Peace and Conflict Seminar
PEAC-3000 (6 credits)

Uganda and Rwanda: Peace and Conflict Studies in the Lake Victoria Basin

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 Lake Victoria Basin provides a unique opportunity to critically examine conflicts ranging from armed conflicts, and genocide, to conflicts over natural resources. Students get an opportunity to work with key actors in the region and practice conflict management approaches. The program starts from Uganda with introduction to conflict mapping and conflict resolutions drawing on the two-decade war of the Lord’s Resistance Army conflict with the government. They cover the importance of geopolitics as a driver to conflicts and how responses such as humanitarian assistance manifests in the region. Visits to the refugee settlement provides the students with the opportunity to engage with multiple actors to learn the role played by UN agencies and private NGOs in supporting the displaced people. In Rwanda a country popular because of the two Gs, gorillas and genocide, students examine the causes of the genocide using different theoretical lens. In both study areas, they debate how ethnic identity constructions, and inequality were central in conflicts. Post conflict reconstruction and transformation in the two regions are also studied.

In this course we employ Rwanda and Uganda to interrogate frameworks and the assumptions that have shaped the ways in which the popular media and mainstream academy have portrayed and explained the violence in Uganda and genocide in Rwanda. We use Rwanda and Uganda as the lens through which we critically examine the dominant narratives concerning the genocide in Rwanda and the LRA, the UN system and its institutions and conventions, the contemporary global political and economic order and the measures currently being implemented in Rwanda and Uganda to resolve and mitigate conflict and its impacts. The focus on these two countries also extends to their role in addressing conflict, violent extremism and radicalism in the Great Lakes Region of Africa.

Learning Outcomes
Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:
- Account for the systemic causes of conflicts and their mitigation in the Lake Victoria Basin;
• Analyze the ways in which processes of genocide and intrastate conflicts are influenced by a complex interaction of local and international dynamics;
• Recognize how meanings of justice and reconciliation are mediated by identity and historical experiences;
• Develop tools for conflict analysis, conflict resolution and conflict management;
• Demonstrate knowledge of designing interventions that increase the role of women and youth in conflict management and sustainable livelihoods and
• Generate a network of professional and personal contacts on which they can rely for future professional development.

Language of Instruction
This course is taught in English, but students will be exposed to vocabulary related to course content through in-country expert lectures and field visits in a wide range of venues and regional locales.

Instructional Methods
The six-week intensive course is built upon SIT’s experiential learning model: everything that students encounter while on the program: what they hear, feel, and observe during homestays, in public buses, in conversations with local people, in restaurants, etc. is incorporated in classroom discussions. Hence students should expect that we don’t draw a line between academic and non-academic spaces and activities. The course draws heavily on cultural immersion and participant observation.

Assignments and Evaluation
These assignments serve to push students to get further immersed in the local culture and to get students to initiate conversations with local people on the issues about which they are concerned. They serve to bring help students to bring these issues into classroom discussions -- they help to further extend our participant observation learning approach. Written papers, arising from these assignments, will be graded on content, depth of analysis/insights and appropriate incorporation of assigned readings and lectures.

Assignment Descriptions and Grading Criteria
1) Current Issues Assignment, Uganda (15%)
Based on conversations with local people (homestay family members, neighbors, lecturers and with any other resourceful persons), select one among the multiple issues that are currently animating Ugandan’s attention and write a 2 page, typed double spaced analysis of the issue and how it relates to people’s anticipation of Uganda’s future prospects for peace and stability. Some examples of these issues could include elections, Uganda’s oil discover and the current standoff with the European Union, resettlement and recovery efforts in northern Uganda, media restrictions, the implications of regional or global wars on Uganda, the anti-LGBTI law, etc.
2) Current Issues Assignment, Rwanda (15%)
Follow Rwandan news via *The New Times* and/or Rwandan television for at least one week, and compose a typed 2 page double spaced content analysis of the issues in the news. How would you describe the issues in the news? What, broadly, does or doesn’t the news cover? Where is the emphasis? What issue(s) have struck you about the issues in the news? In addition, follow-up with at least two homestay family members or any adult acquaintances and elicit their views about any of the issues that you observe. Include their views in your synthesis.

3) Processing Sessions (10%)
These are student led discussion sessions, about 1 ½ hours long. You should gauge the key issues in the group since the previous processing session and facilitate a discussion around these issues. Examples include group dynamics, cultural adjustment, homestay issues, health and safety, site visits, readings, lectures etc. It may even be a single issue, if it should be one of much importance within the group. You could use games, activities of the like that you have used before in summer camp or in school. You could break up into smaller groups to facilitate discussion. The choice of what and how you do it is entirely yours. The processing session is a safe, open space for students to do what they think is important to the group.

4) Participation (10%)
Contribution to class discussion, active listening, attentiveness, conduct within the classroom, conduct within the homestay, respect for staff and program resources, time keeping, timely completion of assigned readings, and adherence to program rules.

5) Reading presentation and discussion leadership (10%)
Summarize the assigned articles. Identify key arguments or issues that the article raises and, possibly, the assumptions that the article author makes, as well as their broad implications for our understanding of causes, prevention, and mitigation of conflict. Identify key questions that you note, in ways that will provoke discussion.

6) Moot Court (10%)
Students will prepare a Moot Court for a case at the ICC in which two imaginary ex-combatants will be presented for trial. The students will be organized into two groups. Each group will represent an ex-combatant. The ICC court will have its “own judge”. The case will be presented, and a judgment made. Participation in the Moot Court will be counted.

7) Reflection Essay (30%)
Keep a detailed journal that notes, insights, questions, thoughts, perspectives, and emotions over the duration of the program. Using these notes to compose a 4-page typed double spaced essay that evaluates three key broad intellectual lessons that you have learnt regarding the international system (however you choose to define it) or contemporary forms or frameworks of knowledge production and how they shape conflict/genocide causation and prevention and the implications and limitations arising therefrom. You may also list additional questions that, for you, are pending.

**Assessment**
Current Issues Assignment, Uganda 15%
Current Issues Assignment, Rwanda 15%
Processing Sessions 10%
Participation 10%
Reading presentation and discussion leadership 10%
Moot Court 10%
Reflection Essay 30%

Attendance and Participation
Participation in class refers to attendance, punctuality, attentive listening and active engagement in all lectures, discussions, educational excursions 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.

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 (projects, ISP, case studies, internship, etc.). 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. Example: Students may request a justified extension for one paper/assignment during the semester. Requests must be made in writing and at least 12 hours before the posted due date and time. If reason for request is accepted, an extension of up to one week may be granted at that time. Any further requests for extensions will not be granted. Students who fail to submit the assignment within the extension period will receive an ‘F’ for the assignment.

Grading Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>94-100%</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-93%</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87-89%</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84-86%</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-83%</td>
<td>B-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77-79%</td>
<td>C+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74-76%</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-73%</td>
<td>C-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67-69%</td>
<td>D+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64-66%</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>below 64</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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, 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.
• 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 me and/or seek help from counseling services.

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.

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

Lectures are given by Ugandan and Rwandan historians, political scientists and other personalities directly involved with peace and conflict issues in the region. Readings are primarily drawn from history, political science, sociology and anthropology. Psychological experiments shown on video deepen students understanding of the mentality that produces
violence, as do student’s insights and conversations with people in-country. Discussions with peace-related civil society groups and NGOs provide practical and grounded insights, which enrich student knowledge of conflict dynamics, conflict mitigation and resolution. Weekly critical reflection sessions synthesize classroom-based lectures, videos, conversations with local people, and the diverse insights that students obtain through participant observation and their overall experiences on educational excursions. Weekly meetings, some facilitated by the academic director and others by students with the guidance of the academic director, will help students to process and synthesize the various issues they encounter, and to place such issues in their historical and contemporary contexts and theoretical foundation.

Module 1: Setting the Stage: SIT’s Experiential Learning Model and the Art of Crossing Cultures

Readings:
Kohls, Robert.  The Values Americans Live By.  
www.claremontmckenna.edu/math/alee/extra/American_values.html


Module 2: State, Ethnicity, and Conflict in Uganda
This module focuses on the foundations of defining conflict, mapping it, and analyzing its manifestation. Conflict mapping is discussed as the first step towards understanding causality and designing conflict management. The causes of global, regional, and national conflicts are debated through theoretical lenses. Conflict resolution is discussed by comparing the African traditional forms of conflict resolution and the current approaches of international standards such as the International Criminal Tribunal and the International Criminal Court

Documentary: Uganda Rising

Readings:


**Module 3: NGOs, Resettlement, Recovery, and Development in Northern Uganda**

This session builds upon issues, insights, and concepts developed in module II above to critically examine how community-based organizations (CBO) and NGOs approached reconstructing this region and transforming it into more inclusive development. How amnesty to former combatants changed the community relations of the entire region. Humanitarian agency operations in the region for the post-conflict reconstruction, resettlement, and recovery. A debate on whether ex-combatants must be presented to the International Criminal Court, or to national courts or even simply the traditional cultural court.

**Excursions:**

Communities in Gulu, Northern Uganda (a primary school, a health center, local government)

NGOs: Invisible Children and WEND Africa; Justice and Reconciliation Project (JRP); Gender Women Economic Development

**Readings:**


**Documentary:**

*Invisible Children: Discover The Unseen*
Module 4: Anatomy of Genocide
This module focuses closely on two related questions: How can we explain senseless, irrational acts such as the genocide in Rwanda and how may this illuminate both the limits and possibilities of human nature? To what extent does Genocide as an exceptional event conceal the relationship between the dynamics that led to the genocide in Rwanda and other conflicts in the region and in the rest of the modern world? To this end, we draw on lectures, site visits, assigned readings, related documentaries and films, and conversations with homestay family members to delve into the complex processes that precipitated the Rwandan genocide. This module provides the foundation upon which we begin to obtain insights into the implications of the social and political formations of the contemporary modern world and their relationship to conflicts in Africa and in other parts of the world.

Excursions: Gisozi, Nyamata, and Ntarama and Murambi Genocide memorial sites, Ministry of National Unity and Civic Engagement, and Institute for Research and Dialogue for Peace (IRDP), and conversations with rescuers, perpetrators of genocide as well as genocide survivors.

Readings:


Documentary: The following films, shown during this module, illuminate different causes of political violence and provide concepts and frameworks with which we critically examine the complex processes that led up to the genocide in Rwanda: *Perils of Obedience, A Class Divided, Ghosts of Rwanda.*

Module 5: Transitional Justice and the Historicization of Post-Genocide Political Development
Mainstream academics have been at the forefront of critics of political developments in contemporary Rwanda and the country’s transitional justice mechanisms adopted to deal with the effects of genocide. Building upon the themes that we examined in our discussions in module IV, Anatomy of Genocide, we trace the origins of Rwanda’s contemporary political dilemma. Without necessarily discounting the concerns of mainstream intellectuals, we critically examine the assumptions and methods that shape both the questions that they pose and the answers that they generate. This module begins to place students on a path that critically examines contemporary frameworks of knowledge production, which shape both the ways in which global responses to global conflict and poverty have been designed and their implications. Transitional justice mechanisms are discussed by comparing the Gacaca jurisdictions and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.

Excursion: Nakivaale Refugee Settlement

Readings:


**Documentary:** The uncondemned

**Module 6: Conflict Prevention: Problematizing Philanthropy and Economic Development**

Within many western publics, from their personal or individual perspective, popular explanations for global conflict relate to rising poverty and accordingly, philanthropy and promoting economic development are their personal response to this problem. Without discounting the place or importance of philanthropy in mitigating the impacts of conflict, this part of the course will trace the origins of this mindset or perspectives and critically examine their consequences both in the sites from which they arise and where they are implemented.

**Readings:**

Easterly W. (2006). The White Man’s Burden: why the West’s efforts to aid the rest have done so much ill and so little good, Oxford University Press. (Chap1&2)


**Documentaries:**
*Lost Boys of Sudan*
*Life and Debt*

**Module 7: Contextualizing Post-Conflict Reconstruction and “Development” in the Lake Victoria Basin**
This module juxtaposes the post-conflict reconstruction of northern Uganda with Rwanda’s fast-paced post-genocide transformation. The development policies of the two countries are analyzed and critiqued starting from the Millennium Development Goals policy to the current attraction to China’s development assistance. The positive peace approach and its initiatives toward reconciliation, rehabilitation, relief, and recovery are discussed. This is augmented with visiting women and youth groups working towards resilience and peaceful co-existence.

**Readings:**


**Excursions:**
Uganda’s Industrial Park (Gulu)
Rwanda Development Board and The Special Economic Zone
Millenium Village Project (Mayange, Bugesera)