

SOCIOLOGY OF AFRICA
SOC 321K
Unique: 46364

Spring 2010
BUR 136
Tue/Thurs 3:30-5:00pm

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Office Hours: Mon/Thurs 9-10, or by appointment

I. Course description

This course provides a broad introductory survey to Africa from a sociological perspective. Bridging classical macro and micro-sociological approaches, it has two principal aims: to deepen our understanding of Africa and African societies; and to help enrich sociological thought by incorporating Africa – long ignored – into the sociological canon.

The course is divided into three sections. The first addresses the problem of representation. How do we learn about Africa? How has the tension between Philo-Africans, Africa-romantics and those driven to improve life on the “Dark Continent”, affected what we claim to know about Africa? How do Africans themselves feel about Africa? What are “authentic” African cultural forms and behavior?

The second section deals with political structures. By this we refer not only to the formal structure of African states and political authority, but also to constraints on states’ ability to project their formal authority. Some of these constraints are internal, related to specific countries’ ethnic and geographic characteristics. Others are external, stemming from African states’ embeddedness in global or transnational authority structures .

Having identified those constraints, the third section of the course deals with the three key social institutions that, either in addition to the state or in response to its failures, affect life on the ground. These three are: the extended family, religious institutions, and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). We will describe the key features and functions of each of these, document how, if at all, they have changed over the last few decades, and think about how they are likely to change in the near future .

Course reading will draw primarily on academic writing – book chapters and journal articles – though it will also include chapters from popular non-fiction. Throughout the course we will also watch – and critically discuss – three documentary films about Africa.

II. Course objectives:

Upon completion of the course, I expect students to be able to:

1. Evaluate ideas about Africa more critically
2. Embed information about contemporary Africa and the lives of contemporary Africans in a more general historical and sociological frame
3. See the dangers of uncritical engagement with Africa from both the left and the right
4. Think about sociology from a less western perspective – note that this does not necessarily mean *anti*-western perspective

III. Course Design and Format

This course will be run in a seminar-style format. It demands ongoing commitment and, as such, is recommended for motivated undergraduates who are interested in Africa and in broad interdisciplinary social science. While there are writing assignments throughout the semester to encourage students to analyze and synthesize information and ideas in a rigorous way, there are no in-class quizzes or tests. The classes are designed to be a series of interactive weekly meetings, with some lecturing to help embed reading in a more general context.

IV. Course requirements and weighted grading at-a-glance

- Attendance, active intellectually rigorous engagement in class discussions and reading response papers: 25%
- Three short (3-5 page) analytic papers related to course readings: 30%
- Final (10-15 page) research paper which integrates selected readings into a topic/research question of choice: 45%

V. Writing Assignments (all 12 pt. font, double spaced):

1. Reading response papers: Each week all members of the class will write a two-page response to the reading. These can be reflections, reactions, critical commentaries or overviews of that reading. They do not need to equally cover all readings of that week, but they should refer to all. These reading response papers should be turned into class every Thursday. Although they are ungraded, they constitute an important part of the participation grade. **Note**: These reading response papers must be turned in on time. They cannot be made up at the end of the course.
2. Three short papers: These should be in the 3-4 page (length) range. Each will focus on one of the three documentary films scheduled for class time during the semester – note that all three are available in UT's Fine Arts library for supplementary private viewing. The primary aim of these is to critically review the films in relation to materials that we have already covered in class. A more specific rubric will be distributed prior to the first assignment.
3. Final paper: a 10-15 page analysis focused on a question of your choice, which combines theory, analysis and ethnography. Students will be asked to use theoretical materials from the course to think through their research projects for their final papers. The paper should include a bibliography of literature cited (should have at least 6-10 references total, 3-5 from scholarly sources outside the course, 3-5 from the course).

V. Grading Scale

A	95-100%	<u>Excellent</u> grasp of subject matter; provides relevant details and examples; draws clear and interesting connections, exceptionally original, coherent and well-organized; explains concepts clearly; ideas clearly written/stated, outstanding classroom participation
A-	90-94%	<u>Very good</u> grasp of subject matter; provides relevant details and examples; draws clear connections; explains concepts clearly; ideas clearly written/stated
B+	86-89%	<u>Good</u> grasp of some elements above, others need work
B	83-85%	<u>Satisfactory</u> grasp of some elements above

B-	80-82%	<u>Uneven, spotty</u> grasp of the elements above
C+	76-79%	<u>Limited</u> grasp of the above
C	73-75%	<u>Poor</u> grasp of the above
C-	70-72%	<u>Very poor</u> grasp of the above
D	60-69%	<u>Little evidence</u> of grasp of material, having done readings, attended class, or completed assignments
F	0-59%	<u>Insignificant</u> evidence of having done readings, attended class, or completing assignments

VI. Important notes on grading and participation:

Complete written assignments on time: I am committed to returning assignments to you promptly so you can benefit from my feedback while the material is fresh in your mind. I do not grade papers or exams until I have the entire printed set in front of me. For these reasons, **I do not accept late assignments.** Bring a hard copy at the beginning of class on the day it is due. If you anticipate a problem, or have a history of deadline problems, meet with a consultant at the learning or writing center to help you plan ahead.

The UT Learning Center: <http://www.utexas.edu/student/utlc/>
Undergraduate Writing Center: <http://uwc.utexas.edu/>

Grading policy: I am very happy to discuss how you may improve your work, but **I will not reconsider grades on papers or quizzes.** I grade all the papers in a set at the same time to ensure that I am applying the same standards, and I make every effort to be fair.

Plagiarism and copying: Although this course is designed for creative, individual work and synthesis of ideas from various sources (it would be hard to cheat in the conventional sense of the word), any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit must be the student's own work. Should copying occur from another student, both the student who copied work and the student who gave material to be copied will both automatically receive a zero for the assignment. Penalty for violation of this Code can also be extended to include failure of the course and University disciplinary action. Here are University statements about plagiarism and the consequences of plagiarizing:

<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/services/instruction/faculty/plagiarism/preventing.html>
<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/services/instruction/learningmodules/plagiarism/>

Using office hours, getting help: If you're having problems, or have questions, come to my office (BUR 476) during office hours! I've set aside those hours for you. Use them. If you can't come during those hours, make an appointment with me over email.

Note: As a general rule, I don't like being asked questions over email that have been asked – and answered – in class. Consequently, please save email for (a) questions or queries which cannot wait until class, and (b) which I haven't already addressed in class. If you're unsure about the latter, then either ask someone else in the class, or come to me immediately before/after class.

Attendance, contribution, and classroom vibe: Regular attendance is not only the key to your own success as a student in this course, but also for the quality of the course as a dynamic whole. Arriving late and leaving early disrupts class flow, so make every effort to arrive to class on time with your materials prepared and phones, etc. off. This is supposed to be an

interpersonal seminar. Attendance and the quality of your participation are factored into your final grade. And as it's a relatively small class, I'll notice absences.

VII. University Notices and Policies

University of Texas Honor Code

The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

In this course, that means we will all work to ensure that the discussion space is shared relatively equally among the participants, and to maintain an atmosphere of respect for each other's perspectives and arguments, especially when there are strong disagreements.

Students with disabilities

Any student with a documented disability who requires academic accommodations should contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at (512) 471-6259 (voice) or 1-866-329-3986 (video phone). Please contact me as early in the semester as possible to let me know if you need anything to participate fully.

Religious Holy Days

By UT Austin policy, students are required to notify me of a pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, I will certainly give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

VIII. A required course pack is available for purchase at Paradigm Books (West 24th St. at the intersection of Guadalupe)

IX. Key due dates at-a-glance: Plan ahead!

Every Thursday: Reading response papers

Thursday, February 4: Movie review (*ABC Africa*) due

Thursday, February 25: Movie review (*Darwin's Nightmare*) due

Tuesday, March 23: Movie review (*Le malentendu colonial*) due

Monday, May 10: Hand in final paper

X. Extra things

Most people don't know African geography very well – part of a theme that we'll explore in part 1 of the course. I expect more of you. All students in this class should to be at least nominally familiar with African countries. If need be, spend some time with a map.

XI. Getting lost in Africa

Feeling bored, want to relax? Visit Africa. Fly over it (Google Earth). Listen to it (tons of African music from all over the continent on youtube). Read some fiction (start with Chinua Achebe). Watch some African movies (there are a bunch of movies directed by Ousmane Sembène, the father of African cinema, in UT Fine Arts library).

XII. Tentative Course Schedule: ***This syllabus represents current course plans and objectives. As we go through the semester, those plans may need to change to enhance the class. Any such changes will be communicated clearly.*

Date	Main Topic(s)	Work to do at home Readings – to be completed before class	Evaluation
A. General Introduction			
Tue Jan 19	Introduction to the course	No reading	
Thurs Jan 21	Introducing Africa	Read over syllabus Eddy L. <u>Harris</u> (1992) <i>Native Stranger: A Black American's Journey into the Heart of Africa</i> . New York: Simon and Schuster <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 1 (pp. 13-33) "Into Africa Through the Back Door" Ali A. <u>Mazrui</u> (1986) <i>The Africans: A Triple Heritage</i> . Boston: Little, Brown and Company. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 1 (pp. 23-38) "Where is Africa?" 	OPTIONAL: Type me a note about the syllabus: a) what surprises you; b) what you look forward to; c) what you most dread
Tue Jan 26	The Berlin conference + contemporary African political geography	Roland <u>Oliver</u> (1991) <i>The African Experience: Major Themes in African History from Earliest Times to the Present</i> . New York: HarperCollins <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 14 (pp. 174-186) "The Drawing of the Map" • Ch. 18 (pp. 227-240) "The Birth of Nations" 	
Thurs Jan 28	Movie day: <i>ABC Africa</i>	No reading	
B. Representation			
Tue Feb 2	Premodern sources	William Leo <u>Hansberry</u> (1981) <i>Africa and Africans as Seen by Classical Writers</i> . (ed. Joseph E. Harris) Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 2 (pp. 19-63) "A preliminary critique of classical sources" Bernard <u>Lewis</u> (1990) <i>Race and Slavery in the Middle East: An Historical Enquiry</i> . New York: Oxford University Press. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 7 (pp. 50-53) "The Discovery of Africa" • Ch. 4 (pp. 28-36) "Prejudice and Piety, Literature and Law." 	

Thurs Feb 4	PhiloAfricans & romantics	<p>Charles <u>Allen</u> (ed.) (1979) <i>Tales from the Dark Continent</i>. London: Andre Deutsch/BBC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 6 (pp. 94-111) "Going to Bush" • Ch. 7 (pp. 112-127) "Men with Sand in their Hair" optional Chapter 2. 	Review of ABC Africa due
Tue Feb 9	African views	<p><u>Ngugi Wa Thiongo</u> (1981). <i>Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature</i>. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 1 (pp. 4-33) "The Language of African Literature." <p>Gregory Hankoni <u>Kamwendo</u> (2004). "'Your Chitumbuka is Shallow. It's not the Real Chitumbuka': Linguistic Purism Among Chitumbuka Speakers in Malawi." <i>Nordic Journal of African Studies</i> 13(3): 275–288.</p> <p>David <u>Haggood</u> (1970). <i>Africa: From Independence to Tomorrow</i>. New York: Atheneum.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 10 (pp. 191-204) "Bourgeois Marxists in Their Ivory Tower." 	
Thurs Feb 11	Between worlds	<p>David <u>Haggood</u> (1970). <i>Africa: From Independence to Tomorrow</i>. New York: Atheneum.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 2 (pp. 12-31) "The Mask of Colonialism." <p>Evelyn Nakano <u>Glenn</u> (ed.) (2009). <i>Shades of Difference: Why Skin Color Matters</i>, Stanford: Stanford University Press.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 11 (pp. 188-209), by Lynn M. <u>Thomas</u>. "Skin Lighteners in South Africa: Transnational Entanglements and Technologies of the Self." 	
Tue Feb 16	The darker side of data collection	<p>Nigel <u>Barley</u> (1983). <i>The Innocent Anthropologist: Notes from a Mud Hut</i>. London: Penguin Books.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 5 (pp. 37-50) "Take me to your leader." • Ch. 6 (pp. 51-67) "Is the sky clear for you?" <p>Alexander <u>Weinreb</u> (2006). "The limitations of stranger-interviewers in rural Kenya." <i>American Sociological Review</i> 71(6): 1014-1039</p>	

Thurs Feb 18	Movie Day: <i>Darwin's Nightmare</i>	No reading	
C. Internal Political Structures			
Tue Feb 23	National design	Jeffrey <u>Herbst</u> . (2000). <i>States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control</i> . Princeton: Princeton University Press <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ch 4. (pp. 97-136) "The Political Kingdom in Independent Africa." 	
Thurs Feb 25	Broadcasting power	Jeffrey <u>Herbst</u> . (2000). <i>States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control</i> . Princeton: Princeton University Press <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ch 5. (pp. 139-172) "National Design and the Broadcasting of Power." 	Review of <i>Darwin's Nightmare</i> due
Tue Mar 2	Local politics	Sandra T. <u>Barnes</u> (1986). <i>Patrons and Power: Creating a Political Community in Metropolitan Lagos</i> . Bloomington: Indiana University Press <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ch. 4 (pp. 71-96) "The Residential Basis of Leadership." Catherine <u>Boone</u> (2003). <i>Political Topographies of the African State: Territorial Authority and Institutional Choice</i> . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ch. 2 (pp. 11-37) "Mapping Political Topography in Africa." 	
Thurs Mar 4	Creating ethnicity	Basil <u>Davidson</u> (1992). <i>The Black Man's Burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation-State</i> . Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ch. 4 (pp. 99-117) "Tribalism and the New Nationalism." Daniel N. <u>Posner</u> (2005). <i>Institutions and Ethnic Politics in Africa</i> . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction to Part 1 (pp. 21-25) Ch. 2 (pp. 26-55) "Accounting for Zambia's Ethnic Cleavage: Structure 1" 	
Tue Mar 9	Experiencing ethnicity	Jean <u>Hatzfeld</u> (2006). <i>Life Laid Bare: The Survivors in Rwanda Speak</i> (trans. Linda Coverdale). New York: Other Press <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (pp. 89-117) "Bicycle Taxis Under an Acacia" 	
Thurs Mar 11	Movie day <i>Le malentendu colonial</i>	No reading	

SPRING BREAK

D. Key Social Institutions: Family, Religion, NGOs

D1. Extended family system

Tue Mar 23	Family-based welfare systems	Blaine <u>Harden</u> (1990). <i>Africa: Dispatches from a Fragile Continent</i> . London: HarperCollins. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ch. 5 (pp. 61-94) "Eye of the Family." 	Review of <i>Le malentendu colonial</i> due
Thurs Mar 25	Changes in family systems	Daniel Jordan <u>Smith</u> (2001). "Romance, Parenthood, and gender in a modern African society." <i>Ethnology</i> 40(2):129-151 Sjaak <u>van der Geest</u> (2004). "'They don't come to listen!': The experience of loneliness among older people in Kwahu, Ghana." <i>Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology</i> 19:77-96.	
Tue Mar 30	* No class: Pesach (Passover) Day 1		
Thurs Apr 1	Contention about the direction or pace of change	Blaine <u>Harden</u> (1990). <i>Africa: Dispatches from a Fragile Continent</i> . London: HarperCollins. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ch. 5 (pp. 95-102, 108-129) "Battle for the Body." 	
Tue Apr 6	* No class: Pesach (Passover) Day 8		

D2. Religion

Thurs Apr 8	Christianity	Philip <u>Jenkins</u> (2006). <i>The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South</i> . Oxford: Oxford University Press <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ch. 4 (pp. 68-97) "Poor and Rich." Ali A. <u>Mazrui</u> (1986) <i>The Africans: A Triple Heritage</i> . Boston: Little, Brown and Company. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excerpt from Ch.7 (pp. 150-157) "Africa at Prayer: New Gods." 	
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Tue Apr 13	Islam	David <u>Robinson</u> (2004). <i>Muslim Societies in African History</i> . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 4 (pp. 42-59) "The Africanization of Islam." • Ch. 10 (pp. 139-152) "Sokoto and Hausaland: Jihad within the Dar al-Islam." 	
Thurs Apr 15	* No class: Annual Meetings of Population Association of America (PAA)		
Tue Apr 20	Religion and the state	Timothy P. <u>Longman</u> (1998). "Empowering the weak and protecting the powerful: The contradictory nature of churches in Central Africa." <i>African Studies Review</i> 41(1):49-72.	
Thurs Apr 22	African religious marketplace	Arye <u>Oded</u> (1995). <i>Religion and Politics in Uganda: A Study of Islam and Judaism</i> . Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pp. 68-91: "The Bayudaya: The African Jews of Uganda." <p>Philip <u>Jenkins</u> (2006). <i>The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South</i>. Oxford: Oxford University Press.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 3 (pp. 42-67) "Old and New." 	
D3. International aid			
Tue Apr 27	Aid industry	Nicholas <u>van de Walle</u> (1999). <i>African Economies and the Politics of Permanent Crisis, 1979-1999</i> . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 5 (pp. 188-234) "The Crisis and Foreign Aid" <p>David <u>Haggood</u> (1970). <i>Africa: From Independence to Tomorrow</i>. New York: Atheneum.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 9 (pp. 176-190) "Foreign Aid: The New Missionaries." 	

Thurs Apr 29	The road to hell is paved with . . .	Blaine <u>Harden</u> (1990). <i>Africa: Dispatches from a Fragile Continent</i> . London: HarperCollins. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ch. 5 (pp. 177-216) "Good Intentions." Michael <u>Maren</u> (1997). <i>The Road to Hell: The Ravaging Effects of Foreign Aid and International Charity</i> . New York: Free Press. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ch.9 (pp. 162-177) "Creating Dependency." 	
Tue May 4	Aid industry case study: Rwanda and Zaire	David <u>Rieff</u> . 2002. <i>A Bed for the Night: Humanitarianism in Crisis</i> . New York: Simon and Schuster. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ch. 5 (pp. 155-193) "Rwanda" Alex <u>de Waal</u> (1997). <i>Famine Crimes: Politics and the Disaster Relief Industry in Africa</i> . Bloomington: Indiana University Press. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ch. 10 (pp. 204-212) "Eastern Zaire, 1996: The Fundraisers' Catastrophe." 	
Thurs May 6	Talking about the future	No reading	
Monday May 10			Hand in final assignment
SEMESTER ENDS			

XII. USEFUL WEBSITES

1) African sources

Afrol—the only independent news agency dedicated solely to African news
<http://www.afrol.com>

All Africa <http://allafrica.com>

KIOSKEN: Gateway to African newspapers by country:
<http://www.esperanto.se/kiosken/en/af>

2) Other (English-language) source

TOPIX—scours online sources about African news
<http://www.topix.net/world/africa>

BBC Africa <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/default.stm>

CNN Africa <http://www.cnn.com/WORLD/africa/archive>