SYLLABUS

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African Urban Hip-Hop, Diaspora, and Decolonial Futures
AFRS-3000 (3 credits)

Ghana: Hip-Hop, Resilience, and Black Struggle

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
This course provides students with the intellectual and practical opportunities for critiquing the relationship between African creative expression and sociopolitical experiences that span transnational contexts. Through an experiential engagement with urban cultures that constantly engage the limits of coloniality, global capitalism, and local political realities, this course will particularly focus on the ways in which African urban hip-hop functions as decolonial pedagogical praxes and counterhegemonic movements against cultural and economic imperialism in the global African diaspora, in general and in the U.S. and Ghana, in particular. We will explore how observed practices in host families, entertainment venues, places of worship, artist workshops, markets, political spheres, etc., expose the way discourses on "Africa" have participated in our own conceptions of, and relation with, the continent, 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.

Engaging with the musical vibes of the cities of Accra, Cape Coast, Takoradi, Kumasi, and Tamale will allow for an understanding of the use of creative expression in imagining resilience and struggles in competing and complementary contexts. Hip-Hop will be studied as a means to create links and spaces of solidarity between African descendants and economically disenfranchised peoples from the Global North and the Global South. Our ultimate goal is to question dominant narratives and create a transformative consciousness about economic and cultural globalization, immigration, identity, nation, nationality, democracy, human rights, and equality.

Learning Outcomes
Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:
- Articulate the invented nature of cultural communities;
- Appraise the necessity of a decolonial narrative on the place of Africa and African descended cultures and peoples in the global scene;
- Critique 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.

Language and of Instruction
This course is taught in English, but students will be exposed to local vocabularies related to course content through survival Twi lessons, 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 will submit assignments in English and are expected to complete all assignments by their due dates.

Instructional Methods
Topics covered in each lecture will draw on site visits, guest lectures, 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: Coloniality, Decolonial Thinking, and the Necessity of New Pedagogies
Module one introduces students to the epistemic, political, and socio-economic effects of coloniality on people of African descent in the context of creative expression. Students will be introduced to key concepts in decolonial theory and link them to Ghanaian music culture. Students will then be shown the limits of traditional disciplines such as philosophy, literature, anthropology, and political science and how hip-hop offers the possibility of different epistemologies and pedagogies that allow political and ethical modes of resistance against global colonialism and its corollary the colonial matrix of power.

Site visits will include Rockstone's Office, which is the home of the originator of Ghanaian *hiplife*, Reggie Rockstone; Dikan Center, the first photo library in Ghana; and the School of Performing Arts at the University of Ghana. There will also be sessions with the DJ-scholar-writer Kobby Graham, who will explain the history of the art form and better appreciate its connection with social, economic, and political aspects of urban Ghanaian life.

Required Reading
>Adu-Gilmore, L. (2021). "Critical Sonic Practice: Decolonizing Boundaries in Music Research." *Continental Thought & Theory.* Vol. 3.3, p. 187-208
>Kambon, O. (2017). Akan Ananse stories, Yorùbá Ìjàpá tales, and the Dikènga theory: Worldview and structure. *Contemporary Journal of African Studies*, *4*(2), 1-36.

Recommended reading
>SCZ. (2015). "Remixing: Decolonial Strategies in Cultural Production" Decolonization, Indigeneity, Education & Society. https://decolonization.wordpress.com/2015/03/10/remixing-decolonial-strategies-in-cultural-production/
>Lorenzo, V. (2010). "Introduction: The Settler Colonial Situation" in Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Module 2: Hip-Hop, Urban Cultures in the Making of the Fourth Republic
This module looks at the ways African urban hip-hop challenges the colonial matrix of power and participates in the consolidation of democracy in Ghana. At a time when Ghana has

practiced more than 30 years of democratic rule and is one of Africa's strongest democracies, we use the particularities of hip-hop to question the modes of definitions of the world and the epistemic and cultural foundations of eurocentrism and global capitalism. Readings, observations, and experiences will allow students to explore how hip-hop and urban cultures function as political and aesthetic expressions against Empire and the local elite. The module will ultimately engage in a more focused study of hip-hop and urban cultures in Ghana. Starting with a genealogy of the movement, we will examine its relevance in the consolidation of democracy in Ghana while exploring the ways it has adapted to, and transformed, contemporary Ghanaian cultures and cityscapes.

Required Reading

> Msia, C. (2012). "Hip Hop as a social commentary in Accra and Dar es Salaam." *African Studies Quarterly 13 (3): 23-46. http://sites.clas.ufl.edu/africa-asq/files/Clark-V13Is3.pdf.*
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> Opoku-Agyemang, K., & Orfson-Offei, E. (2022). These broke guys have lot of energy": Binaries and Male Anxiety in Ebony's "Sponsor. In *Kairos: A Journal of Critical Symposium* (Vol. 7, No. 1, pp. 7-22).
>
> Shipley, J. W. (2012). *Living the hiplife: Celebrity and entrepreneurship in Ghanaian popular music.* Duke University Press

Module 3: Palm Wine vs. the Highlife: Class and the Grammar of Decoloniality
This module explores the birth and development of hip-hop in Ghana through the lens of class. We will trace early roots of conversations about class across the span of the popular Ghanaian music and its links to pan-Africanist/afrosocialist attempts to eradicate class division during and after the struggle for independence. The module will subsequently explore the role of hip-hop and urban cultures in the creolization of local cultures through a discussion of the ways it has lead to modern and creole yet fundamentally African cultures thereby showing the complexity at the very root of the idea that traditionally constitutes the foundation of the idea of diaspora. We will look at the ways language plays a role in class in Ghana, exploring the rise and application of pidgin English, as well as class aspects to debates around the phenomenon of LAFA (Locally Acquired Foreign Accents), as well as between 'hiplife' - with its use of local language and sounds - and 'GH rap', which tried to differentiate itself from local variants to converse directly with American rap.

Students will visit the Bokoor African Popular Music Archives Foundation; and the Center for African Popular Culture at Ashesi University, Berekuso. Students will also have a session with Koo Nimo, one of the vanguards of palmwine highlife, and with M.anifest - one of Ghana and Africa's most renowned rappers.

Required Reading

> Adofo C. (2022). *A Quick Ting on Afrobeats.* Jacaranda.
>
> Collins, J. (2018). *Highlife time 3.* Accra, Ghana: DAkpabli & Associates

Oduro-Frimpong, J. (2021). "We Dey Beg": Visual Satirical Media Discourses on Contemporary Ghana-Sino Relations. *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 33(2), 218-229.

Ugor, P., & Mawuko-Yevugah, L. (2016). Coz Ov Moni: Hip-Life, Hybridity and Contemporary Youth Culture in Ghana. In *African Youth Cultures in a Globalized World* (pp. 183-198). Routledge.

Module 4: Afrobeats, Afropolitan Dreams and the Diaspora

This module investigates the discourses, practices, and relations that have shaped diasporic identities and communities outside of the African continent in the past 600 years. Site visits to the Cape Coast Castle, Elmina Castle, and the Java Museum will explain the roots of forced diasporic travel both eastward and westward. 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.

The module will again examine contemporary crossings of creative expression across the Atlantic Ocean both to and from Africa by engaging with music created by Ghanaian diasporic communities in North America and Europe, including the afrobeats phenomenon. This will allow students to revisit the competing anti-colonial discourses and political practices that have questioned the colonial matrix of power and investigate the ways experiences in Ghana affect their understandings of the continuities and discontinuities between Africa and the so-called Diaspora. Informed by music from Blitz the Ambassador, Fuse ODG, Burna Boy, Amarae, Vic Mensa, and Chance the Rapper, 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 Reading

Equiano, O. (1789). *Equiano's travels: The interesting narrative of the life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African*. Chapters 1-2.

Gyasi, Y. (2016). *Homegoing*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. Chapter 3: "Esi"

Sembène, O. (1974). *Tribal scars and other stories*. Heinemann.

Assignments and Evaluation

Assignment Descriptions and Grading Criteria

1) Response Papers (40%)

The Response Papers are 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 font 12 double spaced papers ranging from 500-600 words.

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 Ghana, 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

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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.