

GEOG 4984: AFRICA TOGETHER
Empathizing with the Youngest Continent through Music, Disease and Violence

COURSE INFORMATION

Credit Hours: 3
Requirements: None
Primary Audience: All students are welcome.
Prerequisites: No prerequisites are required for this course
Location: Moss Arts Center Learning Studio
Meeting Times: 12:30pm-1:45pm T/Th

INSTRUCTOR CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Dr. Timothy Baird
Office Location: Major Williams Hall, Room 127
Office Hours: Tuesdays/Thursdays 3pm-4pm
Email address: tbaird@vt.edu (THIS IS THE BEST WAY TO GET IN TOUCH WITH ME - please put 'GEOG 4984' in the Subject line of your email – this way it won't get lost)

TEACHING ASSISTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Mark Villarreal
Office Location: Major Williams Hall, Room 112
Office Hours: by appointment
Email address: villarmd@vt.edu (CONTACT MARK WITH YOUR QUESTIONS ABOUT READING AND READING NOTES)

COURSE DESCRIPTION & GOALS

Africa is one of the most diverse areas of the world. It faces challenges and opportunities that may be familiar to those of us from other areas. This course focuses on modern Africa and how it's connected to each of our lives. We will critically and constructively examine our connections to Africa by working towards 3 course goals:

1. **identifying** similarities and differences between our lived experiences and Africans';
2. **understanding** how these similarities and differences are contextual and dynamic; and
3. **evaluating** to what extent these dynamics are shaping contemporary understandings of Africa.

The course will be broken into six sections that focus on different topics germane to parts of Africa and potentially to enrolled students. These topics will include:

- Music: Pre-jazz to hip-hop (imperialism to globalization)
- Disease: Ebola to obesity and back (genetics, poverty and infrastructure)
- Social networks: hunting, gathering and tweeting (i.e., the evolution of friending)
- Terrorism: cradle of inhumanity (global trade – global terror)
- Youth: angst and opportunity on the youngest continent

As we discuss these topics, we will pay careful attention to issues of stereotyping, empathy, diffusion and scarcity.

By the end of the course, students should be able to: (1) identify significant challenges and opportunities facing Africa and how they're presented or obfuscated in an array of media; (2) describe the dynamics associated with these concerns; (3) compare their own lived experiences with certain experiences lived by Africans; and (4) evaluate information critically

COURSE MATERIALS

No Required Text

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

Class periods will involve discussion of readings, small in-class group projects, and interactive lecture. Also, there will be a few short movies shown during the course.

READING & CLASS PARTICIPATION

For this course, reading and class participation are inextricably related.

One of the primary forms of participation will be discussion. To reinforce this course objective, a few guiding questions will be provided for each reading. These questions will form the basis of our in-class discussion. Students are expected to do the required reading and answer the reading questions before the appropriate class period. Questions **should be uploaded to Canvas in advance of class** and are evaluated on a 100-point scale. Students are expected to make an earnest effort to respond thoughtfully to each question. Evaluation is not based on correct answers. Answers do not need to be long – a few sentences will suffice for full credit. 13 points will be deducted for each day that questions are handed in late. Exceptions will be made only in extreme circumstances. This is not intended to be punitive, but to encourage timely completion of the reading and quality preparation for class discussion.

In order to create a good climate for everyone to participate, please follow these discussion guidelines:

- *Be ready to share and explain your opinions. Feel free to disagree with others, but be specific in your own assertions and back them up with evidence.*
- *Listen carefully and respond to other members of the group. Be willing to change your mind when someone demonstrates an error in your logic or use of facts.*
- *Do not hesitate to ask for clarification of any point or term that you do not understand.*
- *Make your point succinctly, avoid repetition, and stick to the subject.*

The reading for this course will include newspaper, magazine, and journal articles, selections from books, and textbooks. It is important that you do the readings before the appropriate class periods. Plan ahead so that we will not get behind. PDFs of readings or links to sources on the internet can be found canvas.vt.edu. Also links to internet readings are provided on the syllabus.

COURSE EVALUATION

The best evaluation is personal. “Did I learn anything in this class? Was it worth the effort?” An inquiring attitude and an active imagination will help you to recognize the relevance of the course topics to your life and will enhance your enjoyment of, and success in, this class.

Instructor evaluation will reflect performance on:

Reading Notes:	46%
Midterm Exam	18%
Student Choices	18%
Final Exam/Project	18%
Final Grade	100%

Reading Notes: please see *READING & CLASS PARTICIPATION* section above.

Exams: Exams will aim to evaluate critical thinking skills. Questions for the midterm and final will be drawn from the class discussions and reading notes. Exams will be open book and open notes. This does not mean that the exams will be easier – it means that I will be looking for thoughtful application of examples and ideas from the course to address broad conservation issues and challenges in an organized and convincing manner. One more thing – you have to be in a group of 2. It sucks – I know.

HONOR CODE

The Undergraduate Honor Code pledge that each member of the university community agrees to abide by states: “As a Hokie, I will conduct myself with honor and integrity at all times. I will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor will I accept the actions of those who do.”

Students enrolled in this course are responsible for abiding by the Honor Code. A student who has doubts about how the Honor Code applies to any assignment is responsible for obtaining specific guidance from the course instructor before submitting the assignment for evaluation. Ignorance of the rules does not exclude any member of the University community from the requirements and expectations of the Honor Code. For additional information about the Honor Code, please visit: www.honorsystem.vt.edu

HOW TO SUCCEED IN THIS COURSE

- *Attend class and participate in discussion.*
- *Keep up with the readings.*
- *If something is not clear, ask a question.*
- *Clarify expectations with the Professor.*

COURSE SCHEDULE

SECTION 1: INTRODUCING TOGETHER: STEREOTYPES & EMPATHY

1. JAN 22 (T): FROM WINSLOW TO SIMANJIRO TO BLACKSBURG, REPEAT

2. JAN 24 (Th): GOLF BALLS, SUPER HEROES AND A HAIR SALON

Reading:

- Binyavanga Wainaina (2011) Chapters 1-2 in One Day I Will Write About This Place. 4-20.

3. JAN 29 (T): UPROOTING STEREOTYPES

Reading:

- Claude M. Steele (2010) “The many experiences of stereotype threat” in Whistling Vivaldi: How stereotypes affect us and what we can do. [85-98].

4. JAN 31 (Th): CULTIVATING EMPATHY

Reading:

- Roman Krznaric (2014) “The Radical Power of Empathy” in Empathy: Why it matters and how to get it. [ix-xxx].

5. FEB 5 (T): JUST A NIGHT FLIGHT

Reading:

- Richard Dowden (2009) “Africa is a night flight away” and “Africa is different” in Africa: Altered States, Ordinary Miracles. [1-37].

SECTION 2: SOCIAL NETWORKS: HUNTING, GATHERING AND TWEETING

6. FEB 7 (Th): HUNTING AND GATHERING

Reading:

- Coren Apicella et al. “Social Networks and cooperation in Hunter Gatherers” in Nature, 481, 497-501.

7. FEB 12 (T): HERDING IN BOSTON

Reading:

- Tepilit Ole Saitoti “Boston” and “Homeward Bound” in The Worlds of a Maasai Warrior. 125-144.

8. FEB 14 (Th): PHANTOM VIBRATIONS

Reading:

- Baird and Hartter (2017) Livelihood diversification, mobile phones and information diversity in northern Tanzania. Land Use Policy
- Susan Trulove, (2015) Modern Family: Age Old Traditions are fading on the savannah in Virginia Tech Research Magazine, Summer Issue.

9. FEB 19 (T): THE MISSION AND THE DANCE

Reading:

- Tsitsi Dangarembga (1988) Chapter 6 in Nervous Conditions, 105-121.

10. FEB 21 (Th): SOCIALS AND MOVEMENTS

Viewing:

- The Stream (Al Jazeera English) (2011) Uganda’s Walk to Work Movement & Short-lived Social Networks in Africa. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s-BR_iz2Qb8

- Juliana Rotich (2013) “Meet BRCK, Internet access built for Africa” TED Talk https://www.ted.com/talks/juliana_rotich_meet_brck_internet_access_built_for_africa
- Siyanda Mohutsiwa (2016) “How Young Africans found a voice on Twitter” TED Talk. https://www.ted.com/talks/siyanda_mohutsiwa_how_young_africans_found_a_voice_on_twitter#t-455230

SECTION 4: MUSIC: PRE-JAZZ TO HIP-HOP (IMPERIALISM TO GLOBALIZATION)

11. FEB 26 (T): PICK YOUR LANGUAGE / PICK YOUR NAME

Listening (at home & in class):

- Noah, Trevor (2016) “Chameleon” and “Go Hitler!” in Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood

12. FEB 28 (Th): CHAMPAGNE BUCKET-LADEN YACHTS

Reading, Watching:

- Afua Hirsch (2012) “Africa Hip Hop is Recreating America” in the Guardian, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/oct/03/african-hip-hop-america>

13. MAR 5 (T): CHAMPAGNE BUCKET-LADEN YACHTS

Readings:

- Eric Charry (2012) “A Capsule History of African Rap” in Hip Hop Africa, 1-25.

14. MAR 7 (Th): THERE’S SOMETHING THAT FEELS ANCIENT

Listening (in class):

- Georges Collinet, Afropop Worldwide (2007) Africa and the Blues: An Interview with Gerhard Kubik: <http://www.afropop.org/8638/africa-and-the-blues-an-interview-with-gerhard-kubik/>

MIDTERM EXAM DUE MAR 8 (F)

SPRING BREAK

15. MAR 19 (T): WOKE UP THIS MORNING

Watching:

- BBC (2013) “Woke up this morning” and “Bright Lights, Big City) in Blues in America (2 Parts). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9hZMHLGMpzc> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3AoQqTYjFSA>

16. MAR 21 (Th): I SAID A HIP HOP THE HIPPIE THE HIPPIE...

Reading:

- Denise Sullivan. (2011). “Rapper’s Delight” and “Power to the Peaceful” in Keep On Pushing: Black Power Music from Blues to Hip Hop. 183-185, 201-216.

SECTION 3: DISEASE: EBOLA TO OBESITY AND BACK (GENETICS, POVERTY AND INFRASTRUCTURE)

17. MAR 26 (T): INFECTION DIFFUSES

Reading:

- David Quammen (2014) Ebola: The Natural and Human History of a Deadly Virus, 1-16 & 45-50.

18. MAR 28 (Th): FAMINE & FEAST

Reading:

- Barry Popkin (1999) "The World is Flat and Fat" in The World is Fat, 83-100.

19. APR 2 (T): A DOUBLE BURDEN

Reading:

- Nelia P. Steyn and Zandile J. Mchiza (2014) "Obesity and the nutrition transition in Sub-Saharan Africa" in Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences 1311, 88-101.

20. April 4 (Th): STUDENT CHOICE DAY 1 (Service Learning Voluntourism J, T, E)

Watching:

- ???

20. APR 9 (T): STUDENT CHOICE DAY 2 (Environmentalism/Wildlife A, D, C, N)

Watching:

- ???

SECTION 4: TERROR: CRADLE OF INHUMANITY

21. APR 11 (Th): VOICES ON MY BRAIN OF FRIENDS THAT WERE SLAIN (out)

Watching (in class):

- In class: Christian Karim Chrobog (2008) Emmanuel Jal: War Child.

22. APR 16 (T): WAR... WHAT IS IT GOOD FOR? (out)

Reading:

- J. Terrence McCabe. (2001). "Cattle Bring Us to Our Enemies" in Cattle Bring Us to Our Enemies, 81-105.

23. APR 18 (Th): THE FAVORITE WIFE

Reading:

- Kelly Summers MS Thesis: Methods and Findings

24. APR 23 (T): STUDENT CHOICE DAY 3 (Fashion E, C, N)

Reading:

- ???

25. APR 25 (Th): STUDENT CHOICE DAY 4 (Equality and Colonialism S, E, J)

Reading:

- ???

26. APR 30 (T): RWANDA

Reading:

- Jean Hatzfeld (2003) "Taste and Distaste, Going Into Action, Field Work, A Neighborhood Genocide, Punishment" in Machete Season: The Killers of Rwanda Speak, 47-76.

27: MAY 2 (Th): STUDENT CHOICE DAY 5 (Reconciliation and Forgiveness F, B, H)

Reading: ???

28. MAT 7 (T): FREE, FALL

Reading:

- Richard Dowden (2009) "New States, Old Societies" in Africa: Altered States, Ordinary Miracles, 51-89.