

Department of African American & African Studies| Fall 2026| University of Minnesota
CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN AFRICA | Syllabus Course | AFRO 3131

Course Modality : **face-to-face**
Instructional Time : **M/W 11:15am – 12:30pm**
Location : **435 Blegen Hall (West Bank)**
Instructor : **Njeri Githire (she/her)**
Course Assistant : **TBA**
Email : **Canvas**
TA Office Hours : **virtually or by appointment**

Course Description: **Welcome to AFRO 3131:** This course aims to provide an overview of contemporary African concerns from an interdisciplinary perspective. Locating present-day realities within an historical continuum, the course covers a wide array of political, social and economic themes, including their interrogation in core fields of study. Emphasis on threats to human rights and challenges to democratic governance; political engagement and civil society activism. The rise of the middle class in sub-Saharan Africa; population growth and urbanization. Dislocation and displacement as observed in rural-urban, intra-African and international migrations; religious, ethnic and civil conflicts; climate and environmental change in terms of a sustainable livelihood framework; gender, equity and women's rights as crucial to sustainable development; postcolonial ethics of nature and nurture; technological advances, disparities and compelling factors for future growth.

Course Objectives:

- Examine the principal priorities and challenges confronting Africa as the third decade of the 21st century continues its course.
- Identify key events and causes that have shaped modern African social, political, environmental, cultural, and economic landscape.
- Reflect on the role of African philosophies and religious practices in promoting the production of knowledge of/from Africa unencumbered by the need to perpetually confront, contest, invert or subvert the invention of Africa as the ultimate “elsewhere”.
- Understand the interface of ecological processes and the multifarious crises that afflict Africa today.
- Acknowledge the correlation between environmentalism and human rights, with particular emphasis on democratic culture and political reform.
- Engage with the challenges that increased mobility in contemporary globalized world poses for environmentalism's central preoccupation with ethics of place and localized identities.
- Appreciate the complexity of the relationship between technology and democratic participation, as well as between technology and environmental impacts.
- Interrogate the intersections of contemporary environmental activism and the (in)visibility of race, class, and economic status.
- Consider the role of storytelling, orally transmitted lore and song-based narratives in understanding social, cultural, political and environmental changes in Africa.

Required Textbooks

African Religions: A Very Short Introduction (2014), Jacob K. Olupona.

Seven Myths of Africa in World History (2017), David Northrup.

Films on Reserve

Congo: White King, Red Rubber, Black Death, 2004 (90 min.).

Arlit, deuxième Paris = Arlit, the second Paris, 2005 (78 min.).

Weather Report, 2007 (52 min.).

Taking Root: The Vision of Wangari Maathai, 2008 (80 min.).

Milking the Rhino, 2009 (83 min.).

Pumzi, 2009 (21 min.).

Climate Refugees: The Human Face of Climate Change, 2010 (86 min.).

Burning in the Sun, 2011 (83 min.).

Big Men, 2013 (101 min.).

Something Necessary, 2013 (82 min.).

Hope, 2014 (91 min.).

Lifeboat, 2018 (34 min.); Moser Bryn.

Anthropocene: The Human Epoch, 2018 (87 min.).

Material on Course Reserve

<http://www.bullfrogfilms.com/guides/milkguide.pdf>

Name/Pronouns:

I will do my best to address you by a name or gender pronoun that you have identified. Please advise me early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

Statement of Inclusion

Shortly after 8pm on Monday, 25 May 2020, Derek Chauvin, a white police officer with the Minneapolis Police Department, pinned his knee on the neck of George Floyd, a 46-year-old Black man, and continued to press him to the ground even as Floyd repeatedly begged for air and affirmed that he could not breathe. Neither Floyd's pleas nor those of the swelling crowd of bystanders, who soon joined in a chorus of protest against the brutal and unnecessary take down and arrest tactics against an already handcuffed and clearly distressed man, could sway Chauvin. After more than nine minutes of Chauvin's deadly restraint later, George Floyd's body limped into unconsciousness, and he was pronounced dead at 9:25pm at the Hennepin County Medical Center's emergency room. In the days that followed, and after a bystander's video was shared widely on social media, Minnesota earned a level of national and global disrepute that became the subject of serious national reckoning. Whatever our location as we explore the material presented in AFRO 3131 this fall, I will be inviting us to reflect on the way Minnesota's severely tarnished reputation is embedded within a history of injustices that define the American experience. Students and scholars of this historical context know all too well that George Floyd's death only served to bring to the fore the scourge of racism and unequal justice that lay beneath the veneer of the myth of "Minnesota nice." Like many myths, the perception of Minnesotans as cordial and courteous all too often stands in the way of our appreciation of our state's – and indeed, our country's – origins and continued existence in conquest, dispossession, and genocide of Native Americans, and in the inhuman exploitation of enslaved Africans.

For these reasons and for many others not possible to mention here, it is critical that there be an atmosphere of trust and respect in the classroom. I will attempt to foster a safe space for class interaction, where discussion encourages both sharing and listening. I have purposefully designed course material and activities that advocate for the celebration of diversity: ethnicity, race, gender

identity, sexuality, age, disability, socioeconomic status, nationality, culture, and religion. I encourage each one of you to share your thoughts and opinions openly, while valuing respectful disagreement and the capacity to learn from each other as essential life skills that foster healthy discussion and help build community. However, I will not tolerate rude, dismissive, combative, insulting, degrading or hostile conduct in my class.

Classroom Decorum & Course Content

We enter this course with a range of different positions on and opinions about the topics we will be discussing. We will leave this course with a range of different positions on and opinions about the topics we will have discussed. This is a good and necessary thing. What is neither good nor necessary, however, is that we disrespect each other as a consequence of these differences. Some of the material we cover may be emotionally difficult or frustrating for some students. Some of it may force students to encounter worldviews or ideas they were previously unfamiliar or are uncomfortable with. As stated above, while we should feel free to express our divergent points of view, it is important that our discussions remain civil, respectful, and mindful of our various ways of being in the world.

Some of the materials in this course will include profanity, sexual situations, scenes or descriptions of racial and/or sexual violence, depictions of death, and other descriptions or representations that may be disturbing for some students. While it is not my pedagogical practice to provide “trigger warnings” in class, you should feel free to talk with me individually about any potential concerns you might have in this regard so that I can work to better prepare you for disturbing content. Further, if you anticipate having difficulty with course material, I encourage you to engage in appropriate self-care measures, including doing research on any films we will be watching ahead of time and logging out of class or viewing sessions that are difficult for you to view or engage with.

CLE Requirements:

AFRO 3131 is designed to meet the Council of Liberal Education’s requirements of Global Perspectives Theme.

Global Perspectives Theme

It is fair to say that the imagery of Africa as a continent teeming with grim savagery and wild darkness, propagated by Western thinkers and further championed by explorers, missionaries, and empire builders has hardly evolved. Africa continues to be cast in such bleak and depressing terms, that critics and scholars have coined a term to refer to the sentiment engendered by the steady diet of overwhelmingly negative and sensationalist portrait of Africa, characteristic of today's media: afropessimism. By afropessimism, reference is made to the popularly held perception that the African continent is hopelessly imprisoned in its past, its populace held hostage to corrupt institutions, and trapped in a vicious cycle of underdevelopment. Intense and sustained coverage of civil wars, predatory rulers, brutal despots, famine, epidemics, deadly diseases and unfathomable atrocities, has etched an image of Africa on the global conscience that would appear indelible. Departing from a country-specific focus and a comparative regional perspective, AFRO 3131 examines contemporary African challenges and varied struggles using case studies, and a range of analytical parameters. Of particular interest will be issues relating to peace and (in)security, ethnic/civil clashes, religious conflicts, authoritarianism, democracy and related impacts. Designed to engage with themes that are topical to contemporary political discourse, the course will consider how political destabilization, social fragmentation, economic disruption and their concomitant effects of internal displacement and international migration are poised within highly complex and dynamic political processes and cultural dimensions, which transcend simple interpretations.

AFRO 3131 facilitates students' understanding of the importance and relevance of the region under consideration for the international community by focusing on Africa's unique challenges and opportunities. Africa plays a crucial role in the global community as a key contributor to future economic growth, containing 30% of the world's vital mineral reserves (cobalt, lithium) needed for the transition to green energy. Africa also has the youngest population globally, which is expected to reach one in four individuals by 2050. This demographic represents an essential market for products and a significant geopolitical force in international trade and security. Acknowledging that the world will thrive when African economies achieve their potential entails thinking of ways to utilize the continent's extensive resources to establish new markets, enhance food security, tackle supply deficits, offer essential labor (remotely if necessary), diversify trade routes – and, crucially, accomplish all of this within a framework of inclusive economic development.

On a more local level, with Minnesota home to one of the largest immigrant communities from the Horn of Africa, students will better understand why people left their respective countries to make their way to the USA.

Procedures and Expectations

Statement of Instructional Time

This course is conducted face-to-face. Course attendance will be evaluated based on your completion of assignments as well as on your engagement with course material in class, through online forums, and *other* designated forms of communication. Overall, you are expected to do roughly 9 hours of work/week for this course. For undergraduate courses, one credit is defined as equivalent to an average of three hours of learning effort per week necessary for an average student to achieve an average grade in the course. The approximately 9 hours a week required to complete this course correspond to the average time obligation for a 3-credit course such as ours.

Our instructional time will amount to 150 minutes of face-to-face instruction with me per week. My continuous asynchronous feedback on your work on Canvas during the week will serve as one of the learning resources that systematically guide students towards the learning objectives. Group discussions and other *online activities* will be geared toward promoting instructor/learner interaction and exchange, as well as reinforcing, clarifying, and elaborating on the course content. Outside of the instructor-student contact hours, you will view the assigned films (3-3.5 hours/week), read the assigned articles (approximately 3 hours/week), respond to and complete weekly assignments (roughly 3 hours/week), as well as complete exams related to themes examined throughout the course. The assigned viewings will be available through Stream access, while the assigned articles will be accessed through the University of Minnesota Electronic reserve services. All readings and viewings are required to pass the class, and your knowledge of this material will be tested on writing assignments, discussion postings, etc. Through *Canvas*, I will evaluate learner performance in relation to learner outcomes established at the beginning of the semester.

Statement of Technology

The use of Canvas is a requisite component to learning in this course and all students are expected to use technology that can access Canvas. It is recommended that students use a desktop or laptop computer less than six years old with at least 1GB of RAM, and to use the most recent version of Chrome or Firefox with JavaScript enabled. Internet connections should be at least 512kbps. If you have trouble accessing technology, please contact me, and please consult with the Office of Information Technology: <https://it.umn.edu/working-learning-campus/get-internet-access-campus>

Course Communication

This course is provided with a *Canvas course web* site onto which class notes, *course guidelines, announcements and other* helpful information will be posted. Students are required to log on to the course web site on a regular basis *and to familiarize themselves with the information* and content therein. Students will be held responsible for any information defined in announcements and other formal communications on the course web. Furthermore, all course-related email communication will be conducted via the *Canvas* inbox. Students are required to include the instructor **and** the course assistant in **all** course-related communication. Students who experience problems logging onto *Canvas* should contact UMN Canvas Admin & Support <help@umn.edu> Please let the instructor/TA know if you are encountering technological challenges.

Statement of Assessment

All online exercises will be open over a period of 48-72 hours to allow the submission of late work, as well as to offset the possibility of losing your wireless connection at a crucial moment. The extra time allowance is also meant to ensure that students with DRC accommodation for extended time have the extra time requested regarding the accommodation.

Course Cadence:

Below are the crucial components that represent required weekly activities for students in this course:

1. On Monday and Wednesday mornings from 11:15am to 12:30pm, I will deliver face-to-face lectures based on the assigned readings as per the schedule established and provided at the beginning of the semester. While attendance during all meetings is important, if only because you cannot participate in absentia, simply coming to class and listening to the discussion does not constitute participation. Therefore, in and of itself, attendance will have little, if any, effect on your final grade. Regular contribution to class discussions is required to earn a participation grade, and you will be assessed on how actively and positively you participate in discussions.
2. On designated Monday/Wednesday mornings from 11:15am to 12:30pm, students will respond to short questions based on the assigned readings/viewings. **When** prompted, students will also engage in online discussion forums as a reflective process for interpreting and interrogating the assigned material. Because online discussion is designed to stimulate conversation, share knowledge and ideas, and build a learning community, your postings will be evaluated based on their quality, timely participation, thoughtfulness, courtesy, relevance to the topic, and evidence of your engagement with the core concepts and key ideas discussed in the course. The degree to which your posting promotes discussion among class members will be an added advantage, as well as a requirement for excellent performance. Timed exams, in-class assignments and other projects may also be conducted during this scheduled class time.

Attendance

Participation at the face-to-face meetings will amount to 30% of your final grade. While attendance is very important, you will not get any grade towards participation simply because you never miss a class. A student whose quality of participation is superior could miss two/three meetings and still get an A. However, attendance is imperative and critical for students to participate and a student with excessive absences will see their grade adversely affected and their overall performance negatively impacted. Participation consists of active involvement in all the communicative activities that will take place in class. Additionally, there is no way to make up “missed” participation opportunities. If you miss a class period, please arrange to meet with the instructor/TA during office hours if you have any questions on material that you have missed. While specific situations may arise, requiring

students to arrive at the meetings late or to leave class early, you are requested to refrain from tardiness of five minutes or more or leaving class before the end of the class period (even during viewing of films). It is distracting, disruptive, annoying, and inconsiderate to other students when students arrive late, after class has begun, or disappear and reappear at random while class is in progress. If you are late, or if you absolutely must be absent during class, kindly do it as quietly and as discreetly as possible. Students are also requested to avoid dozing in class, carrying on private/side conversations, or doing private work during class lectures. If the same person repeatedly exhibits this type of behavior, a one grade notch (e.g., B- to C+) penalty for each day in question will be applied to their final grade. Please turn off your cell phone during class. Students who exhibit consistently disruptive behavior will be penalized with a disciplinary “F” grade.

Extra Credit / Questions & Answers Forum

It is normal to have many questions about things that relate to the course, such as clarification about assignments, course materials, or assessments. Please post these in the “Questions & Answers” forum, which you can access by clicking the DISCUSSIONS link in the course navigation links. This is an open forum, and you are encouraged to give answers to help each other. For the first clear and comprehensive answer provided to each question, the answering student can expect to receive one (1) extra credit point for participation (up to three (3) points maximum to be tallied at the end of the semester).

Netiquette - Rules of Online Communication:

Read with Respect:

Your classmates come from diverse backgrounds and life experiences. They may share beliefs and ideas that may not be agreeable with your own beliefs. Understand where they are coming from and give them the benefit of the doubt.

Think, before Posting:

Your responses must be constructive, intentional, and well-articulated. Review your responses to ensure that you've conveyed exactly what you intended. Profanity and derogatory remarks directed at your instructor and classmates is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

Refrain, from Yelling:

All caps (“I'M YELLING AT YOU”) and exclamation points (“Give me a break!!!”) can be misinterpreted as intense anger or humor without the appropriate context.

Mindful, your/others Privacy:

In a professional environment try to keep personal information private. Get permission before you use emails, pictures, videos for any content that is shared in class.

Use Humor and Sarcasm, Sparingly:

Be cautious when using humor or sarcasm as tone is sometimes lost in an email, chat or discussion post and your message might be taken seriously or sound offensive.

Grading Policies

1. Class Participation (30%). Your participation at face-to-face and synchronous meetings will be evaluated based on your preparedness for class through prior engagement with the assigned readings/viewings. Overall, you will earn credit for your willingness to offer answers to questions

asked in class and to contribute to a positive class atmosphere. Your responsiveness, enthusiasm, and active role in promoting intellectual exchange, eliciting your peers' understanding of the course material, etc., will all be considered evidence of your readiness for class as well as consistent engagement with the assigned readings/viewings outside of classroom. Therefore, I encourage you to eagerly share your opinions, remarks, and ideas concerning issues discussed in class. Please also endeavor to refer to concrete supporting examples from the course materials and other credible sources, where necessary. Group discussions and short in-class writing assignments will also form part of the participation grade. Participation and preparation are evaluated as follows:

A/A-: student makes frequent unprompted contributions (questions, comments, answers) to each class discussion, engages fully in debates and other activities, and contributions demonstrate excellent preparation and solid understanding of the material.

B+/B/B-: student makes frequent contributions to discussions, engages well in debates and other activities, and contributions demonstrate good preparation and good understanding of the material.

C+/C/C-: student makes regular contributions to each class discussion, engages in debates and other activities, and contributions demonstrate some preparation and understanding of the material.

D+/D: student rarely makes contributions to class discussions, rarely engages in debates and other activities, and contributions do not demonstrate adequate preparation and understanding of the material.

F: student does not contribute to class discussions, does not engage in debates and other activities, and contributions do not demonstrate preparation and understanding of the material.

Postings on the discussion forum will also count towards your participation grade. Every week, several prompts will be posted on canvas to guide your viewing/reading and to help you reflect on the major points in the assigned material. **Not all prompts** will require online discussion. *When directed*, however, you will respond, offer queries or comments to that week's prompt, and engage in threaded conversations with other postings already on the wall. Your postings need not be extensive or voluminous. However, they should be finely detailed to specifically answer the prompt question. In general, I expect no more than 150 words for each response. A baseline for your comments will be the ability to offer insightful reflection on the material under discussion. Beyond responding to the prompt, you are encouraged to help with community building by showing interest in what others are discussing. Therefore, students should respond to at least **one** comment on the wall. The response should go beyond superficial statements such as "I agree" or "good job". You may, of course, choose to expand on another posting not merely by rephrasing but by offering insightful, value-added information that illuminates your peers' posts. Overall, your response to the prompt question and to your peers' postings should display evidence of thoughtful engagement with the material. I also typically do not accept posts after the forum has closed because, I promise you, no one is coming back to a closed forum, and because engagement is really the key.

2. Writing Assignments (20%): From time to time, you will be called upon to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the course material through writing assignments consisting of roughly 6-9 short answer questions. These assignments will be administered via Canvas and available for 48-72 hours. These assignments will require you to write between 100 and 200 words in response to each prompt. Note that while the word count is indicative, not exact, any answer that substantially exceeds, or falls substantially short of the above word count will not be accepted. The assignments will assess your understanding of the material covered in assigned readings, viewings, class discussions, etc. While the assignments are open book/open notes, meaning that you are free to use any resources from class, thorough grounding in the material before the opening of the exams on Canvas is a requisite for successful completion of the exams. Note, however, that no resources outside of the course readings/viewings may be used. Furthermore, the exams are strictly individual endeavors. Therefore, students may not share study notes or summaries of the lecture content and NO

communication with any other human is allowed in any form (either real-time communication or delayed form). Note, too, that students are required to use their own words and phrasing instead of cutting and pasting from course material. To help students focus and prepare for the weekly discussion will be a central and important component of this course. A useful way to prepare therefore will be to actively engage in discussion forums. Late work will be penalized by a one grade notch (e.g., B- to C+) if submitted within the first hour following the due date/time. Thereafter, your grade will drop by a letter (e.g., B to C) for every day it is late. No work will be accepted past the closure of the Canvas course portal without a documented excuse. Email submissions will only be accepted where prior arrangements have been made or accompanied with documented evidence that the assignment submission portal was down or inaccessible.

3. Oral Presentation of Final Project (10%): Each student will give a presentation of their final project on dates to be established in consultation with the instructor. The presentation should incorporate visual and interactive elements to enhance your message and engage your audience.

4. Final Project (30%): Students will submit a 5–6-page (typed and single-spaced) essay in which they will critically assess the role played by **four** women from the same country, two of them from an earlier time and two of them from the contemporary period in the dynamic changes that transformed their worlds and the worlds around them. This is a research paper in which students will be required to incorporate information contained in the required & further readings. Indeed, the course readings are deemed to constitute sufficient authority in matters relating to the societies studied for the purposes of the final report. Students who feel the *need to discuss other material will be required* to consult the instructor for authorization to explore other sources. To this end, they will need to provide the instructor with references of reliable texts from which they intend to derive any bibliographic information. By “reliable” I mean any material written by a person who has authority to make statements about African societies and cultures by virtue of their recognized scholarly knowledge in that topic. While students are entitled to incorporate knowledge from other sources, therefore, this assignment will consider as ‘valid’ and ‘worthy of credit’ only those ‘views,’ ‘opinions,’ and ‘interpretations’ that will be clearly and explicitly substantiated by the course material contained on the AFRO 3131 syllabus. The second part of the essay will include a discussion of your takeaway from the class. Here, you are invited to thoughtfully consider what you learned this semester that resonated with you. This second part of your essay is reflective. Therefore, the tone will be informal yet confident and authoritative; engaging, but not colloquial; structured and consistent, yet not casual. The main idea is that you are invited to thoughtfully consider what you learned this semester that resonated with you. What affinities or connections might you have established with any of the material studied in class this semester. Beyond the 5-6 pages an additional page or two may be included for photos, newspaper clippings of important events (activism, major accomplishment, etc.) or any newsworthy information related to your engagement with social change efforts, etc.

The final grade will be determined as follows:

- Class participation		30%
- Writing Assignments		20%
- Oral Presentation of Final Project		10%
- Final Project		40%

Your final grade will be determined by the percentage of score earned:

A (94-100%) A- (90-93%) B+ (87-89%) B (83-86%) B- (80-82%)

C+ (77-79%) C (73-76%) C- (70-72%) D+ (67-69%) D (60-66%)
 S (70 % & above)

Generally, the scale is not curved. If you find that you are having trouble with any part of the course, please see the instructor early in the semester.

University Policies

Student Conduct Code

The University seeks an environment that promotes academic achievement and integrity, that is protective of free inquiry, and that serves the educational mission of the University. Similarly, the University seeks a community that is free from violence, threats, and intimidation; that is respectful of the rights, opportunities, and welfare of students, faculty, staff, and guests of the University; and that does not threaten the physical or mental health or safety of members of the University community.

As a student at the University you are expected to adhere to Board of Regents Policy: Student Conduct Code. To review the Student Conduct Code, please see:
https://regents.umn.edu/sites/regents.umn.edu/files/2019-09/policy_student_conduct_code.pdf

Note that the conduct code specifically addresses disruptive classroom conduct, which means "engaging in behavior that substantially or repeatedly interrupts either the instructor's ability to teach and/or a student's ability to learn." The classroom extends to any setting where a student is engaged in work toward academic credit or satisfaction of program-based requirements or related activities.

Scholastic Dishonesty

You are expected to do your own academic work and cite sources as necessary. Failing to do so is scholastic dishonesty. Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering, forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis.

(Student Conduct Code:
https://regents.umn.edu/sites/regents.umn.edu/files/2019-09/policy_student_conduct_code.pdf)

If it is determined that a student has cheated, the student may be given an "F" or an "N" for the course, and may face additional sanctions from the University. For additional information, please see:
<https://policy.umn.edu/education/instructorresp>.

The Office for Community Standards has compiled a useful list of Frequently Asked Questions pertaining to scholastic dishonesty: <https://communitystandards.umn.edu/avoid-violations/avoiding-scholastic-dishonesty>.

If you have additional questions, please clarify with your instructor for the course. Your instructor can respond to your specific questions regarding what would constitute scholastic dishonesty in the context of a particular class, e.g., whether collaboration on assignments is permitted, requirements and methods for citing sources, if electronic aids are permitted or prohibited during an exam.

Makeup Work for Legitimate Absences

Students will not be penalized for absence during the semester due to unavoidable or legitimate circumstances. Such circumstances include verified illness, participation in intercollegiate athletic events, subpoenas, jury duty, military service, bereavement, and religious observances. Such circumstances do not include voting in local, state, or national elections. Documented absence due to illness, injury, surgery, death in the family, a family emergency should be reported to the instructor with an appropriate written excuse *immediately* following your absence. For complete information, please see: <https://policy.umn.edu/education/makeupwork>. Grades and grade-related concerns after the end of the semester will *only* be addressed via an official email account (umn.edu).

Appropriate Student Use of Class Notes and Course Materials

Taking notes is a means of recording information but more importantly of personally absorbing and integrating the educational experience. However, broadly disseminating class notes beyond the classroom community or accepting compensation for taking and distributing classroom notes undermines instructor interests in their intellectual work product while not substantially furthering instructor and student interests in effective learning. Such actions violate shared norms and standards of the academic community. For additional information, please see: <https://policy.umn.edu/education/studentresp>.

University Grading Scales

The University has two distinct grading scales: A-F and S-N.

A-F grading scale. The A-F grading scale allows the following grades and corresponding GPA points:

Grade	GPA	Points Definitions for undergraduate credit
A	4.000	Represents achievement that significantly exceeds expectations in the course.
A-	3.667	
B+	3.333	
B	3.000	Represents achievement that is above the minimum expectations in the course.
B-	2.667	
C+	2.333	
C	2.000	Represents achievement that meets the minimum expectations in the course.
C-	1.667	
D+	1.333	
D	1.000	Represents achievement that partially meets the minimum expectations in the course. Credit is earned but it may not fulfill major or program requirements.
F	0.000	
		Represents failure in the course and no credit is earned.

S-N grading scale.

The S-N grading scale allows for the following grades and corresponding GPA points:

Grade	GPA	Points Definitions for undergraduate credit
S	0.00	Satisfactory (equivalent to a C- or better)
N	0.00	Not Satisfactory

For additional information, please refer to: <https://policy.umn.edu/education/gradingtranscripts>.

Sexual harassment, sexual assault, stalking and relationship violence

The University prohibits sexual misconduct, and encourages anyone experiencing sexual misconduct to access resources for personal support and reporting. If you want to speak confidentially with someone about an experience of sexual misconduct, please contact your campus resources including the Aurora Center, Boynton Mental Health or Student Counseling Services (<https://eoaa.umn.edu/report-misconduct>). If you want to report sexual misconduct, or have questions about the University's policies and procedures related to sexual misconduct, please contact your campus Title IX office or relevant policy contacts.

Instructors are required to share information they learn about possible sexual misconduct with the campus Title IX office that addresses these concerns. This allows a Title IX staff member to reach out to those who have experienced sexual misconduct to provide information about personal support resources and options for investigation. You may talk to instructors about concerns related to sexual misconduct, and they will provide support and keep the information you share private to the extent possible given their University role.

https://regents.umn.edu/sites/regents.umn.edu/files/2019-09/policy_sexual_harassment_sexual_assault_stalking_and_relationship_violence.pdf

Equity, Diversity, Equal Opportunity, & Affirmative Action

The University provides equal access to and opportunity in its programs and facilities, without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, membership or activity in a local commission created for the purpose of dealing with discrimination, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. For more information, please consult Board of Regents Policy:

https://regents.umn.edu/sites/regents.umn.edu/files/2019-09/policy_equity_diversity_equal_opportunity_and_affirmative_action.pdf.

Disability Accommodations

The University views disability as an important aspect of diversity, and is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. The Disability Resource Center (DRC) is the campus office that collaborates with students who have disabilities to provide and/or arrange reasonable accommodations.

If you have, or think you have, a disability in any area such as, mental health, attention, learning, chronic health, sensory, or physical, please contact the DRC office on your campus (UM Twin Cities - 626.1333) to arrange a confidential discussion regarding equitable access and reasonable accommodations.

Students with short-term disabilities, such as a broken arm, can often work with instructors to minimize classroom barriers. In situations where additional assistance is needed, students should contact the DRC as noted above.

If you are registered with the DRC and have a disability accommodation letter dated for this semester or this year, please contact your instructor early in the semester to review how the accommodations will be applied in the course.

If you are registered with the DRC and have questions or concerns about your accommodations please contact your (access consultant/disability specialist).

Additional information: Twin Cities - <https://diversity.umn.edu/disability/>, drc@umn.edu)

Mental Health and Stress Management

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance and may reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. University services are available to assist you. You can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Student Mental Health Website:

<http://www.mentalhealth.umn.edu>.

Academic Freedom and Responsibility:

Academic freedom is a cornerstone of the University. Within the scope and content of the course as defined by the instructor, it includes the freedom to discuss relevant matters in the classroom. Along with this freedom comes responsibility. Students are encouraged to develop the capacity for critical judgment and to engage in a sustained and independent search for truth. Students are free to take reasoned exception to the views offered in any course of study and to reserve judgment about matters of opinion, but they are responsible for learning the content of any course of study for which they are enrolled.*

Reports of concerns about academic freedom are taken seriously, and there are individuals and offices available for help. Contact the instructor, the Department Chair, your adviser, the associate dean of the college, or the Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs in the Office of the Provost. [Customize with names and contact information as appropriate for the course/college/campus.]

* Language adapted from the American Association of University Professors "Joint Statement on Rights and Freedoms of Students."

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Complaints Regarding Teaching/Grading

Students with complaints about teaching or grading should first try to resolve the problem with the instructor involved. Please note that no such discussion can be held at the beginning or end of class because of time constraints. Kindly, therefore, arrange to virtually meet with the instructor during a mutually convenient time. If no satisfactory resolution is reached through these venues, students may then discuss the matter with the Department Chair, Professor Chotsani Dean (chotsani@umn.edu) 612-624-9847, who will attempt to mediate. Failing an informal resolution, the staff in the AA&AS departmental office will facilitate the filing of a formal complaint. Official U of M information on grading can be found at <http://www1.umn.edu/usenate/policies/gradingpolicy.html>

Reading/Viewing Schedule

Week One: September 07-13

Distribution & explanation of the syllabus followed by an introduction to the course; a brief survey of Sub-Saharan African history.

Week Two: September 14-20

Sub-Saharan African history continued; **eReserve Reading:** “How to Write about Africa” by Binyavanga Wainaina; “On a Croc’s Back, America-Bound” by Okey Ndibe; “Weary Professors Give Up; Concede that African is a Country”; “Problematic Terms”; **Film Viewing Online:** *Talk to Al Jazeera - Binyavanga Wainaina: Rewriting Africa* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qMODRFS2Pbc>

Week Three: September 21-27

The A-Z of the Environment and Climate Change: **eReserve Readings:** “Understanding and Attributing Climate Change” by Hegerl, Zwiers et al. “The Basics of Climate Change: Greenhouse Gases affect Earth’s Energy Balance and Climate.” “A Stunning Animation of Cumulative Greenhouse Gas Emissions” by Umair Irfan. **Film Viewing Online:** “Gas Problem”; “Earth has a Fever”; “Usual Suspects”; “Mission to Earth” https://climate.nasa.gov/climate_resource_center/earthminute/ / *Weather Report*, 2007 (52 min.);

Week Four: September 28 -04 October

Colonial Dispossession and Environmental Racism; **eReserve Readings:** Excerpts from *African Religions: A Very Short Introduction* by Jacob Olupona; **Film Viewing Online:** *This Magnificent African Cake* (53 min).

Week Five: October 05 – 11

Colonial Dispossession and Environmental Racism continued; **Film Viewing Online:** *Taking Root: The Vision of Wangari Maathai* (80 min).

Week Six: October 12 – 18

Religious, Ethnic and Civil Conflicts: Focus on Kenya; **eReserve Readings:** “Triggers and Characteristics of the 2007 Kenyan Electoral Violence” by Stefan Dercon & Roxana Gutiérrez Romero; **viewing in class:** *Kenya at 50* <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2013/12/12/kenya-celebrates-50-years-of-independence> **Film Viewing Online:** *Something Necessary* (85 min).

Week Seven: October 19 – 25

Religious, Ethnic and Civil Conflicts: Focus on Kenya; **Film Viewing in Class:** *Pumzi*; **eReserve Readings:** “Climate Change, Resource Competition, and Conflict amongst Pastoral Communities in Kenya” by Beth Njeri Njiru; <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007%2F978-3-642-28626-1.pdf> **Film Viewing Online:** *Milking the Rhino*; <https://video.alexanderstreet.com/watch/milking-the-rhino>

Week Eight: October 26 – 01 November

Religious, Ethnic and Civil Conflicts: Focus on Côte d’Ivoire; **eReserve Readings:** “The War of ‘Who Is Who’: Autochthony, Nationalism, and Citizenship in the Ivoirian Crisis” by

Ruth Marshall Fratani; **Film Viewing in Class:** *Africa... States of Independence - Ivory Coast* (24 minutes); **Film viewing online:** *The Dark Side of Chocolate*:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Vfbv6hNeng>

Week Nine: 02-08 November

Religious, Ethnic & Civil Conflicts: Focus on Côte d'Ivoire cont. **eReserve Readings:** "The Real Price of a Chocolate Bar: West Africa's Rainforests" by Fred Pearce. "Biodiversity and Stability in Grasslands" by David Tilman & John A. Downing.
 Interview with David Tilman on influence of biodiversity:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X0H_8awgpIA.

Week Ten: November 09 -15

Colonial Dispossession and Environmental Racism continued: **eReserve Readings:** "Waiting on the Past: African Uranium Futures in *Arlit, Deuxième Paris*" by Carmela Garritano. **Film Viewing Online:** *Arlit, deuxième Paris = Arlit, the second Paris*, 2005 (78 min.);

Week Eleven: November 16 – 22

Rural-Urban, Intra-African and International Migrations: Focus on the Sahel: **Film Viewing in Class:** *Lifeboat*: **eReserve Readings:** "Climate Refugees': Is It Time to Legally Acknowledge Those Displaced by Climate Disruption?" by Lea Merone & Peter Tait **Film Viewing Online:** *Climate Refugees*.

Week Twelve: November 23 - 29

Energy Revolution & Environmental Concerns: Focus on the Niger Delta: **eReserve Readings:** "Clean the Niger Delta: we all stand before history"; "Oil-Induced Displacement and Resettlement: Social Problem and Human Rights Issue" by Bogumil Terminski; **Film Viewing Online:** *Big Men*; lc.elevator

Week Thirteen: November 30 – December 06

Rural-Urban, Intra-African and International Migrations: Focus on the Sahel cont. **eReserve Readings:** Human Trafficking and the Smuggling of Migrants: **eReserve Readings:** "The Gender Entrapment of Neoliberal Development" by Tryon P. Woods; **Film Viewing Online:** "The African women trafficked to Italy for sex work (24 min.)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aEBM6oX-4yg>
 "How the 'Nigerian mafia' exploits African women in Europe" (5 min) -
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9kWwe5IWh0o>
 "Sex trafficking of African migrants in Europe is a 'modern plague'"
<https://www.pbs.org/video/sex-trafficking-of-african-migrants-is-a-modern-plague-1482452802/>

Week Fourteen: December 07 - 13

From "Cruel" Oil to Crude Oil: **Film Viewing in Class:** *Seeing is Believing*. **eReserve Readings:** "Palm Oil Tensions" by Danielle Gallegos; **Film Viewing Online:** *Anthropocene: The Human Epoch*, 2018 (87 min.).

Week Fifteen: December 14 - 20

Final Project due on Canvas on Friday, December 18

Updates, Changes, Modifications and/or Revisions:

The instructor reserves the right to make changes in this schedule to facilitate student learning. Any changes in the schedule will be communicated to students via the Canvas course portal. This syllabus is available in alternative formats upon request.