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
Narratives and perspectives of Africa are shaped as much by mainstream debates and popular representations as they are by socio-political realities on the continent. Drawing on theories of representation this course brings a critical perspective to how popular images and discourses have represented the social realities in Africa today. The course will connect back to the galvanizing frameworks of imperial and colonial representations and then explore how western imaginations, colonialists and colonization, development discourses, and the popular media have contributed to constructing a space and place called “Africa” and an identity of “Africanness”.

The course draws on visits to sites that Ghanaian society designates as historically and culturally significant, media organizations, government and non-government organizations, to obtain empirical insights into Ghana's social realities. The course exposes students to alternative frameworks for conceptualizing African social realities and equips them with a knowledge base and with new ways to engage with international or “exotic” locations. By interrogating contemporary popular discourses on Africa, how policy and development theory and practice frames and engages with Africa, students obtain new insights and perspective on Africa’s social realities and students’ positionality in relation to them. Students with interests in international careers or international development work should find this course essential to their professional careers.

Learning Outcomes
By the end of the course students should be able to:
- Apply theories of representation to an understanding of the ways in which popular media and development discourses have conceptualized social realities in Africa;
- Account for the discrepancy between popular images and African social realities; and
- Appreciate the historical process through which Africa and “Africanness” has become constructed and the media influences that perpetuate this construction.

The course will introduce students to theories of representation and central debates in the study of contemporary Africa. As we examine dominant frameworks in development debates, students will learn that the way ‘Africa’ is represented shapes the kinds of questions asked and the projects and policies pursued.

**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 economic change and development through in-country expert lectures and field visits in a wide range of venues and regional locales.

**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: Theories of Representation and the Invention of “Africa”**
This module draws on Stuart Hall’s work on representation to introduce students to theories of representation. The module also explores how cultural and historical experiences shape language and ultimately how particular situations are perceived and how they are naturalized. Students discuss assigned readings and practice the activities listed in Stuart Hall’s Chapter, “The Work of Representation”. The second session is intended to build a sensibility, and critical awareness, of the historical processes by which the notion of “Africa” becomes a material reality.

**Session 1: Theories of Representation**

**Required Reading:**
- Watch and discuss: “Representation and the Media (Stuart Hall) Part 1: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LBVYty1Wnvc

**Session 2: The Invention of “Africa”**

**Required Reading:**

**Module 2: Western Imaginations and Their Influences**
This module builds on module 1 to examine imperial ideas and structures of power as critical influences on popular and contemporary perceptions of ‘Africa’ and the meaning of “Africanness”. The module reviews, first, the discursive and material impacts of imperialism and then second, colonization and colonialism and its lasting impacts.

**Session 1: The Imperial Gaze**

**Required Reading:**
Session 2: Colonialists and Colonization

Required Reading:

Module 3: Re-representation and Development Discourses
Emerging from the World War II global order, development discourses have played a central role in shaping Africa as a space for all kinds of “improvement” projects. Drawing on various government and NGO development projects, this module explores and critically examines the projects and associated discourses emerging from them, and the contested meanings of development that emerge from them and their material implications for the construction of “Africaness”.

Session 1: Development Discourses Part I: Development and the Invention of the Third World
Required reading:

Session 2: Development Discourses Part II: Development and the Art of De-politicization
This session draws on local perspectives on development. With support from program staff, students will conduct a focus group with selected residents in rural and urban locations on the broad subject of development and the lack thereof. The academic director uses insights emerging from those discussions for a critical reflection on assigned reading.
Required reading:

Session 4: Development Discourse Part II: Hope and Despair
Module 4: The Media, Popular Images and Representation
In this module students will draw on the ways in which Africa is portrayed in mainstream media and in popular western culture.

Required reading:
Session 1: Conceptual Frame

Session 2: Case Studies:

Module 5: Re-making Ghana: Neoliberalism, the State and Community life
The students will visit the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development in Ghana to explore the history and nature of Ghana’s current development policy and practice, its theoretical underpinnings, its origins and its influences both how Ghanaian perceive themselves and how they are perceived.

Session 1: Africa Rising

Session 2: Market Fixes
Required reading:

Evaluation and Grading Criteria

Description of Assignments:

Assessment:
- Op-ed 25%
- Reading responses 25%
- Final research paper 40%
- Participation 10%

Grading Scale

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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, evidence of having completed assigned readings, attentive listening and active engagement in all lectures, discussions, field visits 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.

Expectations and Policies

Class Participation
Participation in class refers to attendance, punctuality, attentive listening and active engagement in all lectures, discussions, field trips and other activities. It also means polite and respectful behavior. In addition, the following are expectations of all participants:

- **Show up prepared.** Be on time, have your readings completed 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, printed, and done accordingly to the specified requirements.** This will help ensure that your assignments are returned in a timely manner.
• **Ask questions in class. Engage the lecturer.** These are often very busy professionals who are doing us an honor by coming to speak.
• **Comply with academic integrity policies** (no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical).
• **Respect differences of opinion** (classmates’, lecturers, local constituents engaged with on the 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.

**Disability Services:** Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact Disability Services at disabilityservices@sit.edu for information and support in facilitating an accessible educational experience. Additional information regarding SIT Disability Services, including a link to the online request form, can be found on the Disability Services website at http://studyabroad.sit.edu/disabilityservices.

**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 Student Handbook and the Program Dossier given to you at Orientation.