

Multiculturalism and Human Rights

AFRS-3000 (3 credits)

South Africa: Choose Your Track—Multiculturalism, Education, Health OR Climate

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 Multiculturalism and Human Rights course examines South Africa's complex sociopolitical landscape through five interconnected modules. Through lectures, discussions, and field visits to relevant sites, this course provides students with a nuanced understanding of South Africa's history of apartheid, its transition to democracy, and contemporary challenges in building an equitable multicultural society that upholds human rights principles.

Beginning with foundational historical context, the course progresses through examinations of South Africa's democratic transition, truth and reconciliation efforts, and current debates on identity, land, education, and economic justice. Students will analyze how apartheid's legacy continues to shape policy and social relations, while exploring various approaches to fostering social cohesion and protecting rights in a diverse society.

The course critically engages with multiculturalism's theoretical foundations and practical applications in South Africa, examining both "Rainbow Nation" discourse and its critiques. Students will investigate how various stakeholders—from government institutions to grassroots organizations—work to address historical injustices while building inclusive frameworks for the future. Through direct engagement with communities, activists, and scholars, students will develop a complex understanding of how multiculturalism and human rights intersect with issues of race, gender, class, language, and access to resources in contemporary South Africa.

Learning Outcomes and Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate comprehensive knowledge of South Africa's political, economic, social, and cultural landscape from both historical and contemporary perspectives
2. Critically analyze multicultural frameworks and policies in South Africa, evaluating their effectiveness in addressing historical inequalities and fostering social cohesion

3. Assess how human rights principles are implemented, protected, or challenged across various domains including education, land reform, gender equality, and economic development
4. Evaluate the complex relationship between truth, reconciliation, justice, and nation-building in post-apartheid South Africa
5. Apply theoretical concepts from multicultural studies and human rights discourse to analyze real-world cases encountered through field visits and community engagement
6. Articulate the connections between South Africa's historical legacies and contemporary social movements for equity and justice
7. Demonstrate skills in cross-cultural communication and ethical engagement with diverse South African communities and perspectives

Language of Instruction

This course is taught 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.

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.

Assignments and Evaluation

Assignment Descriptions and Grading Criteria

In-Class Participation and Field Engagement (15%) Active participation is essential for learning in this course. Students are expected to engage meaningfully in class discussions, field activities, and interactions with guest speakers and local organizations. Students will be evaluated on the quality of their contributions, critical thinking skills, respectful engagement with diverse perspectives, and ability to connect field experiences to course concepts. Participation is assessed through instructor observation during class sessions and field visits.

Multimodal Identity Map (25%) Students will create a physical, multimodal "identity map" that documents and analyzes how identity, culture, and human rights intersect in a specific South African community or context they encounter during the program. The project combines visual documentation, firsthand observations, and critical analysis into a creative presentation format.

Requirements:

1. Select a specific community, neighborhood, or cultural site that illuminates South Africa's multicultural dynamics
2. Document your engagement through various media: handwritten field notes, photographs, sketches, audio recordings (with permission), found objects, or other physical artifacts
3. Create a visual "map" that represents how different identity markers (race, language, religion, gender, etc.) intersect with human rights issues in this space
4. Include direct quotes and perspectives from at least two community members (collected through in-person conversations)
5. Incorporate analysis connecting your observations to course concepts and readings

The final project will be presented as a physical installation that might take the form of an annotated photographic essay, a mixed-media collage, a hand-drawn map with embedded analysis, or another creative format that effectively communicates your findings. Maps will be displayed in a "gallery walk" session where students share and discuss their work.

Assessment:

- Quality and depth of field observations and documentation
- Creative and effective visual representation of complex social dynamics
- Thoughtful integration of community voices and perspectives
- Critical analysis connecting field observations to course concepts
- Presentation and explanation of the map during the gallery session

Cultural Dialogue Facilitation (25%) In pairs, students will design and facilitate a 45-minute structured dialogue exploring a contentious multicultural or human rights issue in South Africa. This assignment develops students' abilities to create spaces for meaningful cross-cultural conversation while engaging deeply with course themes.

Requirements:

1. Select a significant debate or tension related to multiculturalism or human rights in South Africa (e.g., language rights in education, land reform approaches, cultural appropriation, or traditional vs. constitutional law)
2. Research multiple perspectives on this issue through course readings, independent research, and conversations with South Africans
3. Design an original dialogue format that:
 - Includes at least one experiential activity or simulation that helps participants understand different perspectives
 - Incorporates relevant South African cultural materials (music, art, news articles, etc.)
 - Creates opportunities for all class members to engage meaningfully with the topic
4. Facilitate the dialogue during class time, demonstrating skills in managing discussion and drawing out diverse viewpoints
5. Submit a 3-page reflection analyzing what the dialogue revealed about multicultural dynamics in South Africa

Assessment:

- Depth of research and understanding of multiple perspectives on the chosen issue
- Creativity and effectiveness of the dialogue design and facilitation
- Ability to create a space for respectful engagement with different viewpoints
- Quality of integrated South African cultural materials
- Depth of analysis in the reflection component

Oral Examination (35%) Students will participate in a 25-minute individual oral examination with the course instructor at the end of the semester. The examination will assess students'

understanding of key course concepts, ability to analyze complex social issues, and capacity to synthesize information across the course modules. Questions will require students to analyze case studies, interpret cultural artifacts, and apply theoretical frameworks to specific South African contexts. Students will receive a rubric and study guide two weeks before the examination to prepare effectively. The oral exam will be recorded for assessment purposes.

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: Historical Foundations: Colonialism, Apartheid, and Resistance

This module examines the historical development of South Africa, focusing on colonialism, the implementation of apartheid, and resistance movements that challenged these systems. Students will develop a critical understanding of how historical forces shaped South Africa's social, political, and economic landscape, creating enduring patterns of inequality and division.

Guest lectures will explore topics including pre-colonial and colonial history of South Africa, the development and implementation of apartheid policies, resistance movements and their strategies, and international solidarity and anti-apartheid activism.

Field visits include the Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg, Constitutional Court, Soweto township tour, and sites of historical significance in Cape Town.

Required Readings:

- Thompson, L. (2001). A history of South Africa (3rd ed.). Yale University Press. (Selected chapters)
- Robins, S., & Shepherd, N. (Eds.). (2008). New South African keywords: A concise guide to public and political discourse in post-apartheid society. Jacana Publishers and Ohio University Press. (Selected chapters)
- Frueh, J. (2002). Political identity and social change: The remaking of the South African social order. SUNY Press. (Chapters 1-2)

Module 2: Democratic Transition and Constitutional Framework

This module focuses on South Africa's transition to democracy, examining the negotiation process, constitutional development, and the establishment of new democratic institutions. Students will analyze the strengths and limitations of South Africa's constitutional framework and its approach to protecting rights in a diverse society.

Guest lectures will address topics including the negotiation process and political transition, South Africa's constitutional framework, democratic institutions and governance structures, and the role of civil society in democratic consolidation.

Field visits include Parliament (when in Cape Town), Constitutional Hill, and civil society organizations focused on democratic governance and participation.

Required Readings:

- Friedman, S. (2009). An accidental advance? South Africa's 2009 elections. *Journal of Democracy*, 20(4), 108-122.
- Cowan, J. K., Dembour, M. B., & Wilson, R. A. (2011). Culture and rights: Anthropological perspectives. Cambridge University Press. (Selected chapters)
- Alexander, N., & Heugh, K. (1999). Language policy in the new South Africa. In A. Zegeye & R. Kriger (Eds.), *Cultural change and development in South Africa*. Special Issue, 1998-9 *Culturelink*, 9-33.

Module 3: Truth, Reconciliation, and Transitional Justice

This module examines South Africa's approach to addressing human rights violations of the past through mechanisms like the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Students will critically analyze the concepts of truth, justice, reconciliation, and forgiveness in South Africa's context, evaluating the successes and limitations of transitional justice efforts.

Guest lectures will address topics including the establishment and work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, victim testimonies and perpetrator amnesty, approaches to reparations and memorialization, and ongoing debates about justice and reconciliation.

Field visits include District Six Museum, Robben Island, and an engagement with the Direct Action Centre for Peace and Memory, which conducts peace-building workshops with former freedom fighters.

Required Readings:

- Gibson, J. L. (2004). *Overcoming apartheid: Can truth reconcile a divided nation?* HSRC Press.
- Villa-Vicencio, C. (2008, June 18). *On being South African: Identity, religion and culture* [Beyers Naudé Memorial Lecture]. University of Johannesburg, South Africa.

Module 4: Identity, Language, and Cultural Rights

This module explores issues of identity and cultural rights in post-apartheid South Africa, examining how different communities navigate questions of belonging, recognition, and cultural preservation. Students will analyze South Africa's approach to multiculturalism, language rights, and cultural expression in a diverse society.

Guest lectures will address topics including theoretical frameworks for multiculturalism, language policy and language rights, cultural heritage and preservation, and religious diversity and religious freedom.

Field visits include the Bo-Kaap neighborhood in Cape Town, cultural and heritage sites, and community organizations focused on language preservation and cultural rights.

Required Readings:

- Adhikari, M. (2005). *Not white enough, not black enough: Racial identity in the South African coloured community*. Double Story Books.
- Bekker, S., & Leildé, A. (2003). Is multiculturalism a workable policy in South Africa? *IJMS: International Journal on Multicultural Societies*, 5(2), 119-134.
- Rex, J., & Singh, G. (2003). Pluralism and multiculturalism in colonial and post-colonial societies. *IJMS: International Journal on Multicultural Societies*, 5(2), 106-118.
- Hadland, A., Louw, E., Sesanti, S., & Wasserman, H. (2008). *Power, politics and identity in South African media*. HSRC Press. (Selected chapters)

Module 5: Social Justice and Contemporary Human Rights Challenges

This final module examines contemporary challenges in achieving social justice and protecting human rights in South Africa. Students will analyze issues such as land reform, economic inequality, gender justice, and ongoing struggles to realize social and economic rights for all South Africans.

Guest lectures will address topics including land reform and restitution, economic inequality and transformation, gender equity and women's rights, and access to housing, education, and healthcare.

Field visits include townships and informal settlements, land restitution projects, and community-based organizations addressing social and economic rights.

Required Readings:

- Mubangizi, J. C. (2008). Protecting human rights amidst poverty and inequality: The South African post-apartheid experience on the right of access to housing. *African Journal of Legal Studies*, 2, 130-146.
- Ntsebeza, L., & Hall, R. (Eds.). (2007). *The land question in South Africa: The challenge of transformation and redistribution*. HSRC Press. (Selected chapters)
- Pithouse, R. (2010, February 13). Faster, harder, smarter? SACSIS. <http://www.sacsis.org.za>
- McEachern, C. (2002). *Narratives of nation media, memory and representation in the making of the new South Africa*. Nova Science Publishers. (Selected chapters)