

Rethinking Africa and the African Diaspora

AFRS 3500 (3 Credits)

Senegal: Hip Hop, African Diaspora and Decolonial Futures

Course Description

The goal of this course is to provide a deeper understanding of the Idea of “Africa” and the African diaspora from a decolonial perspective. Students will, through an experiential engagement with the intellectual, social, and political characteristics of everyday life in Senegal, Ghana, and the U.S., carefully engage dominant narratives about people of African descent to critique colonial interpretations of Africa and move toward a consciousness that decolonizes the “idea of Africa” and the African diaspora. Further, this course attempts to evaluate the way this critical and experiential engagement with mainstream understandings of the meaning of “Africa” is essential to the decolonial futures of people of African descent. The course will therefore have three major concentrations: 1) We will trace the hegemonic discourses and practices rooted in the colonial matrix of power that have, since the 14th century, participated in the invention of “Africa” and the dehumanization of people of African descent; 2) We will revisit the competing anti-colonial discourses and political practices that have questioned the colonial matrix of power. Focus will be given to how these engagements do not succeed in completely delinking from the modern paradigm, and therefore continue to participate in another re-invention of “Africa” that still places African descended cultures and peoples at the periphery of knowledge production; 3) We will finally engage the often silenced, yet nonetheless articulated decolonial voices and creolized cultures that allow for a more Afri-centered understanding of people of African descent’s presence in the world. The analysis of these three major ways of understanding “Africa” and African descended peoples will be done in light of students’ everyday experiences in the U.S., in Senegal, and in Ghana thereby allowing us to determine what “Africa” and the “African diaspora” mean to us rather than what they *are*. We will insist on the ways observed practices in host families, places of worship, artist workshops, modes of entertainment, markets, political spheres, and workplaces, etc., expose the way the above mentioned discourses on “Africa” have participated in our own conceptions of, and relation with, afro-descendants and how engaging these discourses and practices, in light of our experiences, can prepare us to not only

reconceptualize the pluriversality of the continent but also re-imagine African descended peoples' futures in decolonial terms.

Learning Outcomes:

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

- Articulate the invented nature of all cultural communities;
- Problematize the concept of diaspora;
- Explain the archeology of the concept of Africa and the African diaspora from a social, political, and economic perspective;
- Demonstrate the complexity of African descended cultures and their pluriversality;
- Explain how experiential learning gives one an understanding of reality that may be impossible to grasp theoretically; and
- Appraise the necessity of a decolonial narrative on the place of Africa and African descended cultures and peoples in the global scene.

Language and Methods of Instruction This course is taught in English, but students will be exposed to local vocabularies related to course content through in-country expert lectures, field assignments, and activities. Assigned and recommended readings are listed in the course schedule section below. Students are responsible for all the required readings and should be prepared to bring them to bear in class discussions. Students may submit assignments in either English or French and are expected to complete all assignments by their due dates.

Topics covered in each lecture will draw on site visits, guest lecturers, and other activities, in addition to the assigned readings. Each country will involve a series of classes structured around the key lines of inquiry outlined in the course overview. The order of the lectures may be rearranged to respond to activities or opportunities presented in each location.

Module 1: The Invention of Africa

This Module will trace the hegemonic discourses and practices rooted in the colonial matrix of power that have, since the 14th century, participated in the invention of “Africa” and “Latin” America and the dehumanization of people of African descent. We will consider Africa as an imagined, yet not imaginary, place the genealogy of which is rooted in European imagination of their subliminal self. We will therefore mainly insist on Mudimbe’s critique of the invention of Africa. This theoretical engagement with the invention of Africa will be sustained by critical observations of everyday life in Senegalese communities, especially in Dakar. We will insist on the ways this invention is performed daily in markets, art productions, and political stands, etc.

Week 2, Session 1, Monday 2/3/20

Ideologies of Otherness

Required readings:

Walsh, Catherine (2007) "Shifting the Geopolitics of Critical Knowledge" *Cultural Studies*, 21, 2: 224-239

Mignolo, W. D. (2007), "Delinking the rhetoric of modernity, the logic of coloniality and the grammar of decoloniality". *Cultural Studies* (2-3), 449-514

Recommended readings:

Mudimbe, V. Y. (1994). *The Idea of Africa*. Indiana: Indiana University Press

Rodney, W. (1970). *A History of the Upper Guinea Coast, 1545-1800* (pp. 1-38). Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Mignolo, Walter D (2005) *The Idea of Latin America*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing

Quijano, A. (2000) "The Coloniality of Power and Eurocentrism in Latin America" *International Sociology* Vol. 15, Issue 2: 215-232

Mudimbe, V. Y. (1988). *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge*. Indiana: Indiana University Press. Chapter 1. Pp.24-43 and conclusion p.187-200

Week 3, Session 2, Monday 2/10/20

Orientalizing the Female Other

Guest: Dr Sarah Zimmerman, Washington University

Dr Zimmerman will be talking about the waves of feminism and intersectionality. She would suggest orienting students towards thinking the production of knowledge concerning gender in a globalizing world. Oyewumi certainly fixes our attention to the British colonial period in Yorubaland, but there are also other things to consider. She will encourage students to think about where gender sits within multifaceted identities and who has the power to define and refine gender expression.

Required readings:

Oyewumi, Oyeronké, (1997) *The Invention of Women*, University of Minnesota Press

Chap. 4 "Colonizing Bodies and Minds: Gender and Colonialism" pp: 123-15

Mohanty, C. T. (2003) "Under Western Eyes' Revisited: Feminist Solidarity Through Anticapitalist Struggles" *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, Vol. 28 No. 2: 499-535

Recommended readings:

Said, Edward (1978). *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books

Mazrui, Ali A. (2005) "The Re-invention of Africa: Edward Said, V. Y. Mudimbe And Beyond" *Research in African Literatures* Vol. 30, No. 3: 68-82

Hasan, Muhmudul Md. (2005) "The Orientalization of Gender" *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* , Vol. 22, No. 4: 27-56

Module 2: The Invention of Diaspora

This module will investigate the discourses, practices, and relations that have shaped Diasporic identities and communities outside of the African continent in the past 600 years. Building on the precedent module, students will evaluate the ways the idea of Diaspora has evolved in response to the invention of Africa and African descended peoples. Students will also investigate the ways the Diaspora helps to reconfigure new spaces of development of Africanness in such a way that they shape contemporary African cultures in the domains of arts, music, fashion, and even religion and politics.

Week 4, session 3, Monday 2/17/20

Of Diaspora and transnationalism

Required readings:

Hall, S. (1994). "Cultural identity and diaspora." Williams, Patrick and Laura Chrisman, Ed. *Colonial discourse and post-colonial theory: a reader*. pp. 227-237, London: Harvester

Bruneau, M. (2010) "Diaspora, Transnational Spaces and Communities" Rainer Baudock and Thomas Faist (eds.) *Diaspora and Transnationalism: Concepts, Theories and Methods*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, pp: 35-49

Recommended readings:

Ndhlovu, F. (2016) "A decolonial critique of diaspora identity theories and the notion of superdiversity" *Diaspora Studies*, Volume 9, Issue 1

Weik, T. (2004) "Archaeology of the African Diaspora in Latin America" *Historical Archaeology* Vol .38, Issue 1: 32-49

Butler, K. (2001). "Defining Diaspora: Refining a Discourse." *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*. (2-2), 189-219.

Module 3: The experience of Africa and its Diaspora

The third module will revisit the competing anti-colonial discourses and political practices that have questioned the colonial matrix of power and investigate the ways students' experiences in Senegal and Ghana affect their understandings of the continuities and discontinuities between Africa and the so-called Diaspora. Focus will be given to the limits of the possibility to "delink" from the pervasiveness of "white supremacy" as a system that constantly reiterates the marginalization of African descended peoples.

Week 5, session 4, Monday 2/24/20

Guest Lecturer: Dr. Adja Gueye, English Literature, Université de Thies

Dr Gueye is going to talk about nationalism, nation-building at the service of the people to fight against discrimination or inequality. Invoking Marxism, she will analyze the relations of the national bourgeoisie and the disposable downtrodden masses who are given the leftovers of the nation's wealth. She will invoke Frantz Fanon's political philosophy to highlight these African (diasporic) conditions, not only in Africa, but in the Caribbean as well.

Required readings:

Sefa Dei, George J. (2012) "Reclaiming our Africanness in the Diasporized Context:

The Challenge of Asserting a Critical African Personality" *Journal of Pan African Studies* Vol. 4, No. 10: 42-57

Blackey, R. (1974) "Fanon and Cabral: A Contrast in Theories of Revolutions for Africa" *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 12, 2: 191-209

Recommended readings:

Appiah, A. (1993). *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

McKay, C. (1931). *Banjo: A Story without a Plot*. Paris: Rieder

Kane, C. (1972). *The Ambiguous Adventure*. New York: Heinemann.

Module 4: Decolonial Futures or Creolized Presents?

We will finally engage the often silenced, yet nonetheless articulated decolonial voices and creolized cultures that allow for a more Afri-centered understanding of people of African descent's presence in the world. In this module, we will, in light of the first three

modules, investigate the ways both continental and diasporic African communities negotiate their presence in modernity and engage with globalization. Particular attention will be reserved to the early colonial causes of globalization and the contemporary epistemic, social, and economic effects of neo-liberal policies and politics on local cultures.

Week 7, session 5, Monday 3/9/20

Guest Lecturer: Dr Papa Malick Ba, American Studies, English Department, UCAD

Dr Ba will talk about neoliberalism and neocolonialism as challenges to Panafricanism. In other words, he will be discussing how the ambitious project of uniting Africa under federal government, one free market with a common currency has been and continues to be challenged by the expansion of Empire through neocolonial and neoliberal dynamics.

Required Readings:

Neil, Roberts (2016) "Césaire, Senghor and the Decolonial Political Imagination" *Theory and Event* Vol. 19, Issue 4

Tlostanona, M. (2020) "The Postcolonial Condition, the Decolonial Option and the Post-Socialist Intervention" Monika Albrecht (ed.) *Postcolonialism Cross-Examined: Multidirectional perspectives on Imperial and Colonial Pasts and the Neocolonial Present*, New York: Routledge, pp: 153-164

Recommended Readings:

Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. "Global Coloniality and the Challenges of Creating African Futures" *Strategic Review for Southern Africa* Vol 36, No. 2: 181-202

Wa Thiong'o, Ngugi (1986), *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. London: James Currey.

Diome, F. (2006). *The Belly of the Atlantic*. London: Serpent's Tail.

Adiche, C. (2013). *Americanah*. New York: Knopf Doubleday.

Evaluation and Grading Criteria

Assignments:

Response papers 35%

Final Paper 35%

Journal 15%

Participation 15 %

Grading Scale:

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

Description of Assignments

Response papers will be biweekly reflections (every two weeks) on the assigned readings and the experiential engagement with communities we will interact with, concepts we will discuss and exchanges we will have. These reflections should be 2-page double-spaced papers. The biweekly critical responses are due **Friday 2/14, Friday 2/28 and Sunday 3/8. Every delay equals half a grade lower.**

The final paper is a 10-page critical reflection on the idea of Africa and the African Diaspora from a decolonial perspective. This paper should be written in light of students' readings, their engagement with Senegal and Ghana, and their lived experiences. More details about the structure of the paper and possible topics will be provided before the due date, **on Saturday 4/4/20.**

Each week, students are encouraged to produce a journal entry describing their experiences of the idea of Africa and critically engaging with the experience in relation to the course material. Journal entries should apply classroom discussions to particular experiences of their day to day life. Students are encouraged to organize their journal entries as a blog page.

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:

* Come to class 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.

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.

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>.