

## **(i) The Core Course**

The interdisciplinary compulsory core course aims to introduce students to theoretical and methodological issues in African studies, whilst at the same time conveying substantive information about the histories, cultures, politics and economies of Africa. It will provide essential background for students as they undertake the reading for their dissertations and for options courses. Students with no background in African history would benefit from reading an introduction to African history before beginning the course. This will help situate discussion in seminars. Richard Reid's *History of Africa* is particularly recommended.

The course is taught by Dr Emma Hunter for 12 sessions through Michaelmas term via two-hour seminar discussion classes, with readings set in advance. Films, music and fictional works are set alongside academic literature.

The outline of topics is as follows:

### **Class 1: Africa in the longue durée**

This class serves as an introduction to the course. We reflect on the ways in which Africans have thought about their continent and the origins of 'Africa' as a subject and object of study, both within and outside Africa. We consider the logic of studying 'Africa', and explore the extent to which there are commonalities across the continent in terms of Africa's deeper past and pre-colonial history and the methodological challenges involved in studying Africa's pre-colonial past.

### **Class 2: Colonialism in the history and historiography of Africa**

This class focuses on the place of colonialism in the history and historiography of Africa. How did Africans make sense of colonialism? How was the colonial experience represented in art and literature? This class will include comparative reading, placing the work on Africa alongside academic literature about other parts of the colonial world, particularly South Asia.

### **Class 3: Gender, the family and youth**

This class explores debates over gender, the family and youth in Africa's past and present. We explore the argument that pre-colonial Africa was a 'labour-poor' continent. How were kinship and other social relationships conceptualised in pre-colonial Africa? How did that change in the colonial period and later? What theoretical tools might we use to understand social relationships in Africa past and present?

### **Class 4: God, gods, missionaries and their African translators**

This class examines the rich literature on the histories of Islam and Christianity in Africa and their relationship to pre-existing cosmologies and systems of thought. The class also examines the politics and practice of religion in colonial and postcolonial Africa.

### **Class 5: Perspectives on the state in Africa**

How should we understand the state in Africa? Are there patterns common to all post-colonial African states and if so why? Are African states simply predatory on their people? What role have pre-colonial and colonial legacies played in shaping states and conceptions of power in post-colonial Africa? How do people in Africa understand the state and interact with their governments? This class analyses debates in anthropology, history and political science over these questions.

### **Class 6: Citizenship, Ethnicity, Autochthony and Belonging**

Why is Africa said to be facing a crisis of citizenship? What is the relationship between citizenship and ethnicity and other forms of belonging? What is ethnicity and to what extent was it a colonial 'invention'? Is there a distinction to be drawn from legal categories of citizenship and 'meaningful' citizenship? This class explores the debates about citizenship in Africa from the perspectives of political science, anthropology and history.

### **Class 7: Development, Poverty and Wealth**

This class reflects critically on development in Africa. There is now a long history of development interventions in Africa, from the late nineteenth century until the present day. How did colonial regimes and post-colonial charities and international agencies conceptualise 'development'? How does thinking critically about African conceptions of what 'development' means, in African languages, challenge a concept of development as outside intervention? How have conceptions of 'development' changed over time? Has international aid benefited the people of Africa, or has it disempowered them?

### **Class 8: Popular culture and the post-colony**

This class engages with African popular culture. We will consider the myriad forms of African cultural expression both past and present, and ask to what extent popular culture in Africa has offered a political critique of state and society and challenged or perpetuated negative stereotypes of Africans. What theoretical models best equip us to study popular culture in Africa?

### **Class 9: Land use and the environment**

In this class we will examine debates about the changing natural environments of Africa, such as discussions on environmental degradation, population growth and distribution; the impact of 'green revolution' technologies; competition over resources; gender and the environment, and the impact of structural adjustment policies on the distribution of natural resources such as water. What has been the impact both of climate change and the international politics of climate change on Africa?

### **Class 10: Health and Healing**

This class traces histories of health and disease in Africa, with a focus on the HIV/AIDS epidemic. We will examine debates around the nature of African sexualities and gender relations and their role in understanding the course of the epidemic, as well as the longer-term history of disease and medical interventions in Africa. The seminar will also trace the politics of AIDS, patient activism, the creation of new forms of 'therapeutic citizenship' and the long-term impacts of HIV/AIDS.

## **Class 11: Violence**

This class explores violence in contemporary Africa. How has violence been used to create power, both in the present and the past? Where should we look to understand contemporary violence? Some have focused on colonial legacies, others on Cold War politics or competition for natural resources, or on the significance of ethnic and religious divisions within African states, others have focused on generational struggles and the role of 'youth'. In this class we reflect critically on these approaches, focussing in particular on Sierra Leone and Rwanda.

## **Week 12: Round table discussion: Africa in the world, past, present and future**

The course ends with a concluding discussion which draws together the themes of the course. In this round table discussion we will reflect on the changing ways in which Africans have thought about the world and their place in it over the past two centuries, and reflect critically on the key concepts and methods discussed in this course and the disciplinary perspectives explored here.

### **Background reading suggestions**

- C. Achebe, *Things fall apart* (London, 1958)
- A.K. Armah, *The beautiful ones are not yet born* (Ghana, 1969)
- F. Cooper, *Colonialism in question: Theory, knowledge, history* (Berkeley, 2005)
- H. Englund, *Prisoners of freedom: Human rights and the African poor* (Berkeley, 2008)
- S. Feierman, *Peasant Intellectuals* (Wisconsin, 1999)
- S. Feierman & J.M. Janzen, *The social basis of health and healing in Africa* (Berkeley, 1992)
- J. Ferguson, 'Declarations of Dependence: labour, personhood and welfare in southern Africa', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 2013
- J. Iliffe, *Africans: The history of a continent* (Cambridge, 2007)
- J.C. McCann, *Green land, brown land, black land* (Portsmouth, 1999)
- L. Smith, *Making Citizens in Africa* (Cambridge, 2013)
- L. White, *Speaking with vampires: Rumor and history in colonial Africa* (Berkeley, 2000)