Course Syllabus

Peace and Conflict Seminar

PEAC 3000 (6 credits/90 class hours)

SIT Study Abroad Program:
Uganda/Rwanda:
Peace and Conflict Studies in the Lake Victoria Basin

Please Note: This syllabus represents a recent 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, as is often said, is popular for two Gs: gorillas and genocide, and many tourists visit Rwanda for these reasons. Compared to other countries in the region, Uganda has also drawn substantial international attention, initially because of the infamous Idi Amin and recently due to the atrocious attacks by the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) in northern Uganda. In this course we employ Rwanda and Uganda to interrogate the frameworks and assumptions that have shaped the ways in which popular media and the mainstream academy have portrayed and explained the genocide in Rwanda and the violence in Uganda. We use Rwanda and Uganda as lenses through which we critically examine the dominant narratives concerning the genocide in Rwanda and the LRA, the UN system and its institutions and conventions, the contemporary global political and economic order, and the measures currently being implemented in Rwanda and Uganda to resolve and mitigate conflict and its impacts. We use Rwanda and Uganda as unique case studies but, rather than situate each as stand-alone and exceptional, we generate initial insights into the intersection between international political economy and local politics while in Rwanda, and then delve deeper into these issues when we cross to Uganda.

Lectures are given by Ugandan and Rwandan historians, political scientists, and other personalities directly involved with peace and conflict issues in the region. Readings are drawn from history, political science, sociology and anthropology. Psychological experiments shown on video deepen our understandings of the mentality that leads to violence, as do student’s insights and conversations with people in-country. Discussions with peace-related civil society groups and NGOs provide practical and grounded insights, to
enrich your knowledge of conflict dynamics, conflict mitigation and resolution. Weekly reflection sessions synthesize classroom lectures, videos, conversations with local people, and the diverse insights that you will obtain through participant observation and your overall experiences on educational excursions. Weekly meetings, some facilitated by the academic director and others by you with guidance from the academic director, will help us process and synthesize the various issues we encounter, and to place such issues in their historical and contemporary contexts.

The course is built upon the SIT experiential learning model. Everything that you encounter while on the program: what you hear, feel, observe and see during homestays, in public buses, in conversations with local people, in restaurants, etc., is incorporated in classroom discussions. Hence you should expect that we don’t draw a line between academic and non-academic spaces and activities. The course draws heavily on cultural immersion and participant observation.

Learning Outcomes

The Peace and Conflict Seminar has an interdisciplinary, integrative, and critical focus encompassing 90 academic hours (6 credits). The seminar uses the genocide in Rwanda and the violence in northern Uganda as lenses through which complex intra- and extraterritorial processes are teased out and how, historically, these enabled explosive situations of conflict to emerge.

Upon completion of this course, you will be able to:
• Demonstrate knowledge of the complex social and political factors that precipitated genocide in Rwanda and conflict in Uganda;
• Analyze the ways in which processes of reconciliation and conflict are shaped by a complex interaction of local and international dynamics;
• Recognize how meanings of justice and reconciliation are mediated by identity, historical experience and futuristic imaginations;
• Generate a network of professional and personal contacts on which you can rely for future professional development.

Course Requirements

Readings
You are responsible for all required readings and should be prepared to bring them to bear on discussions in class. The readings will help you place the course in context, to challenge and engage lecturers, to generate questions for class discussions and to deepen your knowledge of political conflict causation, mitigation and prevention.

**Module I: Setting the Stage: SIT’s Experiential Learning Model and the Art of Crossing Cultures**

Kohls, Robert. “The Values Americans Live By.”


**Module II: Anatomy of Genocide**
This module focuses closely on two related questions: How can we explain senseless, irrational acts such as the genocide in Rwanda and how may this illuminate the potential of human beings to inflict harm on others? To what extent does regarding the Rwanda Genocide as an exceptional event conceal the relationship between the dynamics that led to the genocide in Rwanda and the dynamics that lead to conflict in the region and the rest of the modern world? To this end, we draw on lectures, site visits, assigned readings, related documentaries and films, and conversations with homestay family members to delve into the complex processes that precipitated the Rwandan genocide. This module provides the foundation upon which we begin to obtain insights into the implications of the social and political institutions of the contemporary modern world and their role in contributing to conflicts in Africa and in other parts of the globe.


Site Visits: Gisozi, Nyamata and Ntarama Genocide memorial sites, Commission for the Fight against Genocide, Community Service for Prisoners-TIG, Institute for Research and Dialogue for Peace (IRDP).

Module III: Contextualizing “development” in post-genocide Rwanda

Rwanda’s reconciliation model has a multiplicity of facets, and aggressive fast-paced development is one of its major ones. In this module we situate Rwanda’s current development model within contemporary development paradigms and examine its implications for the different categories of Rwandan society - both in the immediate and in the long term. We also place Rwanda’s fast-paced transformation within its recent history and examine its implications for resettlement and reconciliation in Rwanda and in the wider Lake Victoria basin.


Chu, J. Rwanda: “A Rising Model of Economic Development.”

Easterly, W. (2006). *The white man’s burden: Why the West’s efforts to aid the rest have done so much ill and so little good.* New York: Penguin Press, Ch. 2.


**Site Visits**: Rwanda Development Board, Millennium Villages Project.

**Module IV: Historicizing Politics in Post-Genocide Rwanda**

Western scholars have been quite critical of political developments in contemporary Rwanda. Building upon the themes that we examined in our discussions in session II, Anatomy of Genocide, we trace the origins of Rwanda’s contemporary political dilemma. Without necessarily discounting the concerns of these western scholars, we critically examine the assumptions and methods that shape both the questions that they pose and the answers that they generate. This module begins to place students on a path that critically examines contemporary frameworks of knowledge production, which shape both the ways in which global responses to global conflict and poverty have been designed, and their implications.


**Site Visit**: Nakivaale Refugee Settlement.

**Module V: States, Ethnicity, and Conflict**
Building upon some of the concepts and themes we developed in modules II and IV, this part of the course transcends popular representations of the causes of contemporary global conflicts and attempts to situate them within the current state system, its apparatuses, and its contribution to constructing “psychologies of violence.” The main thrust of this part of the course forces you to begin to think “outside the box.”


**Module VI: Conflict Prevention: Problematizing Philanthropy and Economic Development**

In the modern West, popular explanations for global conflict tend to associate violent conflict with poverty and income inequality. From this perspective, material donations, driven by a philanthropic intention, and economic development have become a major response to conflict prevention and mitigation. Without discounting the importance of philanthropy in mitigating the impacts of conflict, this part of the course will trace the origins of this mindset and critically examine its consequences both in the sites from which it arise and the sites in which it is implemented. This model further draws upon and elaborates the issues and questions that we pose in module IV, above.


Illich, Ivan. To Hell with Good Intentions. An address by Monsignor Ivan Illich to the Conference on InterAmerican Student Projects (CIASP) in Cuernavaca, Mexico, on April 20, 1968


**Site Visits:** Communities in Gulu, northern Uganda (a primary school, a health center, local government), NGOs: Invisible Children and Justice and Reconciliation Project (JRP).

**PLEASE NOTE:** Course contents, lecturers and readings may be modified as needed. Should change of class topics, readings or lecturers be necessary, students will be notified in advance.

**Evaluation and Grading Criteria**
*(additional information will be provided at program orientation)*
These assignments serve to push you to get further immersed in the local culture and to initiate conversations with local people on the issues about which they are concerned. They serve to help you bring these issues into classroom discussions - further extending our participant observation learning approach. Written papers, arising from these assignments, will be graded on content, depth of analysis/insights and appropriate incorporation of assigned readings and lectures.

Assignments

1. **Current Issues Assignment, Rwanda:** Follow Rwandan news via The New Times and/or Rwanda television for at least one week, and compose a typed, two page, double-spaced, content analysis of the issues in the news. How would you describe the issues in the news? What, broadly, does or doesn’t the news cover? Where is the emphasis? What issue(s) have struck you about the issues in the news? In addition, follow-up with at least two homestay family members and elicit their views about any of the issues that you observe and include their views in your synthesis. (15%)

2. **Current Issues Assignment, Uganda:** Based on conversations with local people (homestay family members, neighbors, lecturers and with any other resourceful persons), select one among the multiple issues that are currently animating Uganda’s attention and write a two page, typed, double-spaced analysis of the issue and how it relates to people’s anticipation of Uganda’s future prospects for peace and stability. Some examples of these issues could include elections, Uganda’s oil discovery, resettlement and recovery efforts in northern Uganda, media restrictions, etc. (15%)

3. **Processing Sessions:** These are student led discussion sessions, about 1 ½ hours long. You should gauge the key issues in the group since the previous processing session and facilitate a discussion around these issues. Examples include group dynamics, cultural adjustment, homestay issues, health and safety, site visits, readings, lectures, etc. It may even be a single issue, if it should be one of much importance within the group. You could use games or activities of the like that you have used before in summer camp or in school. You could break up into smaller groups to facilitate discussion. The choice of what and how you do it is entirely yours. Processing sessions are a safe, open space for students to do what they think is important to the group. (10%)

4. **Participation:** Contribution to class discussion, active listening, attentiveness, conduct within the classroom, conduct within the homestay, respect for staff and program resources, time keeping, timely completion of assigned readings, and adherence to program rules. (20%)

5. **Readings Presentation and Leadership of Discussion:** Summarize the article. Identify key arguments or issues that the article raises and, possibly, the assumptions of the article, as well as the broad implications of the argument(s) that the article is making. Identify key questions that you note, in ways that will provoke discussion. 10%

6. **Reflection Essay:** Keep a detailed journal that notes new information, insights, questions, thoughts, perspectives and emotions over the duration of the program. Using these notes compose a four page typed, double-spaced, essay that evaluates three key broad intellectual lessons that you have learnt regarding the international system (however you choose to define it) or contemporary forms of knowledge production and how it/they shape conflict/genocide causation and prevention and the implications and limitations arising therefrom. You may also list additional questions that, for you, are pending. (30%)

**Grading Scale:** The grading scale for all assignments is as follows:

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

**Grading Criteria**
An “A” grade for an assignment entails superior (not just “very good”) performance in terms of structure and organization of assignments, analysis, logical argumentation and consistency, and the provision of factual, numerical and/or historical evidence. In terms of class participation, an “A” grade refers to full attendance, punctuality, attentive listening and active engagement in all course lectures, discussions, educational excursions and other activities. It also means polite and respectful behavior. The level, frequency, and quality of the students’ participation will be monitored and taken into account.

**Student Expectations**

**Class Participation**
Participation in class refers to attendance, punctuality, attentive listening and active engagement in all lectures, discussions, educational excursions and other activities. It also means polite and respectful behavior.

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad handbook for policies on academic integrity, ethics, warning and probation, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and the academic appeals process. Also, refer to the specific information available in the program dossier given to you at orientation.