Rethinking Africa and the African Diaspora
AFRS-3500 (3 credits)

Senegal: Hip Hop, Resilience, and Black Struggles

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.

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 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. and in Senegal, 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

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:
- Articulate the invented nature of all cultural communities;
- Problematize the concept of diaspora;

- Appraise the necessity of a decolonial narrative on the place of Africa and African descended cultures and peoples in the global scene;
- 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 provides an understanding of reality that may be impossible to grasp theoretically;

Language and 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.

Instructional Methods
Topics covered in each lecture will draw on site visits, guest lecturers, and other activities, in addition to the assigned readings. Each module 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 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.

Required readings:
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.

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

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.

> 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.
> 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 student's experiences in Senegal 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.

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

> Recommended readings:
> 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 ligh of the three first 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.

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

> Recommended Readings
> Adiche, C. (2013). Americanah. New York: Knopf Doubleday.

Assignments and Evaluation

Assignment Descriptions and Grading Criteria

1) Response Papers (40%)
The Response papers will be weekly reflections 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.

2) Final Paper (35%)
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 their lived experiences. More details about the structure of the paper and possible topics will be provided before the due date.

3) Journal (15%)
Students will produce, every other week, 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 post.

4) Attendance and Participation (10%)
Due to the nature of SIT Study Abroad programs, and the importance of student and instructor contributions in each and every class session, attendance at all classes and for all program excursions is required. Criteria for evaluation of student performance include attendance and participation in program activities. Students must fully participate in all program components and courses. Students may not voluntarily opt out of required program activities. Valid reasons for absence – such as illness – must be discussed with the academic director or other designated staff person. Absences impact academic performance, may impact grades, and could result in dismissal from the program.

Late Assignments
SIT Study Abroad programs integrate traditional classroom lectures and discussion with field-based experiences, site visits and debriefs. The curriculum is designed to build on itself and progress to the culmination. It is critical that students complete assignments in a timely manner to continue to benefit from the sequences in assignments, reflections and experiences throughout the program.

Assessment
     Response Papers (40%)
     Final Paper (35%)
     Journal (15%)
     Participation (10%)

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

Program Expectations

- 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 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.
- Storing Your Work: Keep several copies of your work as back up and keep one copy accessible to you through an online forum, such as an attachment in your email, the course learning management system, or cloud-based storage. This way your work will always be available to despite technical issues. Lost files, deleted drives, or computer crashes are not excuses for late, missing work.
- Personal Technology Use: Cell phones and other personal electronics can be used for taking notes and other class activities. Off-task usage is not acceptable. You may be marked as absent for habitually using them for something other than classroom activities.
- Course Communication: Course documents and assignments will be posted on the program's Canvas page. Although the course calendar provides a broad overview and the general sequence of work and assignments for the course, what we accomplish in class will vary, and revisions to the calendar will be posted at the course site. You will need to check the course site regularly. You are responsible for letting local staff know about any network-related problems that prevent you from accessing or submitting assignments.
- Content Considerations: Some texts and activities you will encounter in this course delve into sensitive topics that may be emotionally and intellectually challenging. Our classroom is a space where we can engage with challenging ideas, question assumptions, and navigate difficult topics with respect and maturity. As possible, I will

flag content and activities that are especially graphic or intense, so we are prepared to address them soberly and sensitively. If you are struggling to keep up with the work or participate in the course because of the nature of the content and activities, you should speak with the academic director and/or seek help from counseling services.

- Classroom recording policy: To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use.

SIT Policies and Resources

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad Handbook and the Policies section of the SIT website for all academic and student affairs policies. Students are accountable for complying with all published policies. Of particular relevance to this course are the policies regarding: academic integrity, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), research and ethics in field study and internships, late assignments, academic status, academic appeals, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and misconduct, and the student code of conduct.

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad Handbook and SIT website for information on important resources and services provided through our central administration in Vermont, such as Library resources and research support, Disability Services, Counseling Services, Title IX information, and Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion resources.