

Intersectionality in African Contexts SOCI-3000 (3 credits)

Cameroon: Development and Social Change

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 will encourage students to analyze how Cameroon's colonial legacy (shaped by both French and English influences) affects contemporary social structures, exploring the intersections of ethnicity, age, religion, physical ability, gender, race, class, and sexuality in this complex African context. With over 250 local languages and strong patriarchal norms, special attention will be paid to women's experiences across different social contexts, from urban centers to rural communities. The course critically examines how various forms of marginalization and privilege intersect, particularly in relation to family law, gender roles, religious freedom, LGBTQ+ rights, and disability access.

The course combines theoretical frameworks with practical field experiences, including excursions to Batoufam and Northern Cameroon. Through thematic seminars on women, sexuality, ethnicity, religious diversity, disability, and culture, students will gain insights into the dominant and varied within-group differences in identities and societal dynamics, exploring how intersectional understanding can translate into meaningful social change.

Learning Outcomes

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

- Analyze the genealogy and trajectory of intersectionality in African contexts
- Critically examine gender, women and sexuality in Cameroon
- Evaluate how ethnicity, language and culture shape social dynamics in Cameroon's multilingual society
- Analyze religious diversity and social institutions through an intersectional lens
- Examine how disability intersects with access to mobility, education, employment, social protection and political participation
- Apply intersectional perspectives to analyze social dimensions in Cameroonian communities based on field experiences

Language of Instruction

This course is taught in English, and where French is used, translation to English will be provided, but students will be exposed to vocabulary related to intersectionality through in-country expert lectures and field visits to a range of venues and regional locales.

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.

In addition, as the AD on this program, I encourage the restoration of love and care as a praxis of decoloniality as suggested by Maldonado-Torres (2016).

Required Texts

See the course schedule for a full list of reading assignments.

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.** For an interactive course to succeed, you must be present, on time, and have your readings completed and points in mind for discussion or clarification. Being prepared with these elements raises the level of class discussion for everyone. Moreover, the content of this course is learned collaboratively, meaning that when a student isn't here, they take away from everyone's opportunity to learn. The only way to maximize our collective learning potential is if we are all here contributing. 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
- **Submit assignments on time:** 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.
- **Bring your curiosity:** Ask questions in class. Engage the guest lecturers, as these are often very busy professionals who are doing us an honor by coming to speak. Remember, there are no foolish questions, and your inquiries might help others in class who have similar ideas/thoughts. By actively participating and showing curiosity, you demonstrate respect for our guests and contribute to creating a dynamic learning environment for everyone.

- **Maintain academic Integrity:** As members of a learning community, we all want to submit work that reflects our own ideas and efforts. Even if it is unintentional, plagiarism can have serious consequences. Before you submit each assignment, ask yourself these questions:

- Did I reference ideas, quotes, phrases, or facts I read about in a book, article, or website, without citing the author and year of the source where I read about them?
- Did I paraphrase by changing only a word or two or moving the words around?
- Did you answer “yes” to any of the above questions? If so, you are committing plagiarism and need to give credit to appropriate sources before you submit your assignment.

- **Principled Disagreement:** Learning often involves discomfort. Some discomfort can facilitate personal and collective growth. You, your peers, guest lecturers, instructors, and local constituents, have diverse experiences, values, beliefs, affiliations, and identities. Reflecting on these differences can be emotionally challenging, even when it deepens self-awareness and mutual understanding. In this course, we aim to encourage brave spaces where principled disagreement is encouraged rather than avoiding difficult conversations. *This is challenging work, and we will inevitably make mistakes.* Our goal is to thoughtfully critique ideas rather than attacking individuals. We aim to embrace productive discomfort and minimize unproductive discomfort, striving for principled disagreement.

- **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 brave 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.

- **Our social identities** – Our social identities - race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexual identity, religion, mental and physical ability, size, national origin, citizenship status, and more – shape how we are perceived, represented, and treated. They also influence what knowledge and learning is deemed valuable and legitimate. To challenge hegemonic paradigms and perspectives, this course intentionally includes readings, topics, videos, and assignments from authors and perspectives of diverse backgrounds. However, there may be gaps we have overlooked. Your constructive feedback is always welcome on how to make this course more inclusive and transformative.

- **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:** 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 me know about any network-related problems that prevent you from accessing or submitting assignments.
- **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](#), [Accessibility 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: Introduction to intersectionality

In this module, students are introduced to key concepts, definition and the genealogy of intersectionality. Students will examine the concept of intersectionality from Kimberlé Crenshaw seminal work in 1980 and how the concept has travelled and its relevance in African context. This course explores how the multiple identities of Cameroonian women intersect to expose privilege and/or oppression experienced by these women.

This module employs readings on intersectionality and identity, African feminist approaches, including critiques of intersectionality as a travelling concept.

Sessions may include

- Introduction to intersectionality
- A critic of intersectionality
- Intersectionality in the way of lives of Cameroonians

Required Readings:

Motro, D., Evans, J. B., Ellis, A. P., & Benson III, L. (2022). Race and reactions to women's expressions of anger at work: Examining the effects of the "angry Black woman" stereotype. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 107(1), 142.

Roysircar, G. (2016). *Intersectionality of Social Identities*. ResearchGate.
<https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.24718.97602>

Salem, S. (2018). Intersectionality and its discontents: Intersectionality as traveling theory. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 25(4), 403-418.

Videos

National Association of Independent Schools. (2018, June 22). *Kimberlé Crenshaw: What is Intersectionality?* [Www.youtube.com. https://youtu.be/ViDtnfQ9FHc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ViDtnfQ9FHc)

Learning for Justice. (2016). Intersectionality 101. In [www.youtube.com. https://youtu.be/w6dnj2lyYjE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w6dnj2lyYjE)

Module 2: Gender, Women and sexuality in Cameroon

In this module students will identify and explain themes, debates, and issues central to women, gender, and sexual identities in post colonial Cameroon. They will be versed with the determinants and ramifications of the social construction of gender and sexual identities amongst Africans, their local institutions, and nation-states. This course exposes students to the intercession of colonialism, globalization, and modernization affecting the experiences and the narratives of women, gender, and sexuality in Cameroon.

Sessions may include

- An excursion to Batoufam a rural community in the Western region of Cameroon
- Field visit to Ngoundere in the North of Cameroon

Required Readings

Bhana, D., Crewe, M., & Aggleton, P. (2019). Sex, sexuality and education in South Africa. *Sex Education, 19*(4), 361-370.

Mbihbih, N. R., & Endeley, J. B. M. (2022). Mainstreaming Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Council Development Plans in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon. *International Journal of Innovative Research and Development, 11*(1).

Ngabaza, S., Shefer, T., & Clowes, L. (2018). Students' narratives on gender and sexuality in the project of social justice and belonging in higher education. *South African Journal of Higher Education, 32*(3), 139-153.

Ndengue, R., Atsem, A., & Maveun, M. (2023). # JusticePourMirabelle: The Resurgence of a Transnational Cameroonian Feminist Movement. *Politics & Gender, 1-5*.

Recommended Readings

African Feminisms Across Generations in Perspectives: Political Analysis and Commentary, Issue 1, June 2021 <https://ng.boell.org/sites/default/files/2021-07/Perspectives%20Feminisms.pdf>

Andzanga Ndzana and Dr Jean Cedric Kouam (2023), Promoting Rural Development to Reduce Gender inequalities in Cameroon, www.nkafu.org, March 2023

Atanga, L. (2021). Gender ideologies, leadership, and development in Cameroon. *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs, December 17*.

Davos 2017. Disrupting the status quo of gender roles. World Economic Forum. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-MoakjOTTY4>. YouTube. Web. August 2017.

Fokum, V. Y., Fonjong, L. N., & Adams, M. J. (2020, May). Increasing women's representation in the Cameroon parliament: Do numbers really matter? In *Women's Studies International Forum* (Vol. 80, p. 102369).

Fombe, L. F., Sama-Lang, I. F., Fonjong, L., & Mbah-Fongkimeh, A. (2013). Securing tenure for sustainable livelihoods: A case of women land ownership in anglophone Cameroon. *Éthique et économique= Ethics and economics, 10*(2).

Nana-Fabu, S. (2006). An analysis of the economic status of women in Cameroon. *Journal of International Women's Studies, 8*(1), 148-162.

Temngah, J. N. (1996). Customary Law, Women's Rights and Traditional Courts in Cameroon. *Revue générale de droit*, 27(3), 349-356.

Video/Films

The only documentary selected for the 2005 Director's Fortnight at Cannes, festival favorite Kim Longinotto's latest work (co-directed with Florence Ayissi) is a fascinating, often hilarious look at the work of one small courthouse in Cameroon. With fierce compassion, the tough-minded state prosecutor Vera Ngassa and court president Beatrice Ntuba dispense wisdom, wisecracks, and justice in fair measure.

Ayisi, F. (2018). Sisters in Law. In Vimeo. <https://vimeo.com/306057781>

Sky News. (2019). Is it "un-African" to be gay?. In *www.youtube.com*.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AZhtxQY6cJo>

BBC News Africa. (2023). Cameroon: a life of threats and violence when you're gay . In *YouTube*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lpm7yi7KUQA>

VICE Asia. (2020). The Land of No Men: Inside Kenya's Women-Only Village [YouTube Video]. In *YouTube*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=deEqOG4EPc>

Module 3: Ethnicity, language and culture in Cameroon

In this module, students will examine how Cameroon colonial history and multilingualism affect the socioeconomic and political lives of the people. Cameroon has 273 local languages and two official languages, English and French. The two official languages have been led to some form of discontent and civil unrest, leading to secessionist sentiments and violence. Drawing from the current Constitution the importance of local languages and cultural diversity in shaping national identity and unity as it intersects with other aspects of life will be explored in this module.

A case study on the Bamileke culture that explores their politics and social organization of the Bamiléké ethnic group, with a specific look at the Batoufam community. The Bamileke are a vibrant and hardworking ethnic group in Cameroon; they have remained attached to their cultural values while using Western tools to foster progress in their community. The case study includes a visit to a Bamiléké chief's palace, experiencing rural community life through homestays with local families, interactions with traditional doctors and where possible attending a Bamileke ceremony. Topics include understanding the Bamiléké, indigenous development organizations, indigenous systems of savings and credit, cultural associations.

Sessions may include

- An excursion to Batoufam a rural community in the Western region of Cameroon

- Field visit to Ngoundere in the North of Cameroon

Required Readings

Jean-Pierre, W. (1993). *L'esprit d'entreprise au Cameroun*. KARTHALA Editions.

Kamdem, S., Ojongnkpot, C., & van Pinxteren, B. (2024). Decolonizing Cameroon's language policies: a critical assessment. *Applied Linguistics Review*, (0).

Nyamkoh, W. E. (2022). Languaging ethnicity and decolonising language ideologies in Cameroon contemporary urban music. *Journal of Languages, Linguistics and Literary Studies*, 2(1), 1-8.

Nyamnjoh, F. B. (2004). Our Traditions are Modern, Our Modernities Traditional. Chieftaincy and Democracy in Contemporary Africa. In *conference on 'Traditional Accountability and Modern Governance in Africa'*, University of Durham.

Video/Films

NAJA TV. (2021). BATOUFAM - Les rites et la royauté. In *YouTube*.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MlxzHxn_ie8

Recommended readings

Ekane, L. B., Ayamba, A. C., & Vubo, E. Y. *The effect of ethnic diversity on social relations within the inhabitants of Buea, south west region of Cameroon | IJSAR*. (2024). Scienceijsar.com. <https://www.scienceijsar.com/article/effect-ethnic-diversity-social-relations-within-inhabitants-buea-south-west-region-cameroon>

Ezemenaka, K. E., & Ekumaoko, C. E. (2022). Beyond language: Further issues in the Anglophone Cameroon conflict. *Social Identities*, 28(2), 200-216.

Module 4: Religious diversity and social institutions

In this module student will be exposed to the religious diversity that exist in Cameroon. Since 1990 when the freedom of religion and religious diversity was recognized and protected, religious donimations have played a key role in spiritual wellbeing, political, economic and social development. In Cameroon, the relationship between the state and the different religious

denominations has varied over time and has been complicated by the country's unresolved bicultural (Anglophone/Francophone divide), multireligious, and multiethnic contradictions. This has consequently been a relationship that has continuously been marked by a mix of suspicion, tension, regulatory controls, and containment (Fombad, 2015).

Sessions may include

- Visit to non-governmental institutions working with religious institutions

Required Readings:

Fombad, C. M. (2015). State, religion, and law in Cameroon: Regulatory control, tension, and accommodation. *Journal of Church and State*, 57(1), 18-43.

Ndemanu, M. T. (2018). Traditional African Religions and Their Influences on the Worldviews of Bangwa People of Cameroon: Expanding the Cultural Horizons of Study Abroad Students and Professionals. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, 30(1), 70-84.

Module 5: Disability and access in Cameroon

In this module, students will examine how disability has limited access in terms of mobility, access to social protection, employment and political participation to name a few. Students will consider intersectionality as a key principle to disability advocacy and making the movement more inclusive. The hope is that intersectionality will forge new ways of relation with non-deisable persons.

Sessions may include

- Visit to disable center
- Visit to NGO that work with disabled persons

Required Readings:

Boyco Orams, D., Elbers, W., & Okwany, A. (2020). How inclusive is the disability movement? The case of North-West Cameroon.

Cannata, G., Douryang, M., Ljoka, C., Giordani, L., Monticone, M., & Foti, C. (2022). The burden of disability in Africa and Cameroon: a call for optimizing the education in physical and rehabilitation medicine. *Frontiers in Rehabilitation Sciences*, 3, 873362.

Ferguson, P. M., & Nusbaum, E. (2012). Disability studies: What is it and what difference does it make?. *Research and practice for persons with severe disabilities*, 37(2), 70-80.

World Bank. (2022, December 1). Challenges Facing Persons with Disabilities in Sub-Saharan Africa – in 5 charts. *World Bank*.

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/brief/challenges-facing-people-with-disabilities-in-sub-saharan-africa-in-5-charts>

Recommended readings

Berger, R., & Wilbers, L. (2021). *Introducing Disability Studies*. 2nd ed.

<https://www.riener.com/uploads/5f84d9fd8cabd.pdf>

Assignments and Evaluation

Assignment Descriptions and Grading Criteria

1) Presentation & Lead Discussion (20%)

Presentation & Discussion Leadership (20%) Each student will choose a course theme and prepare a 10-minute presentation based on at least two prescribed texts/videos, using no more than 10 slides. Following the presentation, students will lead a 15-minute class discussion. Students are expected to be creative in their approach and incorporate their own ideas alongside course materials. A discussion plan should be submitted before the presentation. Further details and evaluation criteria will be covered in class.

2. Village Observation Poster (25%)

During their stay in Batoufam, students will participate in village life through activities such as helping with farm work, spending time with host families, or engaging with community members. Students will document their observations of daily life while analyzing the social dynamics they encounter. Drawing on these experiences and their broader understanding of Cameroon, students will create a poster that presents their insights clearly and engages viewers in discussion. The poster should combine personal observations with course concepts. Specific guidelines for the poster format and presentation will be shared in class.

3) Women and intersectionality identities (25%)

Putting on your intersectionality lens write a five-page paper reflecting on the lives of the contemporary Cameroonian woman. This should focus on her current circumstances, what resources are available to her, and how access to these would affect her status. It should equally elaborate critically on her challenges, potentials and contributions to the Cameroonian society politically, economically and socially.

You are advised to take a distance from Western conceptions of feminism and be attuned to the local contexts and realities, their sex, age, class, religion, cultures and physical appearance in writing this paper. Your experiences in Cameroon, observations, classroom lectures, readings and conversations with your local hosts and others should inform your write-up.

4) Reflective Field Journal (20%)

Throughout the semester, students will maintain a structured field journal documenting their observations and reflections on course themes, particularly during field visits and community interactions. The journal should include weekly entries that connect personal observations with course concepts and readings. Students will analyze how different aspects of identity and social structures interact in various settings. This ongoing reflection will help prepare for both the poster presentation and final paper.

5. Participation (10%)

Attendance during the seminar is mandatory and your grade will reflect your involvement in class and during other activities and excursions. We encourage you to participate actively, but also remind you that speaking more is not always better. You'll receive participation credit for the days when you do the following:

- Be present - promptness to class and positive presence in class.
- Active Listening - paying attention in class and during field excursions, asking appropriate questions, showing interest and enthusiasm (this includes body language), entertaining contradictory perspectives, taking notes.
- Involvement in Class Discussions - either in small or large groups, sharing knowledge. This means challenging yourself to speak up if you usually don't, and also means allowing others to speak if you are a person who tends to dominate class discussions.
- Group Accountability – positive participation in the group during field excursions and classes; not keeping others waiting.
- Displaying Respect – culturally appropriate interaction with hosts, SIT program staff, SIT lecturers and communities.

Assessment

Presentation and lead discussion – 20%

Village observation poster – 25%

Women in Cameroon - 25%

Reflective Field Journal -20%

Participation - 10%