

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

INTS 3000 (3 Credits / 45 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

The discussion on global security, alongside the discussion on development, has been traditionally dominated by Western hegemonic discourse aimed at the Global South, particularly through the discipline of international relations, influenced by policies of international governmental bodies as well as NGOs. In the wake of the September 11th attacks, this discourse has refocused on the role of interreligious conflict, religious extremism, and terrorism in places such as the Middle East and Africa. This seminar intends to challenge the very basis of such discourse, particularly in Africa, that leads to what Mudimbe calls the invention of Africa. This invention involves universalizing Western-centric interpretations of regional situations, which are much more complex and local. The readings, lectures, discussions, and site activities for this course will not only challenge the interpretative status quo of international relations, but will also offer new, decolonial interpretations of religious beliefs and practices, a more vigorous understanding of religious pluralism, and a localized debate on the center/periphery from the perspective of the Global South.

To prepare for the discussion of decolonizing global security, we will examine the role of religion in Africa. More specifically, we will focus on the three major belief systems that sustain the diverse religious practices in Senegal: indigenous religion/s, Islam, and Christianity from the perspective of local beliefs, practices, and knowledge. Most importantly, we will examine adaptations of religions within their regional context, their ecumenical potential, as well as their pursuit of a higher, spiritual knowledge. How does a more comprehensive and interrelated understanding of religious institutions in Senegal, including their beliefs, practices, and knowledge challenge the Western-centric notions of global security in the discipline of international relations? How does a more localized knowledge of Islam change the discourse on

religious extremism and terrorism? How does a deeper engagement of the notions of the center and the periphery, inform the concept of development from the perspective of the global south?

Learning Outcomes

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

- Identify Western hegemonic discourse that influences the mainstream narratives on Global Security in International relations;
- Understand how Senegal's Sufi Muslim orders, the Catholic Church, and indigenous religion/s adapt, converge, and pursue higher, spiritual knowledge; and
- Think in a decolonial manner on issues in international relations, such as global security or development.

Language of instruction

This course is taught in English, but some visiting lectures may happen in French. Based on the level of French of students, these lectures may be translated.

Required Readings:

Most readings will be provided by the instructor. The following book is required for this course:

Ocot p'Bitek (2011). *Decolonizing African Religion: A Short History of African Religions in Western Scholarship*. New York: Diasporic Africa Press.

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.

Module I: Decolonial Thinking: Engaging African Religion and International Relations

This module introduces students to decolonial discourses on African religion and global security within the discipline of international relations. Students will examine the critique of Western-centric, hegemonic paradigms that dominate the discussion on topics such as African religion and global security.

Session 1: African Religion and International Relations

Required Readings:

Ocot p'Bitek (2011). *Decolonizing African Religion: A Short History of African Religions in Western Scholarship*. New York: Diasporic Africa Press.

Karen Tucker (2018). "Unraveling Coloniality in International Relations: Knowledge, Relationality, and Strategies for Engagement." <https://academic.oup.com/ips/advance-article/doi/10.1093/ips/oly005/5025555>

Module 2: African Religions and Practice in Senegal

This module develops the context of three main religious practices in Senegal: indigenous religion/s, Islam, and Christianity. It provides the background to the Sereer, Fulani, and Bamana indigenous religions and the acclimatization of Islam and Catholicism in the country. It introduces a deeper understanding of each given religious practice, either through spiritual knowledge of a given religion, their adaptation to the cultural context, or contemporary applications.

Session 1: Indigenous Religion beyond the Western Gaze

Required Readings:

Leopold Sedar Senghor (1962). "On Negrohood: Psychology of the African Negro." In *Diogenes* 10: 37, 1-15.

Amadou Hampaté Bâ, "Notion of the Person," "Relation between the human being and God." In

Aspects de la civilisation africaine: personne, culture, religion. Paris: Présence africaine, 2008. (translated excerpts)

Amadou Hampaté Bâ (1981). "The Living Tradition." In *General history of Africa / UNESCO.* London: Heinemann, 166-172.

Statement on the mission of Promettra: <http://prometra.org/about/what-we-do/promettras-president/>

Session 2: The Africanization of Islam and its Sufi Dimension

Required Readings:

David Robinson (2004). "The Africanization of Islam." *Muslim Societies in African History.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 42-59.

Rüdiger Seesemann. "Spiritual Training: The Way to Mystical Knowledge." In *Ibrahim Niassé and the Roots of a Twentieth-Century Sufi Revival,* New York: Oxford University Press: 67-109.

Article on Sufi brotherhoods and power: <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/142651/politique/s-n-gal-marabout-power-ou-l-influence-des-confrairies/>

Session 3: The Adaptations of Christianity to Local Practices and Vice Versa

Required Readings:

Elizabeth Foster (2012). "A Mission in Transition: Race, Politics, and the Decolonization of the Catholic Church in Senegal." In Owen White and J.P. Daughton eds. *In God's Empire: French Missionaries and the Modern World.* New York: Oxford University Press, 257-273.

Robert M. Baum. (1990). The Emergence of a Diola Christianity. *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute,* 60(3), 370–398.

Interview with Abbé Jacques Seck: <https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/interviews/a-discussion-with-abbe-jacques-seck-vicar-general-and-curate-of-dakar-cathedral-retired>

Module 3: The Critique of Global Security in Senegal and Beyond

Senegal is a majority-Muslim society whose citizens largely live peacefully within the framework of a secular state, practice religious tolerance, and have historically eschewed violent extremism. The main security challenge at the domestic level is associated with the ongoing conflict in the Casamance region which reveals the crisis of the link between the center and periphery. This module examines Senegal's relations with its immediate neighbors in relation to the conflict in Casamance. It also discusses how Senegal has consistently promoted its moderate brand of Islam in response to the global consensus in the fight against terrorism and violent extremism. The module asks how Senegalese society has been affected by international counter terrorism and violent extremism campaigns.

Session 1: Senegal and Religious Pluralism

Required Readings:

Sheldon Gellar (1995). *Senegal: An African Nation between Islam and the West*. Boulder: Westview Press.

Mamadou Diouf (2013). Introduction: The Public Role of "Good Islam": Sufi Islam and the Administration of Pluralism. In M. Diouf (Ed.), *Tolerance, Democracy, and Sufis in Senegal* (pp. 1-24). New York: Columbia University Press.

Session 2: Senegal: The Center and the Periphery

Required Readings:

Mamadou Diouf (2004). Between Ethnic Memories & Colonial History in Senegal: The MFDC & the Struggle for Independence in Casamance. In B. Berman, W. Kymlicka, & D. Eyoh (Eds.), *Ethnicity and Democracy in Africa* (pp. 218-239). Boydell & Brewer.

Vincent Foucher (2013). "Wade's Senegal and its Relations with Guinea-Bissau: Brother, Patron or Regional Hegemon?" South African Institute for International Affairs Occasional Paper 102.

Session 3: Decolonizing Global Security: The Role of Islam in Senegal

Required Readings:

Mamadou Bodian and Catherine Lena Kelly (2018). "Senegalese Foreign Policy: Leadership Through Soft Power from Senghor to Sall." In Jason Warner and Tim Shaw (Eds.), *African Foreign Policies in International Institutions* (pp. 327-351). Palgrave-Macmillan, Eunice Sahle (University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill).

Alexander Thurston (2009). "Why is Militant Islam a Weak Phenomenon in Senegal?" https://buffett.northwestern.edu/documents/working-papers/ISITA_09-005_Thurston.pdf

Article on the trial of 31 alleged Jihadists in Senegal: <https://www.voanews.com/a/trials-in-senegal-expose-possible-terror-sleeper-cells/4465299.html>

Evaluation and Grading Criteria

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

Presentations	25%
Reflection papers	25%
Essay	25%
Participation	25%

Grading Scale

94-100%	A Excellent
90-93%	A-
87-89%	B+
84-86%	B Above Average
80-83%	B-
77-79%	C+
74-76%	C Average
70-73%	C-
67-69%	D+
64-66%	D Below Average
Below 64	F Fail

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.

Course Requirements

Presentations

Students are expected to do at least one presentation on the assigned readings during class. Presentations should include: 1) reflection on the main theme from the reading, 2) your point of view, 3) comparison to current realities, and 4) one question to the class that would initiate discussion. The presentations should take about 15 minutes.

Reflection Papers

Students are also expected to write a short reflection paper connecting their readings to the site visits or weekend trips for that week. Each reflection paper should include a discussion of the main argument from the reading, a development of your point of view, and connection to

field activities. The papers should be the length of three, double-spaced pages. The reflection papers are due on the date specified by the schedule.

Essay

A final, 5-page paper will be due at the end of the semester. More details about the structure of the paper will be provided before the due date.

Class Participation

Participation in class refers to attendance, punctuality, attentive listening and active engagement in all lectures, discussions, written questions for class, 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.

Policies

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.