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AFRS 101: Ethnology of Africa

CUNY School of Professional Studies

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CUNY School of Professional Studies

AFRS 101: ETHNOLOGY OF AFRICA

General Education

Flexible Core A: WORLD CULTURES AND GLOBAL ISSUES

No prerequisites

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Applies the fundamental methods and concepts of cultural anthropology to the study of sub-Saharan African societies and nations, with emphasis on the impact of slavery and colonialism, current problems of economic and political development, and Africa's emerging place in 21st-century global interactions. Exploration of histories, politics, economics, family structures, gender, power, and health in different African cultures through analysis of ethnographies, text chapters, generalist summaries, historical research, news accounts, specialist articles, and literature.

FLEXIBLE CORE AREA LEARNING OUTCOMES A US WORLD CULTURES AND GLOBAL ISSUES

Students will:

1. Gather, interpret, and assess information from a variety of sources and points of view.
2. Evaluate evidence and arguments critically or analytically.
3. Produce well-reasoned written or oral arguments using evidence to support conclusions.
4. Identify and apply the fundamental concepts and methods of a discipline or interdisciplinary field exploring world cultures or global issues, including, but not limited to, anthropology, communications, cultural studies, economics, ethnic studies, foreign languages (building upon previous language acquisition), geography, history, political science, sociology, and world literature.
5. Analyze culture, globalization, or global cultural diversity, and describe an event or process from more than one point of view.
6. Analyze the historical development of one or more non-U.S. societies.
7. Analyze the significance of one or more major movements that have shaped the world's societies.
8. Analyze and discuss the role that race, ethnicity, class, gender, language, sexual orientation, belief, or other forms of social differentiation play in world cultures or societies.
9. Speak, read, and write a language other than English, and use that language to respond to cultures other than one's own.

This course will address Learning Outcomes 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8

DISCIPLINE-SPECIFIC LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Apply the fundamental methods and concepts of cultural anthropology to the study of sub-Saharan African societies and current sub-Saharan African states;
- Identify major geographic features, countries, regions of Africa on a map;
- Achieve a broad understanding of African histories, including ancient civilizations, slavery, colonial, postcolonial, and independence eras;
- Differentiate the forms of family and kinship in sub-Saharan Africa and the purposes they serve in organizing society;
- Examine some of the social issues in contemporary, sub-Saharan Africa;
- Describe the elements of traditional African religions, and their major developments in past decades, including the emergence of indigenous churches;
- Survey contemporary African arts and literature from specific African countries;
- Apply the participant observation methodology to plan and develop a fieldwork project.

REQUIRED TEXTS

This is a low-cost course. There is one required book, *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, which can be rented from the library or bought used. All other required readings will be provided free of charge through the course site.

GRADING & ASSIGNMENTS

ASSIGNMENTS	Percent
Interview Project (Paper & Blog) (400 pts)	40%
Discussion Board (15 @ 24 pts)	36%
Tests (4 @ 60 pts)	24%
Total	100%

ASSIGNMENTS

Discussion Boards

Weekly discussion board fora correspond to the assigned readings and unit topics: ecology, history, politics and political institutions, family and social issues, health and healing, religion, arts, fieldwork, and contemporary issues. Each week the instructor provides one or two discussion prompts (threads) based on the assigned readings. Students are required to select and participate in at least one discussion thread each week, using their own knowledge, the assigned readings, and other course resources to provide thoughtful responses to the initial discussion prompt and to two classmates' posts (on any thread). The DB is assessed on timeliness, mechanics, participation, quality, and interaction with classmates (see the rubrics in Appendix B). Discussion Boards assess all World Cultures and Global Issues LOs.

Tests

There are 4 tests. Tests overall assess LOs A4, A6, A7, A8.

Interview Project

The Interview project consists of 7 steps (scaffolded blogs): introduction of project, selection of topic, academic resources, fieldwork plan, plan update, final product, and reflection. This assignment applies the fundamental concepts and methods of cultural anthropology. The methodology often used by anthropologists is participant observation, where the anthropologist lives among a group of people to understand their way of life and belief system (see Appendix A for additional information). The Interview Project assesses all World Cultures and Global Issues LOs.

Project Task	Points
Blog #1	10
Blog #2	40
Blog #3	40
Blog #4	50
Blog #5	30
Blog #6	30
Interview Paper	170
Blog #7	30
Total	400

GRADING DISTRIBUTION

A	93-100 percent
A-	90-92.9
B+	87-89.9
B	83-86.9
B-	80-82.9
C+	77-79.9
C	73-76.9
C-	70-72.9
D	60-69.9
F	Below 60

ACCESSIBILITY AND ACCOMMODATIONS

The CUNY School of Professional Studies is firmly committed to making higher education accessible to students with disabilities by removing architectural barriers and providing programs and support services necessary for them to benefit from the instruction and resources of the University. Early planning is essential for many of the resources and accommodations provided. For more information, please see: [Disability Services on the CUNY SPS Website](#).

ONLINE ETIQUETTE AND ANTI-HARASSMENT POLICY

The University strictly prohibits the use of University online resources or facilities, including Blackboard, for the purpose of harassment of any individual or for the posting of any material that is scandalous, libelous, offensive or otherwise against the University's policies. Please see: "[Netiquette in an Online Academic Setting: A Guide for CUNY School of Professional Studies Students.](#)"

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic dishonesty is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Cheating, forgery, plagiarism and collusion in dishonest acts undermine the educational mission of the City University of New York and the students' personal and intellectual growth. Please see: [Academic Integrity on the CUNY SPS Website](#).

TUTORING

CUNY SPS offers all students a variety of tutoring services, free of charge, both online and in person. Please see: [Tutoring](#).

HELP DESK

For assistance with access to CUNY SPS and CUNY computing resources, please see the [Help Desk](#) website for contact details and semester hours.

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

If you need any additional help, please visit [Student Support Services](#)

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week	Topic	Readings & Viewings (accessible in Blackboard in Weekly Units)	Assignments
Week 1	Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch: Don't Misrepresent Africa (Ted talk) • Read: "How to Write about Africa" (Wainaina) • Read: "Introduction, A Companion to the Anthropology of Africa • Maps (size map; political map) • Course Syllabus; Blackboard site 	DB Blog #1
Week 2	Ecological background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Overview of Africa • Watch: From Poachers to Caretakers • Ecosystems map 	Test 1 DB
Week 3	Histories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Early history (BBC, Story of Africa) • Read: Central African Kingdoms (BBC, Story of Africa) • Read: West African Kingdoms (BBC, Story of Africa) • Watch: Stringer, Christopher. "Rethinking "Out of Africa" • Map of Rift Valley • Map of Kingdoms 	DB Blog 2
Week 4	Slavery	<p>African Slave Trade</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch: Atlantic Slave Trade: What too few textbooks told you (Ted Talk) • Read: Story of Africa/Slavery (BBC) • Read: Taking Sides, Slavery, pgs 2-23 • Watch: 6-minute clip of Chinua Achebe on slavery <p>Modern Day Slavery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch: How to Combat Slavery (Kevin Bales) • Read: Face of Modern Slavery (NYTimes) • Read: Africa's culture war: old customs new values <p>Ethnography</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Making Heritage in Brazilian Quilombos 	DB
Week 5	Methods and Ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Review anthropology's code of ethics • Read: Reflection on participant observation: • Read: Participant observation guide • Read: How to conduct anthropological interviews • Watch: Guidance on JSTOR 	DB Blog 3
Week 6	Africa and Europe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Africa and Europe (BBC, The story of Africa) • Read: Independence (BBC, The story of Africa) • Map: Colonialism 1914 	DB Test 2
Week 7	Politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Law, Dispute Resolution, and Justice (Jessica Johnson) in A Companion to the Anthropology of Africa • Watch: Africa's Cheetahs vs. Hippos 	DB Blog 4
Week 8	Economics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: The Economic Anthropology of Africa (Jane I. Guyer) • Read: "Some Principles of Exchange and Investment among the Tiv." • Watch: The Age-Old Sharing Economies (Ted talk) 	DB
		Spring Break	
Week 9	Family and Kinship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Revisiting the Social Bedrock of Kinship and Descent in the Anthropology of Africa (Pauline E. Peters) • Read: Kinship in African Philosophy and the Issue of Development 	DB
Week 10	Arts and Literature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch: The Definition of Art • Watch: Telling Stories about Africa (Ted talk with Chris Abani) • Read: Poet of an Ordinary Heartbreak (Chris Abani poem) 	DB Blog 5
Week 11	Religion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Power, Meaning, and Materiality in the Anthropology of African Religions South of the Sahara: A Dialogue with Religious Studies (Joseph Hellweg and Jesse C. Miller) • Read: Do Infants Have Religion? (Alma Gottlieb) 	DB Test 3

Week	Topic	Readings & Viewings (accessible in Blackboard in Weekly Units)	Assignments
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Watch: Beng Babies and Mothers 	
Week 12	Anthropology in Action	Chinua Achebe, <i>Things Fall Apart</i>	DB Blog 6 Final paper
Week 13	Anthropology in Action, cont.	Chinua Achebe, <i>Things Fall Apart</i>	DB
Week 14	Health & Healing	Read: Illness and Healing: Africanist Anthropology (Rebecca L. Upton)	DB Blog 7
Week 15	Conflict & its resolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read: Culture by Other Means: An Africanist Anthropology of Political Violence and War (Danny Hoffman) Watch: Hotel Rwanda; follow story of Paul Rusesabagina in current news Watch: The Music of a War Child Need (TedTalk) 	DB Test 4