

Peace and Conflict Seminar

PEAC-3000 (6 credits)

Rwanda: Peace and Conflict Studies

Note: This syllabus is representative of a typical program. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from semester to semester.

Course Description

Rwanda is depicted as a model of quick growth and success in many areas including gender equality, youth engagement, poverty reduction, use of information technology, eco-tourism to name but a few. However, it is impossible to understand those current success stories of Rwanda without studying the country's complex history that has led to the 1994 Genocide and the civil war. The slaughter of more than one million people - more than a tenth of the then population - resulted in a total collapse. The genocide and the civil war not only took people's lives but also destroyed whatever infrastructure the country had at that time. In the aftermath of the genocide, sewing this war-torn nation back together seemed like an insurmountable task. For that reason, Rwanda provides a unique opportunity to critically examine ethnic conflicts and genocide especially in the African context. Students examine the causes of the genocide using different theoretical lens starting with a thorough analysis of the complex history of Rwanda to understand how conflicts emerged and escalated, until they reached the climax point in 1994. Students evaluate the importance of geopolitics and the role of international community in the entire process of genocide. They debate how ethnic identify constructions, and inequality were central in that process.

Post-Genocide reconstruction and transformation is also studied. Students get an opportunity to work with local experts, scholars and peacebuilding practitioners to learn about practices of transitional justice, conflict transformation, peacebuilding and development. This course provides an opportunity to interrogate frameworks and the assumptions that have shaped the ways in which the popular media and mainstream academy have portrayed and explained the genocide in Rwanda and its aftermath.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Account for the systemic causes of genocide in Rwanda;
- Analyze the ways in which the process of genocide is influenced by a complex interaction of local, regional, 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;
- Suggest measures for promoting sustainable peace and development in Rwanda; and
- Articulate the post-conflict economic development opportunities and challenges in Rwanda.

Language of Instruction

This course is taught in English, but students will be exposed to vocabulary related to course content. 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

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 help students to bring these issues into classroom discussions -- they help to further extend participant observation learning approach. Written papers and presentations, arising from these assignments, will be graded on content, depth of analysis/insights, creativity and appropriate incorporation of assigned readings and lectures.

Assignment Descriptions and Grading Criteria

1) Article or book chapter review (20%)

Students are required to review an article or book chapter relevant to Rwandan Genocide. Students will discuss their interests with the Academic Director during orientation week and make an article or book chapter selection shortly after. Students

will gain skills related to critical reading and analysis of academic literature about a highly sensitive topic like the genocide in Rwanda.

The review should be a 3-page typed double spaced paper and it should include a description of the article or book chapter's general thesis, a summary of the article or chapter's main argument, 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 (10%)

These are student led discussion sessions, about 1 ½ hours long. You should gauge the key issues in the group since the previous reflection 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 reflection session is a brave, safe, open space for students to do what they think is important to the group. The aim of the session is to help students master conflict management skills learnt every week while managing any group issues that may arise. Each student will have his/her turn and will be responsible for identifying the issues to discuss and decide on how to proceed in a way that benefit the group. The facilitator will also have to submit a one-page report to the Academic Director communicating the key issues discussed, how they were solved and any pending problem that needs special attention from program staff. (10%)

3) 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.

4) 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.

5) Position Paper (20%)

Rwanda is highly invested in sustainable peace and development. Suppose that you have been hired as a consultant by the Government of Rwanda to assess its sustainable peace and development model. Write a 4-page double spaced position paper outlining the successes of Rwanda's model and detail four to six issues around which the government of Rwanda should be concerned, and why. Begin by describing, in your own terms, Rwanda's sustainable peace and development model.

6) Critical Reflection Assignment (30%)

Keep a detailed journal that notes, insights, questions, thoughts, perspectives, videos, photos, and emotions over the duration of the program. Use these notes to prepare a 20-minute presentation that critically 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.

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, charts, art format such as drawing, painting, assembling, collage, etc.

Assessment

Article/book chapter review	20%
Reflection Sessions	10%
Participation	10%
Reading presentation and discussion leadership	10%
Position Paper	20%
Critical Reflection Assignment	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. 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 program. 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.

- 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.
- 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, the Academic Director 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 program staff and 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.*

Lecturers are Rwandan historians, political scientists, and other personalities directly involved with peace and conflict issues in Rwanda and beyond. 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: 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. Under this module students get to analyze the differences and similarities between genocide, crimes against humanity and crimes of war. They gain knowledge and skills towards understanding causes of conflicts, the escalation process and the complicated theories of actors in conflicts and genocide.

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

Required readings:

Mamdani, M. (2020). Preface, Introduction, and Chapter 1. In *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda* (pp. 3–39). Princeton University Press.

Newbury, C. (1988). *The cohesion of oppression: clientship and ethnicity in Rwanda, 1860-1960* (pp. 1–72). Columbia University Press.

Recommended readings:

Newbury C & Newbury D (1999) “A Catholic Mass in Kigali: Contested Views of the Genocide and Ethnicity in Rwanda”. *Canadian Journal of African Studies*. Vol 33, No. 2/3

Newbury, C. & Newbury, D. (2003) “The Genocide in Rwanda and the Holocaust in Germany: Parallels and Pitfalls”. *Journal of Genocide Research* V (1): 135-145

Malkki, L. H. (1996). “Introduction” & “Ch. 3: The uses of history in the refugee camp”. In *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania* (pp. 1–18, 105–152). University of Chicago Press.

Totten, S. & Bartrop, P.R. (Eds). (2009). *The genocide studies reader*. New York: Routledge. Chap. I. The Origin of the Term Genocide and the Definition Used in the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Pp. 1-33

Zimbardo G., Philip A. “A Situational Perspective on the Psychology of Evil: Understanding how people are transformed into perpetrators. In Miller, A. G. (Ed.). (2016). *The social psychology of good and evil* (pp. 21–50). The Guilford Press.

Fox, N., Nyseth Brehm, H., & Gasasira, J. (2021). The Impact of Religious Beliefs, Practices, and Social Networks on Rwandan Rescue Efforts During Genocide. *Genocide Studies and Prevention*, 15(1), 97–114. <https://doi.org/10.5038/1911-9933.15.1.1790>

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 2: 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 1, 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 conflicts and poverty have been designed and their implications. Conflict resolution as well as transitional justice mechanisms are discussed by comparing the African traditional forms of conflict resolution such as Gacaca jurisdictions and the International Standards approaches such the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.

Required reading:

Ndahinda, F. M. (2020). Debating and Litigating Post-Genocide Reparations in the Rwandan Context. In C. Ferstman & M. Goetz (Eds.), *Debating and Litigating Post-Genocide Reparations in the Rwandan Context* (pp. 629–655). Brill Nijhoff.

Recommended readings:

Geraghty, M. A. (2020). Gacaca, Genocide, Genocide Ideology: The Violent Aftermaths of Transitional Justice in the New Rwanda. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 62(3), 588–618. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0010417520000183>

Rettig, M. (2008). Gacaca: Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation in Post-conflict Rwanda? *African Studies Review*, 51(3), 25-50. doi:10.1353/arw.0.0091

Hola, B., & Nyseth Brehm, H. (2016). Punishing Genocide: A Comparative Empirical Analysis of Sentencing Laws and Practices at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), Rwandan Domestic Courts, and Gacaca Courts. *Genocide Studies and Prevention*, 10(3), 59–80. <https://doi.org/10.5038/1911-9933.10.3.1428>

Nyseth Brehm, H., et al. (2021). "Consequences of judging in transitional justice courts." *The British Journal of Criminology* 61.5: 1169-1186.

Thorne, B. (2021). "Liberal international criminal law and legal memory: deconstructing the production of witness memories at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda." *Journal of the British Academy* 9.s2 (2021): 127-54.

Horsman, P. (2021). The Gacaca Archive: Preserving the memory of post-genocide justice and reconciliation in Rwanda. In J. Boel & P. Canavaggio (Eds.), *Archives and Human Rights* (pp. 152–163). Routledge.

Eltringham, Nigel. (2019.) *Genocide Never Sleeps*. Cambridge University Press.

Redwood, H. A. (2021). *The Archival Politics of International Courts*. Cambridge University Press.

Carroll, C. M. (2000). An assessment of the role and effectiveness of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and the Rwandan national justice system in dealing with the mass atrocities of 1994. *BU Int'l LJ*, 18, 163.

Documentary video: *The un-condemned*

Module 3: 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.

Required reading:

Easterly, W. (2019). Chapter 1 & 2. In *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.

Recommended readings:

Ferguson, J. (2006). *Global shadows: Africa in the neoliberal world order* (pp. 25–49). Duke University Press.

Mamdani, M. (2009). Introduction and Chapter 2. *Saviors and survivors: Darfur, politics, and the War on terror*. Doubleday.

Documentaries: *Life and Debt*

Module 4: Contextualizing Post-Genocide Reconstruction and “Development” in Rwanda

This module reviews Rwanda's fast-paced post-genocide transformation. The country's development policies are analyzed and critiqued starting from the Millennium Development Goals policy to the current attraction to foreign investors. 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.

Required Reading:

Booth, D., & Golooba-Mutebi, F. (2012). Developmental patrimonialism? The case of Rwanda. *African Affairs*, 111(444), 379–403. <https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/ads026>

Recommended Readings:

Carr, E. R. (2008). The millennium village project and African development: problems and potentials. *Progress in Development Studies*, 8(4), 333–344. <https://doi.org/10.1177/146499340800800403>

Wilson, J. (2013). Model villages in the neoliberal era: the Millennium Development Goals and the colonization of everyday life. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 41(1), 107–125. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2013.821651>

Hodler, R. (2019). The economic effects of genocide: Evidence from Rwanda. *Journal of African Economies*, 28(1), 1-17.

Rich, S. (2007). Africa's Village of Dreams. *The Wilson Quarterly*. Spring 2007.

Sachs, J. (2005). Forward, Introduction and Chapter 16. In *The End of Poverty: Economic possibilities for our time*. New York: Penguin Press.

Sun, Y. (2014, April). *Africa in China's Foreign Policy*. Brookings. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/africa-in-chinas-foreign-policy/>

Excursions:

Rwanda Development Board and The Special Economic Zone
Millenium Village Project (Mayange, Bugesera)Nyungwe Rain Forest
Akagera National Park

Module 5: Conflict Prevention: Analysis of Human Rights Protection in post-genocide Rwanda

This module examines the status of human rights protection in Rwanda. It involves site visits to different organizations involved in the promotion and protection of the rights of minority groups such as LGBTQIA+, people with disabilities, historically marginalized groups (Twa), refugees, etc. The module also provides an opportunity to discuss the status of press and media freedom in Rwanda.

Required Reading:

Jabareen, Y. (2013). Conceptualizing “Post-Conflict Reconstruction” and “Ongoing Conflict Reconstruction” of Failed States. *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, 26(2), 107-125.

Recommended Reading:

United States Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. *Rwanda Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2022*.

Excursions:

Amahoro Human Right Association Rwanda
Gisimba Youth Center
Radio/TV One
Never Again Rwanda