Social Pluralism and Minorities
AFRS-3000 (3 Credits / 45 class hours)

SIT Study Abroad Program:
Cameroon: Social Pluralism and Development

Course Description
The Social Pluralism and Minorities course is an interdisciplinary course taught predominantly in French that explores Cameroon’s complex social history and post-colonial national identities in one of the most ethnically and geographically diverse countries on the continent. In addition to lectures and discussions, the course integrates multiple learning methods including required readings, excursions to relevant sites, group discussions and processing sessions, participatory workshops, student presentations and independent or self-structured learning. Students also participate in urban and rural homestays in different parts of Cameroon. These experiences provide not only an opportunity for cross-cultural understanding, but also provide students with a cross-section of experiences to draw on when critically thinking about the politics of identity based on gender, ethnicity, language or regional factors in the face of national integration rhetoric in post-colonial Cameroon. This course similarly engages students with Cameroon’s broad religious, cultural and aesthetic-symbolic expressions that provide not only insight to the importance of social and cultural development in local or national contexts, but also serve to deepen understanding and appreciation for the diversity and complexity of Cameroonian culture and society.

Course Objectives
Social Pluralism and Minorities has an interdisciplinary and critical focus encompassing 45 academic hours (3 credits). Its main objectives:
- To provide students with foundational understanding of Cameroon’s ethnic, geographic and cultural diversity;
- To broaden students’ understanding of development issues to include artistic, cultural and social dimensions;
- To expose students to identity discourses in Cameroonian social and political circles;
- To critically examine issues of identity, belonging, and ethnicity in light of post-colonial literature in Africa;
- To introduce students to a broad spectrum of religious and cultural expressions in multiple spaces and locations, in both traditional and contemporary contexts.

*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.

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Expected Outcomes
By the end of the course, students should have attained the following:

- The capacity to understand and speak critically on the politics of identity formation in the context of Cameroon;
- The ability to identify core features of Cameroon’s cultural landscape and artistic expressions;
- Breadth of knowledge of Cameroonian regional and ethnic diversity with the capacity to draw on personal experiences and observations when asked to demonstrate understanding;
- The ability to link and assess course materials with personal observations and experiences from around the country to issues of cultural and social development in Cameroon.

Course Requirements

Readings
You are responsible for all the required readings, and should be prepared to bring them to bear on discussions in class. The readings will help you place the classes in their context, to challenge and engage lecturers, to generate questions for class discussions and to deepen your knowledge of particular aspects discussed in class. They are not necessarily tailor-made for each and every class.

Selected Readings


PLEASE NOTE: COURSE CONTENTS, LECTURERS AND READINGS MAY BE MODIFIED AS NEEDED. SHOULD ANY CHANGE OF CLASS TOPICS OR LECTURERS BE NECESSARY, STUDENTS WILL BE PROMPTLY NOTIFIED.

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Evaluation and Grading Criteria

Social Pluralism and Minorities Assignments
Timely completion of all assignments is expected and students can submit assignments in either English or French. Late hand-ins will be penalized. All assignments are evaluated according to organization, analytical quality, depth of understanding, argumentation, presentation of evidence, proper citation and clear formatting.

Thematic Discussion  10%
Article Review Assignment  30%
Analytic Paper  50%
General Participation  10%
Total:  100%

Article Review Assignment: The first step of this assignment is to pick a topic related to the theme of “social pluralism and minorities” that interests you, and select an article in that topic area from the reading package assigned to you. The topic can be either specific or general, but it must relate in some way to lectures we have in this class. Students may want to check out a few articles on a topic and compare them before making a final selection. After reading the article, the paper should begin by discussing the author’s thesis or main argument and describing interesting cases that support their thesis. The second half of the review should critically analyze the article by describing the relationship between its findings and concepts, and issues examined in this course. Finally, you should include a section discussing whether or not the author convinces you of their argument, and why you feel so.

Analytic Paper: With the aim of integrating course materials and components including in-class lectures, field visits, class discussions, or relevant readings, students are to explore and develop a topic of their own choosing but related to one of the themes covered in the course. Topics areas can include religion, gender, ethnic or regional identity, minority status, political discourses, nationalism, etc. With the support of the academic director, students choose their topics after orientation and compile their data for presentation in the form of an 8-10 page paper before embarking on the independent Study Project (ISP). In addition to the resources listed above, students must also integrate into their write-up data obtained from 3 interviews (could be from homestay families, support staff, lecturers, resource people, etc.), data from 3 media sources (radio, television, newspapers, etc.) as well as scholarly sources from books or periodicals.

Grading Scale: The grading scale for all classes 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
All grades assigned will take into account the students’ special circumstances and challenges they face as foreign students. An “A” grade for an assignment entails superior (not just “very good”) performance in terms of structure and organization of assignments, analysis, logical

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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 Academic Seminar lectures, discussions, field trips 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.

*All written assignments should be typed unless permission is given otherwise by the Academic Director.

Program Calendar

Seminar Topics Include

**Forces of Power, Islam and Culture in the Grand North**
- Islam and cultural mutations
- Lamidat, (Would traditional forms of power disappear in the face of modernization and Islamization?)
- Marabout traditional doctors (interference between traditional culture and Islam)
- “Traditional” (Marabout) vs. “modern” medicine
- The impact of the visual arts, media and artifacts on Northern culture
- Chadian immigration and changing dynamics in the city of Ngaoundéré

**Bamilékés**
- A look at the Bamilékés history
- Bamilékés symbols and customs
- Chieftaincies, Elites and the State (power sharing)

**Women and Minorities**
- Traditional gender roles
- Evolving and contemporary gender roles
- Generational perceptions of women’s roles
- Bakola – Bagyeli (Pygmies) culture
- Bakola- Bagyeli and integration in the state
- Being an Anglophone in Cameroon
- The “Anglophone problem”
- Anglophones and their participation in national politics

**Field Visits, Workshops and Educational Excursions**
The following is a sample of the activities students will participate in:

- Some of the thematic topics will be presented in workshop formats, such as traditional dances and the Cameroonian/African film series. Participation in workshops, discussions and lecture sessions are required.
- Groups of students will be assigned to lead discussions in order to link and synthesize course content based the readings, lectures, site visits and discussions of a specific theme. Using these assignments as a base, students will participate in a half-day roundtable discussion with Cameroonian students and program collaborators in Ngaoundéré.
- Western Region – Dschang. Students will engage with one of Cameroon’s rich traditional cultures: the Bamiléké. We will visit a Bamiléké chief’s palace, experiencing rural community life through staying with local families and make an excursion to a sacred waterfall.

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• North-West Region – Bamenda. Students will come to appreciate the challenges of the minority English speaking region of Cameroon, and will have the opportunity to have a seminar with the leader of a major political party.
• South Region – Kribi. Students will be exposed to Pygmy culture and the social effects of the Chad/Cameroon Oil Pipeline on the Pygmies.
• The Adamaoua Region - Ngaoundéré. Student will participate in workshops at COREDEC research institute, homestays, a session with a Muslim traditional doctor, and a session with the Lamidat; 
• The Far North and North Regions - Maroua, Garoua. Students will visit Maroua, Rhumsiki or the Waza National Park.

Student Expectations

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

PLEASE NOTE: All classes leave ¼ of the scheduled time for the purpose of class discussion of the lecture and/or readings

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.