Africa Today: Contemporary Issues and Concerns
GLBL 345 - Fall 2021
10:00-11:50 am Tuesdays and Thursdays

Instructor: Dr. Stephen Wooten
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Pronouns: He, him, his
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GE: Anastasia Grigoreva, Email: agrigore@uoregon.edu, Zoom Office Hours: Wednesdays 12-2 pm or by appointment; Pronouns: She/her/hers

Course Description:
This course is designed to help you develop an informed perspective on how contemporary people on the African continent negotiate an important set of current challenges and opportunities. The class is conceived as a complement to more traditional “survey” type courses on Africa. Thus, rather than casting a wide net to cover a broad array of topics and contexts, we will engage a few, particularly significant case studies. However, the cases we explore certainly have broader resonance across the continent and – for that matter – across the globe.

We will examine in close detail three studies: 1) a personal story of growing up in a racially complicated and contested South Africa; 2) an analysis of the realities of youth, poverty and homelessness in South Africa; and 3) an examination of the relationship between technology, ritual and friendship in/out of Kenya.

In addition to providing a window into these key issues and themes in contemporary Africa, the course is designed to help you develop critical reading, writing, and oral presentation skills.

Texts: There are three required books for this course: Born a Crime by Trevor Noah; Street Life Under A Roof: Youth Homelessness in South Africa by Emily Margaretten, and Email from Ngeti: An Ethnography of Sorcery, Redemption, and Friendship in Global Africa by James Smith and Ngeti Mwadime. You will need purchase the Trevor Noah book right away – you can buy a digital version quickly and inexpensively online. The second two titles are available for free through the Knight Library.

Course Format:
This class integrates independent work with collective analysis. Key readings are assigned for each class period and should be completed prior to each meeting. Class sessions will involve a mixture of lecture and discussion. Guided by substantive outline slides, we will engage the material presented in each set of readings in order to draw out key insights and content. You should be prepared to answer framing questions and offer comments on the themes and examples you encounter in the readings. On occasion we will view video clips to aid our explorations.

Expected Time Allocation: According to the University of Oregon’s policy, one undergraduate credit hour is equivalent to approximately 30 hours of student work, both in class and out of class. Thus, a 4-credit course like this one should engage students for 120 hours over the course of the class. This means that you should expect to spend 30 hours a week attending zoom class sessions, reading, and completing assignments.

***** DO YOUR VERY BEST NOT TO FALL BEHIND! If you run into trouble, please reach out to me ASAP so I can help you. *****
Class Format: Class sessions will center on close analysis and discussion of the issues and concepts raised in our readings. You are required to complete your assigned readings in advance of each class meeting and to play an active and engaged role in each class session.

Evaluation: Requirements include regular “quizzes” and a series of essay exams.

• Quizzes
During each class period you will respond to a series of questions based on the assigned readings. The daily “quizzes” technique is an effective mechanism for helping students engage with the material and for facilitating participation in class discussions. You will be rewarded well for taking this aspect of the course seriously – you will learn more and you can earn easy points toward your final grade! You may complete one quiz without being present in class, and you may miss one completely without penalty. Other missing quizzes will be recorded as 0s.

• Essay Exams
At the close of each case study you will write an essay format response to a set of focus questions. These questions will assess your understanding of key themes or concepts addressed in the case study. To do well on these assignments you will need to read each text carefully, and to listen and contribute to our class discussions. In each essay you will need to provide an effective mixture of case specific subject matter and analysis.

• Grading
Quizzes (20%)
Exams I, II, III and Final (80%)

Final grades will be assigned using a straight scale: e.g., 90-100 = A, 80-89 = B, etc. and pluses and minuses will be used where appropriate.

Policies:
• Missed Assignments
No make ups will be offered for exams EXCEPT in the case of a significant illness, injury, or family emergency. If you should run into one of these exceptional situations, you are required to notify me by email BEFORE the scheduled exam. We will discuss your situation and any possible accommodations that might be warranted.

• Attendance and Participation
In order to engage the assigned material thoroughly you must be present in class. Also, I expect you to contribute to our discussions on a regular basis. Your comments need not be extensive – but they need to be relevant and informed.

• Classroom Culture
In order to create and maintain a focused and productive learning environment, we need to agree on some basic elements of virtual classroom etiquette. Ideas for things to include?

_____________________; ____________________ ; __________________

• Cheating and Academic Dishonesty
All assignments in this class are designed to assess your individual knowledge and understanding of the material covered/presented in the course. Thus, cheating or plagiarism -- in any form -- will not be tolerated. The work you present must be entirely your own. Where appropriate, submissions will be evaluated for plagiarism using a standard software program. All individuals involved in an act of academic dishonesty will fail the course and will be reported to the proper University contacts as required. I do not expect to encounter any problems in this area, but I feel you should be forewarned.

• Diversity and Equity
The University is a place where people from different cultures and experiences learn together; understanding and respecting these differences are critical for the University to be a place of open-minded inquiry where, in challenging the boundaries of knowledge, we include and value all members of our community. If you should ever feel that we are falling short on this goal, please let me know or contact the Office of the Vice President for Equity & Inclusion (346-3175, 1 Johnson Hall).

• Accessible Education
If you have a condition that inhibits learning or evaluation under customary circumstances, please let me know. In addition, please request a letter from the Accessible Education Center (346-1155, 360 Oregon Hall) that verifies your situation and states the accommodations that I can make. I will make any reasonable adjustments necessary to improve your learning environment.

• Basic Needs
Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to contact the Dean of Students Office (346-3216, 185 Oregon Hall) for support. Furthermore, if you are comfortable doing so, please let me know about your situation so I can help point you in the right direction for assistance. You can start here: https://blogs.uoregon.edu/basicneeds/.

CLASS OUTLINE AND SCHEDULE
(This program is subject to change depending on the extent of our case study discussions. We may move more quickly than expected or we may move more slowly. Remain informed and update this schedule as necessary.)

“Ethnographic Perspectives”
   Sept 28: Syllabus
   Sept 30: Mali and me

“Born a Crime”
   Oct 5: Read/Cover: Acknowledgments (at the end of book) and p. 1-62
   Oct 7: Read/Cover: p. 63-128
   Oct 12: Read/Cover: p. 129-184
   Oct 14: Read/Cover: p. 185-286
   Oct 19: Exam

“Street Life”
   Oct 21: Read/Cover: p. xi-42
   Oct 26: Read/Cover: p. 43-92
   Oct 28: Read/Cover: p. 93-147
   Nov 2: Read/Cover: p. 148-180
   Nov 4: Exam
“Email”
  Nov 9: Read/Cover: p. ix-32
  Nov 11: Read/Cover: 33-84
  Nov 16: Read/Cover: p. 85-137
  Nov 18: Read/Cover: p. 138-211
  Nov 23: Exam

“Gratitude”
  Nov 25: Thanksgiving Break - NO CLASS

“Synthesis-Integration”
  Nov 30: Independent assignment- NO CLASS
  Dec 2: Collective discussion/Exam prep

Final Exam posted on Canvas by 5:00 pm on Thursday, Dec 2 and due via upload to Canvas by 10:00 am on Wednesday, Dec 8 – the end of the scheduled slot for our final exam.