual visits and debriefs. The curriculum is designed to build on itself and progress to the culmination (projects, ISP, case studies, internship, etc.). It is critical that students complete assignments in a timely manner to continue to benefit from the sequences in assignments, reflections and experiences throughout the program.

Example: Students may request a justified extension for one paper/assignment during the semester. Requests must be made in writing and at least 12 hours before the posted due date and time. If reason for request is accepted, an extension of up to one week may be granted at that time. Any further requests for extensions will not be granted. Students who fail to submit the assignment within the extension period will receive an 'F' for the assignment.

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

Program Expectations

- Attendance: promptness to class, and positive presence in class.
- Active listening: paying attention in class/during virtual excursions, asking appropriate questions, showing interest and enthusiasm, entertaining contradictory perspectives, taking notes.
- Involvement in class discussions: either in small or large groups sharing knowledge and information.
- Group accountability: participates as part of a group during virtual excursions and classes.
- Respect: culturally appropriate interaction with hosts, SIT program staff, SIT lecturers and communities

- Show up prepared. Be on time, have your readings completed, where assigned, and points in mind for discussion or clarification. Complying with these elements raises the level of class discussion for everyone.
- Have assignments completed on schedule and done accordingly to the specified requirements. All the assignments will be evaluated according to the fulfillment of instructions, organization, analytic quality, depth, argumentation, and evidence presentation.
- Ask questions in class, not for the sake of questions or demonstrating your engagement, rather for clarification, to satisfy your curiosity, to expand your understanding.
- Comply with academic integrity policies. No plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical.
- Respect differences of opinion. This includes the opinions of classmates, lecturers, and local constituents that you interact with during visits. You are not expected to agree with everything you hear, but you are expected to listen across difference and consider other perspectives with respect..
- Content Considerations: Some texts and activities you will encounter in this course delve into sensitive topics that may be emotionally and intellectually challenging. Our classroom is a space where we can engage with challenging ideas, question assumptions, and navigate difficult topics with respect and maturity. To the extent possible, we will flag content and activities that are especially graphic or intense, so we are prepared to address them soberly and sensitively. If you are struggling to keep up with the work or participate in the course because of the nature of the content and activities, you should speak with your Academic Director and/or seek help from our counseling services.

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), 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.