

Anatomy of Genocide AFRS-3000 (3 credits)

Rwanda: Post-Genocide Restoration and Peacebuilding

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 lays the foundation for the entire semester's learning process by exploring the history that precipitated the genocide in Rwanda. Genocide and conflicts in general are construed as phenomena of political institutions of the modern era, and studying contemporary genocide casts, in part, a lens on modernity's institutions and practices. And yet popular discourse associates conflict in African settings with the incompetence of African institutions and inability of various ethnicities to foster peaceful co-existence or, put rather quickly, as primordial ethnic conflict. Using the Rwandan genocide as case study, the course casts a critical lens upon the political institutions of the modern world, and critiques popular reductionist explanations that regard conflicts in Africa as driven simply by primordial ethnic tensions.

The course draws on SIT's experiential learning model. Students will visit sites of historical and political significance in Rwanda both in Kigali and in remote areas, through which they will begin to explore the complex relations between history of colonization and decolonization, indigenous traditions, and genocide in Rwanda. Lectures on selected topics are delivered by local Rwandan scholars and students draw on experiences at, and structured assignments in, homestays, conversations with victims, survivors, perpetrators, bystanders, and rescuers to obtain extra-ordinary insights into the histories and processes that precipitated genocide in Rwanda.

Learning Outcomes

The course aims to enable students to transcend the simplistic and reductionist explanations of genocide, as a way to enable them to appreciate some of the ways through which contemporary genocides and conflicts may be prevented or mitigated. Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Analyze how colonization projects and decolonization struggles shaped genocidal tendencies in Rwanda;
- Analyze the ways in which the process of genocide is influenced by a complex interaction of local and international dynamics;

- Outline social and political process that influence the pursuit of sustainable peace; and
- Suggest measures for preventing the occurrence and recurrence of the genocide in Rwanda and elsewhere.

Language of Instruction

The course is taught in English by Rwandan historians and in meetings with local people translation from Kinyarwanda to English is provided. Discussions sessions are held in English and are facilitated by the academic director. Assigned readings drawn from selected journals and book chapters are also in English.

Instructional Methods

SIT's teaching and learning philosophy is grounded in the experiential learning theory developed by Kolb (1984; 2015) and informed by various scholars, such as Dewey, Piaget, Lewin, among others. Experiential learning theory recognizes that learning is an active process that is not confined to the formal curriculum; "knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 2015, p. 49). Learning involves both content and process. Learning is holistic and happens through various life experiences upon which students draw to generate new ways of knowing and being. Learning involves a community and is a lifelong endeavor. Learning is transformational. The suggested four step-cycle of a *concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation* embedded in the experiential learning model is not linear and might not always happen in that specific order, as any learning is highly context dependent. These stages of taking part in a shared experience; reflecting on that experience by describing and interpreting it; challenging their own assumptions and beliefs to generate new knowledge; and ultimately applying new knowledge, awareness, skills, and attitudes in a variety of situations and contexts are important for students to engage in to become empowered lifelong learners.

Assignments and Evaluation

Assignment Descriptions and Grading Criteria

In addition to class attendance, participation, and discussion leadership, students will have to complete written assignments covering different aspects of the themes the course has addressed. Timely completion of all assignments is expected. Late hand-ins will be penalized. All assignments are evaluated according to organization, analytical quality, depth of understanding, argumentation and presentation of evidence.

1) Book review (35%)

You are required to review a book relevant to the program theme. The book selected can be a scholarly book, edited collection, biography, or autobiography having the Genocide as the central focus. You will discuss your interests with the Academic Director during orientation week and make a book selection shortly after. This exercise will allow you to read in-depth a scholarly work, edited collection or biography/autobiography concerned with the genocide in Rwanda. You will gain skills related to critical reading and analysis of academic literature about

a highly sensitive topic like the Genocide in Rwanda. It will also be a great opportunity to explore potential ISP/internship topics.

The review should be a 5-page typed double spaced paper and it should include a description of the book's general thesis, a summary of the book's main argument/s synopsis of the book, your praise and critique (your unique take), your overall assessment on the text and whether you would recommend it (or not) to future SIT students on the program.

2) Reflection sessions and readings discussion leadership (20%)

Summarize the assigned reading(s); Identify key arguments or issues that are raised and, possibly, the most critical assumptions that the author(s) makes, as well as their broad implications for our understanding of causes, prevention, and mitigation of conflict. Compare and contrast those arguments with what was discussed during lecture sessions and/or field visits. Identify key questions that you note, in ways that will provoke discussion.

3) Critical Reflection Assignment (35%)

Drawing on course materials, lectures, excursions, site visits, and readings, students will evaluate three key intellectual lessons they have learnt in this course and prepare a 20-minute presentation in which they critically reflect on those lessons. Students will have to support their arguments with ideas from scholarly sources, local or international media, local people's views, etc. Students are encouraged to not limit themselves to the use of power point presentations but rather be innovative and use other forms of communications such as role plays, simulations, videos, performance, creative writing, art format such as drawing, painting, assembling, collage, etc.

4) Participation (10%)

This includes 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.

Assessment

Book Review:	35%
Reflection sessions & readings discussion leadership:	20%
Critical reflection Assignment	35%
Participation	10%

Attendance and Participation

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 (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

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.
- 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.
- 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.

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*

Module 1: The construction of ethnic polarization and the historical roots of genocide

What explains the historical construction of Tutsi and Hutu identities in Rwanda, and how does the history of this polarization illuminate the processes that precipitate contemporary global conflict? How were the roots of genocide sowed and how were they nurtured, leading up to genocide in 1994? This module draws on a multiplicity of sources to begin the process of reconstructing Rwanda's extremely complex history. Students will explore carefully a selection of Rwanda's extremely powerful instructional genocide memorials, listen to explanations from Rwandan experts, and study the causes of mass violence from sociological and psychological perspectives. Students will begin to interrogate popular accounts of conflict in Africa and ultimately to critique how conflict in Africa has been explained.

Readings:

Mamdani, M. (2001). Preface, Introduction, and Chapter 1 in *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda*. Princeton University Press.

Lemarchand, R. (1995). "Rwanda, the Rationality of Genocide" in *Journal of Opinion*, XXIII (2).

Hintjens, H. (1999). "Explaining the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda." *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 37, 2, 241-286.

Prunier, G. (1995). *The Rwandan Crisis. History of a Genocide*. Fountain Publisher.

Videos:

Barker, G., Powell, J., Silverbridge Productions., British Broadcasting Corporation. & PBS Home Video. (2004). *Ghosts of Rwanda*. Alexandria, Va.: Distributed by PBS Home Video.

Pennsylvania State University. Media Sales. (1993). *Obedience*. University Park, Pa.: Penn State Media Sales.

Yale University. Films. (2003). *A class divided*. PBS DVD Video.

Module 2: Post-independence politics and the transformation of ethnic identities

Module 1 focuses on the construction of Hutu and Tutsi identities in the colonial period and how it precipitated genocide. Module 2 picks up from here and examines how the politics of post-independence Rwanda further intensified social polarization. The module compares the politics of the first and second republics up until the moment of the Arusha peace accords. The module interrogates the intersectionality of national politics, ethnic identities, social polarization, and the rise of extremism. The module draws on various disciplinary perspectives in social psychology.

Readings:

Mamdani, M. (2001). Chapter 4 in *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda*. Princeton University Press.

Fisiy, Cyprian (1998). "Of Journeys and Border Crossings: Return of Refugees, Identity, and Reconstruction in Rwanda." *African Studies Review*, 41, 1, 17-28.

Zimbardo G. Philip A. "A Situational Perspective on the Psychology of Evil: Understanding how people are transformed into perpetrators. In *The Social Psychology of Good and Evil*, A.G. Miller (Eds). pp 21-50, New York, Guilford Press.

Module 3: International political economy and genocide in Rwanda

Popular understandings of genocide often start and end with the political boundaries in which genocide occurs. This module breaks out of this framing and traces how international actors and policies generated by international financial institutions shaped the socio-economic and political context of Rwanda, out of which the condition that led up to the genocide were created.

Readings:

Klinghoffer, Arthur (1998). *The International Dimensions of Genocide in Rwanda*. New York: New York University Press.

Powers, S. (2002). Chapter 10. In *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide*. Basic Book, New York.

Hintjens, H. (1999). "Explaining the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda." *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 37, 2, 241-286.

Mamdani, M. (2001). Chapter 6. In *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda*. Princeton University Press.

Uvin, Peter (1998). Part V: Conclusions. In *Aiding Violence: The Development Enterprise in Rwanda*. Kumarian Press, Inc. (pp 205-238)

Toussaint, E. (2014). *Rwanda: The World Bank and IMF role in the 1994 genocide*.

Module 4: The immediate aftermath of the genocide

This module discusses what were the conditions in Rwanda after the mass killings stopped. It talks about the challenges related to the repatriation of refugees and restoration of security and stability. Students also critically analyze the role and limitations of humanitarian organizations and the importance of local ownership in the process of recovery and physical as well as psychological rehabilitation. The module focuses on what happened in Rwanda during the ten-year period of transition: from July 1994 to 2004.

Readings:

Pottier, J. (2002). Chapter 4-5. In *Re-imagining Rwanda: Conflict, Survival and Disinformation in the Late Twentieth Century*. London: Cambridge University Press. (pp. 130-178).

Rurangwa, E. (2002). *Perspective of Land Reform in Rwanda*. FIG XXII International Congress, Washington, D.C.

Potel, J. & Owona, G. (2021). *The political Economy and Land Reform in Post-Conflict Rwanda 1994-2020*. *African Journal on Land Policy and Geospatial Sciences*.

Rieder, H. & Elbert, T. (2013) Rwanda—lasting imprints of a genocide: trauma, mental health and psychosocial conditions in survivors, former prisoners and their children. *Conflict and Health*. Department of Psychology, University of Konstanz.

Video:

Journeyman Pictures. (2007). *Rwandan Genocide: The Shocking Immediate Aftermath*. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6eNrHWeN0Rs>