Re-thinking Global Security: Politics and Religious Pluralism in Senegal

INTS 3000 (3 Credits / hours)

SIT Study Abroad Program:
Senegal: Global Security and Religious Pluralism

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
Global insecurity, instigated by rising extremism, is destabilizing our world like never before. The attacks on the US Trade Center on September 11th 2001 epitomize this global insecurity, and since then a debate relating to its causes has raged in the popular media and in the academy. Popular media and the mainstream academy have, to put it rather quickly, framed the rise of this extremism in religious terms: radical Islamic groups are attacking a Christian or a secular west, they claim. Alternatively, critical scholars have offered explanations ranging from deepening global income inequality and social exclusion, to reckless wielding of military power by Western governments. And yet how present and future global leaders respond to the problem of rising global insecurity depends very much on how they define or explain or perceive it.

Senegal provides an excellent context in which one may critically assess the validity of these debates. As one of only a few African states never destabilized by a coup d’état since independence in 1960, Senegal has often been lauded as a model secular, multiparty African democracy. The Senegalese Armed Forces (known as the Jambars, Wolof for “warriors”) have upheld a republican military ideal while Senegalese political passions have been tempered by a tradition of religious tolerance from Senegal’s Sufi Muslim orders, the Catholic Church, and various polytheistic beliefs. How do the practices and perceptions of religion and politics in Senegal complicate or illuminate contemporary debates in global security studies? Why have the cracks in the edifice of the Senegalese nation not broadened into gaping holes threatening the stability of the state? How do the answers to this question change how we think about contemporary popular debates on global terrorism? How do understandings contributed by ethnographic spaces inform plausible remedies to rising extremism?

This seminar explores these questions through site activities, field research with state and non-state actors, cultural and religious institutions in Senegal and assigned readings, complementing these with
classroom based discussions. The seminar employs a creative synthesis of cross-disciplinary literature framed within major debates in security studies and ethnographic data emerging from students’ cultural immersion in Senegal.

**Learning Outcomes**

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Assess the strengths and limitations of mainstream narratives on global security and terrorism;
- Explain how institutions of the nation state and religious orders may forge relations that foster stability in highly plural contexts; and
- Explain how Senegal’s Sufi Muslim orders, the Catholic Church, and polytheistic religions have contributed to the formation of the Senegalese nation and its political stability over time.

**Language of Instruction**

This course is taught primarily in English, but some readings are in French. Thus, the ability to read French is required.

**Required Books**

The following books are required for this course:


All other readings will be provided by the instructor.

**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.*

Students are expected to have completed the readings listed below for each session. It is recommended, but not required, that students complete the required readings in the order listed.

**Module 1: The contemporary global security challenge: mapping the contours of the debate**

This module introduces students to contemporary global security challenges and the terms within which these global security challenges have been framed. Students explore security challenges in the post-Cold War context of West Africa’s civil wars, and employ structured assignments in Dakar City and in homestay to explore the multiplicities and deepen their understanding of contested meanings of terrorism and global security.

**Required Reading:**


Watch Barack Obama Speech in Egypt: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B_889oBKkNU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B_889oBKkNU)

Watch George Bush Speech to Congress: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0wPuY5hl96U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0wPuY5hl96U)
Module 2: Religious pluralism and politics
This module introduces the student to the diversity of Senegalese religious identities and their role in shaping contemporary Senegalese politics. Typically portrayed as a nation with a population more than 90% Muslim, Christianity and polytheism have also played influential roles in Senegalese society. This module investigates the contours of those influences while considering how Senegalese have used religion to negotiate their daily lives in particular socio-economic contexts.

Session 1: Islam in Senegal, Part I: An Introduction
This session focuses on the practice of Islam in Senegal, providing basic introduction to Senegal’s various Sufi orders. The session draws upon site visits to the Grand Mosque of Dakar, the Mosque of the Divinity near Ouakam, and the Layenne Shrine in Yoff (Layenniya).

Required Reading:


Session 2: Islam in Senegal, Part II: Islam and Senegalese Secularism
Complemented by trips to mosques and conversations with religious leaders in Tivaouane (the Tijaniyya) and Touba (the Muridiyya) this session examines Senegalese Islamic practice in the context of Senegal’s traditional secular republicanism.

Required Reading:


Session 3: Christianity in Senegal
This session examines the development and the practice of Christianity in Senegal, and how Senegalese Christians interpret their minority identity and their relations with Islam. The session draws upon site visits to and interviews with religious leaders in Joal-Fadiouth Island, where animists, Catholics, and Muslims practice their traditions in harmony. Following this visit the course then employs ethnographic data in a Christian dominated homestay in the Casamance region to further delve into religion and the practice of politics in Senegal.

Required Reading:


Session 4: The Persistence of Polytheism in Senegal
In spite of the spread of “world religions” like Islam and Christianity across Senegal over the last two centuries, “traditional” polytheistic beliefs still hold large sway in many parts of Senegal. How have
Senegalese learned to use and/or combine these beliefs? What does the persistence of polytheism reveal about the binary ways in which mainstream discourses portray religious pluralism?

**Required Reading:**


**Module 3: National security context**
Building upon a deep understanding of plurality of religious practice in module 2, this module asks: What is the relationship between the security apparatus of the state and religious pluralism in Senegal? How does the security apparatus navigate these pluralities? This module draws upon a critical examination of the Senegalese Ministry of the Armed Forces, which provides the administrative and strategic oversight to the Senegalese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Gendarmerie Nationale (GN), how it has historically evolved its effectiveness in protecting Senegal national security.

**Session 1: The Senegalese Armed Forces (SAF)**
What roles have these security institutions played in enhancing security? Students visit Camp Dial Diop, the SAF Headquarters (“the Senegalese Pentagon”) in Dakar for a briefing on the mission, organization, training, and education of the Senegalese Armed Forces (SAF) and a contemporary on the security threats and how they are mitigated.

**Required Reading:**

**Session 2: The Gendarmerie Nationale (National Police)**
This session examines the historical development of the Senegalese Gendarmerie Nationale and its role in Senegalese society.

**Required Reading:**


**Session 3: Senegalese Intelligence**
This session examines the historical development of the Senegalese intelligence services and their effect on Senegalese security and national cohesion, followed by visit to the Délégation générale au Renseignement national (DGRN) at the Palais Présidentiel in Dakar.

**Required Reading:**
Module 4: Regional security and Senegalese religious pluralism

Sitting astride the Sahel and the Guinean forest zone, Senegal’s regional security interests often overlap and commingle. This module examines how Senegalese policymakers have unraveled and defined these interests over time, the terms with which they are defined and why.

Session 1: The Sahel

This session examines Senegal’s relations with its regional and international partners in West Africa’s Sahel region. It also considers the impact of foreign intervention in recent conflicts and security challenges.

Required Reading:

Session 2: The Sufi Orders in Morocco: A comparative study

Drawing upon a comparative excursion to Morocco, this session examines the religious and political relations between Morocco’s and Senegal’s Sufi orders, and how their histories shaped the relations between religion and politics.

Required Reading:
Al-Tagi, Mohammad (2013). "Despite His 'Absence,' Moroccan King Maintains Total Authority". Al-Monitor

Session 3: West Africa’s Post-Cold War Civil Wars

This session examines the role of Senegal in regional civil wars such as those in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea-Bissau. Instructor leads discussion of required reading.

Required Reading:
Module 5: International security and Senegalese religious pluralism
This module considers Senegal’s role in the international community as a partner against transnational terrorist networks. How, comparatively does Senegalese plural religious identities define and perceive their roles in international security concerns and responses? What accounts for the unanimity or differences in interpretation of the challenges posed by the contemporary global security context? What has Senegal brought to the table and how has Senegalese society been affected by international counter terrorism operations?

Session 1: Counter-Terrorism operations
This session examines Senegal’s role in regional and international counter-terrorism efforts, especially its participation in the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) to counter the activities of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). This modules includes a security brief from the US embassy Regional Security Officer on national and international security concerns in the region. Where do the security interests of Senegal and the international community coincide? Where do they diverge? Why?

Required Reading:


Session 2: Keeping the Peace: Senegalese Peacekeeping Operations (PKO)
Senegal has been a key player in United Nations, African Union and ECOWAS peace keeping missions in Mali, CONG, Angola, Rwanda, Uganda and several other countries in the region. What ethos, ethics and interests drive Senegalese peace keeping missions? What explains their success or failure and what insights can we draw for this model of peace keeping?

Required Reading:


Evaluation and Grading Criteria
Assignments (assignment mechanics and expectations will be provided at the beginning of the course):

- Local perspectives on global security 25%
- Reflection paper on visits to mosques 25%
- Comprehensive take home essay 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.