San José State University

COURSE OUTLINE: Geography 168, Geography of Africa

Course Number: GEOGRAPHY 168
Course Title: Sub-Saharan Africa
Year: Fall 2019
Course Schedule: Tuesdays 3:00 pm – 5:45 p.m.
Location: Clark Hall, Room 224
Units: 3

Instructor: Dr. Aharon de Grassi
Office: Washington Square 111
Office Hours: Tuesdays 11:30 am – 12:30 pm
Office Phone: (408) 924-5425
Office Fax: (408) 924-5477
E-mail Address: aharon.degrassi@sjsu.edu

Course Format:
The course will have a two-and-a-half-hour lecture-type meeting each week, which will include country case studies and the occasional video presentation. In addition, there will also be regular discussion exercises to enhance participatory learning and interaction in the course.

Course Requirements:
Class Participation 10% (includes discussion and occasional in-class exercises)
Attendance 15% (1% for each class)
10 Reading Reflections 30% (1% each paragraph on class readings, your readings, & both)
Research Paper Preparation 15% (see below)
Final Research Paper 30%

Readings:
Course readings for each week will be available on Canvas as pdfs and/or links to webpages. In addition, each week students are also responsible for finding and reading materials related to their research country and the week’s topic. The class will be geared around continual conversation, and grades will largely depend on this (and a final research paper). Each week, students will be required to do about 15-25 pages of class reading and about 15-25 pages of reading related to each students’ own research paper country. These two sets of weekly readings will form the basis for 3 paragraphs of reflections that students will submit online prior to class each week. This will help me gauge progress and also ensure that students are up to date on readings and thereby able to get the most from lecture and class discussions.

In addition, students are also highly recommended to consult the following two books for further background, recent overviews, and useful explanations and definitions:
Highly recommended helpful resources:

Ofori-Amoah, B. (2019). *Africa’s Geography: Dynamics of Place, Cultures, and Economies*, Wiley. This book is available to rent fairly cheaply online (about $30). It is the most recent textbook on the geography of Africa, and covers a lot of issues and country details.


Course Description (from Catalog):
Regional study of environments, as well as cultural, economic and political geography of Africa south of the Sahara. Special attention given to geographic factors in the progress of less developed countries.

Detailed Course Description:
This class explores how people produce African geographies – we will engage a variety of materials, including texts, film, maps, music, art, and social media produced primarily in Africa and by Africans. Students will have the opportunity to gain in-depth familiarity of a country through a student research project on a topic of their choice. The class will study works by African scholars and public figures, potentially feature guest speakers, and also look at connections between Africa and the Bay Area, California, and the US.

Rather than ask students to memorize lists of facts, students will learn by starting with concrete issue or problem or question, and expand out from that to investigate related issues. Therefore, this class’s collective learning will depend significantly on class participation and discussion in which each student contributes and reflects based on their evolving insights. The in-class lecture and discussion plans will have extra time allocated to allow for more free-flowing conversation to go in to detail on relevant topics as they arise. This will be instead of more tedious tasks of simple memorization of lists of events and facts (such as main exports, health coverage rates, or GDP sizes).

Course Learning Objectives:
This course examines concepts, evidence and discussions about the intersecting social, economic, political and physical geographies of Africa. Students’ progress towards course learning objectives will be measured by regular reading reflections, in-class discussion, and a final research paper. By the end of the course, the students will be expected to be able to:

1. Outline the major contemporary differences in social, economic, political and physical geographies in Africa.
2. Understand contemporary geographic issues in Africa in relation to geographic and historical patterns of colonialism and imperialism in Africa, including timelines, terms and debates.
3. Critically evaluate different sources of information about Africa, including their contexts, divergent perspectives, types of claims, and uses of evidence.
4. Discuss geographic concepts and how they help explain patterns of and potential for development in different parts of Africa.
Calendar Overview:

- Note: assignments are due on Mondays at 12:00 PM for the corresponding week
- Note: Reading Reflections are due each week on Mondays at 12:00 PM (not listed below)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assignments Due (% of grade) [due Mondays at 12:00 PM]</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Aug 27</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sept 3</td>
<td>Geography &amp; Africa</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sept 10</td>
<td>Knowledge, Ed., Info</td>
<td>Paper 1: Choose Country &amp; Topic (2%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sept 17</td>
<td>Diversity &amp; Identity</td>
<td>Paper 2: Initial Bibliography (3%)</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Sept 24</td>
<td>Food, Land, Rural Dev.</td>
<td>Country 1: Indigenous Languages (2%)</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Oct 1</td>
<td>Decolonization, Race, History</td>
<td>Paper 2: Initial Bibliography (3%)</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Oct 8</td>
<td>Politics, Corruption, Activism</td>
<td>Country 2: Map (2%)</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Oct 15</td>
<td>Health &amp; Demography</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Oct 22</td>
<td>Borders, Migration, Diaspora</td>
<td>Paper 3: Thesis Statement (4%)</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Oct 29</td>
<td>Environment, Climate, Sustainability</td>
<td>Country 3: Geographer (2%)</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Nov 5</td>
<td>Resources, Wealth, Inequality</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Nov 12</td>
<td>Violence, Militarism</td>
<td>Paper 4: First, Rough Draft (6%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Nov 19</td>
<td>Aid, Humanitarianism, Development</td>
<td>Country: WB/IMF Report (2%)</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Nov 26</td>
<td>Digital Technologies</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Dec 3</td>
<td>Infrastructure and Cities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dec 16</td>
<td>-finals-</td>
<td>FINAL PAPER DUE (30%)</td>
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Detailed Course Requirements, Grading and Evaluation

Studying geography effectively requires in-class discussion and interaction, as well as hands-on learning-by-doing activities. The course requirements and grade distribution are structured accordingly. As is SJSU policy, success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend, for each unit of credit, a minimum of 45 hours over the length of the course (normally three hours per unit per week) for instruction, preparation/studying, or course related activities, including but not limited to internships, labs, and clinical practice. Other course structures will have equivalent workload expectations as described in the syllabus.

Formatting

All assignments and texts should be submitted formatted to double space, 12 point font, Times New Roman, 1 inch margins, with your full name, the date, class, and name of the assignment.

Please use APA formatting to cite references (guides are online, e.g. http://www.bibme.org/citation-guide/apa/ or https://www.mendeley.com/guides/apa-citation-guide ). Consistent formatting is important not just as a matter of following rules, but because it facilitates situating knowledge, information, and authors in their specific historical and geographical context. This is hugely important now in the context of discussions about accurate and trustworthy news and information in contrast with deliberate efforts at sowing division and confusion.

Exams

None!
(but there is a substantial final research paper)
10 Reading Reflections (30% total)
Each week, students are required to submit 3 paragraphs of reflections on readings, for a total of 10 reflections (a few weeks may be skipped). These readings include one of the required readings (or more, if you like) listed on the syllabus, and in addition also include student’s own readings. Specifically, students are required to locate and read 15-25 pages of material related to their country and that the theme for that week’s class. Thus, one paragraph of reflections will be about the course readings, one paragraph about student’s country readings, and one paragraph about connections between the class and students’ own country readings. Each paragraph is 1%, for 3% total each week, and an overall sum of 30%.

These reflections will help students ground the broad class topics in specific country context that each student is getting more familiar with. The reflections will also help gradually build up familiarity for the final paper. The reflections are mostly open and can include questions, debates, interesting points, surprises, related current events – further guidelines will be circulated in class.

Paper Preparation (15% total)
There will be at least 4 assignments, designed to assist you in preparing your research paper.

(1) selecting a country, sector, and topic 2% Sept 9
(2) compiling an initial bibliography 3% Sep 30
(3) composing a thesis statement that is a succinct argument outlining the paper 4% Oct 21
(4) a rough draft that will be used for peer proofreading 6% Nov 11

Research Paper (30% total)
Throughout the course, you will be working on a research paper due online uploaded to Canvas by MONDAY DECEMBER 16th at 12:00PM. The paper must be at least 10 pages of written text (excluding tables, pictures, and references). The paper should be organized around a tight argument that focuses on one country, a particular sector, and specific topic/question/problem. We will discuss further the scope of the papers and the expectations for the paper arguments. This is a fundamental part of the course that will enable you to familiarize yourself with real issues and will thereby help you engage, apply and think critically about some of the vast range of theories and concepts we will be covering in the course.

Participation, Exercises & Attendance (25%)
These are short individual or group discussions/exercises and learning activities that will be given and accomplished once every week in class. At least half of the time will be devoted to seat work, group discussion and the rest of the time for class-level presentations, discussions and summarization. Students are expected to attend all the classes and to arrive on time. Repeated absences without legitimate documented reasons will result in 5% reduction of the course grade for each absence. Your active participation in discussion is a key component of this course. The weekly schedule is condensed, and consequently it is crucial that students keep up with the concepts and material in the course – discussion is one of the most important ways to do this because it allows students to clarify, compare, and deepen their understanding.

There are 4 country assignments:
1. Indigenous Languages Due Week 5: September 23
2. Country Map Due Week 7: October 7
3. Geographer Due Week 10: October 28
4. World Bank or IMF Report Due Week 13: November 18
Grading and Evaluation

Grading Policy
Overall graded course requirements total 100 points. There is no “curve” for this course. Pluses and minuses are given. You receive the grade you earn through your own work and the effort you put into the class.

Grade Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>97-100</td>
<td>A+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94-96</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>90-93</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<tr>
<td>87-89</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<tr>
<td>84-86</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>80-83</td>
<td>B-</td>
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<tr>
<td>77-79</td>
<td>C+</td>
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<tr>
<td>74-76</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>70-73</td>
<td>C-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;60</td>
<td>F</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Dropping and Adding
Students are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures about add/drop, grade forgiveness, etc. Refer to the current semester’s Catalog Policies section at http://info.sjsu.edu/static/catalog/policies.html.

Add/drop deadlines can be found on the current academic year calendars document on the Academic Calendars webpage at http://www.sjsu.edu/provost/services/academic_calendars/.

The Late Drop Policy is available at http://www.sjsu.edu/aars/policies/latedrops/policy/. Students should be aware of the current deadlines and penalties for dropping classes.

Information about the latest changes and news is available at the Advising Hub at http://www.sjsu.edu/advising/.

University Policies
“University Policies: Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs maintains university-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, etc.”
You may find all syllabus related University Policies and resources information listed on GUP’s Syllabus Information web page at http://www.syllabus Information web page at http://sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/

Accommodation
If you need special arrangements, please send me an email or speak with me privately after class or in office hours. It is important to speak with me sooner rather than later in order to be able to accommodate you in an appropriate and timely manner.
Library Resources
To succeed in this course, you will need to access academic materials from the library. Some of this can be done online. Please familiarize yourself with how to get online access to academic journals, reference databases, and e-books via the library. You can ask the librarians and fellow students, do an internet search, or chat with me in office hours. The geography librarian is Nyle Monday, Nyle.Monday@sjsu.edu

Course Etiquette & Policy on Devices in Class

Allowed:
✓ Using your computer if you sit in the back row
✓ Taking class notes on your computer
✓ Consulting readings on your computer

NOT Allowed:
× Using your computer for something not directly related to the class discussion
× Recording audio/video without explicit permission
× Having your cell phone out or visible on the table
   × no texting
   × no using your cell phone
   {unless you are demonstrably using it briefly to immediately address a specific question or issue in class}

If you are using your computer for anything other than taking notes, it will affect your participation grade. You will only get an initial warning, a final warning, and then will not be allowed to use devices for the remainder of the course.

Please be respectful and considerate with your fellow students and your classroom community – if you are doing non-class activities then you will distract people sitting nearby and diminish their learning. Also respect yourself and give yourself a break from the internet – university courses are unique valuable, once-in-a-lifetime opportunities to think deeply, challenge yourself, and learn with your fellow students.
You are expected to have done the readings for the week by the time of the class meeting. I will briefly mention the next week’s readings at the end of each class, in order to help you navigate through the pieces. Pay careful attention to the page numbers for the readings. There may be in-class exercises that count towards your grade based on the reading for that week. We will discuss strategies for approaching the readings, and you are encouraged also to actively work on reading strategies by discussing with fellow students, talking with me, and looking at online resources. While critically reading the materials for the class, students should ask themselves, what is the author’s main argument, what was the context in time and space in which the piece was written, who and what is the author responding to, how is the argument structured, what sorts of material is the author drawing on, are there relevant issues that the author does not address or which contradict the argument? The readings are provided both to inform students and for students to critically evaluate (not as absolute truth).

The course’s weekly topics and associated readings build up cumulatively – it is not a buffet one can drop in on at any point. Therefore, attendance at all classes is essential, and if you absolutely cannot attend a class, you must catch up and speak with me about what you missed.

Different authors have different writing styles and objectives, therefore it is important to approach each reading carefully. I encourage you to pro-actively search online for guides and tips for academic reading (for instance, search: how to read academic article), and here a few examples:


Week 1, August 27: Introduction – Geography, Africa, and Geographies of Africa,
Part I
Topics:
- Spatiality
- Maps
- Representation
- “Tribe”
Week 2, September 3: Geography, Africa, and Geographies of Africa, Part II

Topics:

- “Tribe”
- Representation
- Indirect Rule and Ethnicity

Required Readings:


Supplemental:

Ofori-Amoah – Selections from Introduction.


Week 3, September 10: Knowledge, Education, Information

Topics:
- Thinking geographically in and about Africa
- Relations between African Studies and Geography
- Knowledge for what?
- Indigenous knowledge
- Political economy and histories of development seen through the education sectors
- Information and Communication technologies
- Decolonizing curricula
- Challenges in research topics and finding related article(s)

Required Readings:

Supplemental:

Research Paper Assignment 1 Due (Monday): Choose Country and Potential Topic for Paper

Week 4, September 17: Diversity and Identity

Topics:
- Intersections of Ethnicity, Age, Gender, Class, Sexuality, Nationality, Urban/Rural

Required Reading:
Supplemental:
http://democracyinafrica.org/elders-now/
See also various Honwana videos on youtube, e.g.: ‘Africa in the hands of its youth,’ TEDxEuston,
March 12, 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eUGdT8_fw9s

Week 5, September 24: Food, Land & Rural Development
Topics:
• Diversity and differentiation in African countrysides
• Relations between countrysides and global political economies
• Relations between states and agrarian sectors

Required Reading:
Smallholder Production?’ Agrarian South 8(1-2): 30-63.
Ofori-Amoah – for background, parts of Chapter 11: Agriculture.

Country Assignment 1 Due (Monday): Indigenous Languages in Your Country
What are the main indigenous language groups in your country? What is their spatial
distribution? How many people speak each? Find an example of one of the indigenous
languages – can be a song, a video, or a written text (news article, story, book, or other).
Include the citation to the example, and an image of the first page, if not online.

Week 6, October 1: Decolonization, Race, History
Topics:
• Neo-colonialism through agrarian lenses
• Processes of decolonization
• Pre-colonial and colonial legacies

Required Reading:
Fanon, Frantz (1961) Selections from ‘The Trials and Tribulations of National Consciousness,’ The
97-119.
May 30, 8 minutes, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s35h7AQNnP4

Supplemental:
Books, pp. 45-73.

Research Paper Assignment 2 Due (Monday): Initial Bibliography for Research Paper
Week 7, October 8: Politics, Corruption, Activism & Human Rights

Topics:
- Spatial aspects of politics & governance
- Multiple meanings of democracy and rights
- Geographies of corruption

Required Reading:
Ofori-Amoah – Selections from Chapter 9: Politics & Governance.

Supplemental:
Podcast: https://www.ids.ac.uk/events/podcast-episode-09-digital-democracy-analogue-politics-nanjala-nyabola/
Podcast: https://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/digital-democracy-analogue-politics-how-digital-era-transforming-kenya

Country Assignment 2 Due (Monday): Map of Your Country
Find a map of your country that is relevant to your paper also. Explain how and where you found the map, why you chose the map, and why it is relevant to your paper. If possible state who made the map. What are the interesting aspects of the map, and what are some things that it leaves out or simplifies?

Week 8, October 15: Health & Demography

Topics:
- Decentralization
- Metrics
- Myths, Ebola, MVPs

Required Reading:
Ofori-Amoah – Selections from Chapter 16: Education & Health Care

Supplemental:
Week 9, October 22: Borders, Migration, Diaspora

Topics:
- Importance of remittances
- Refugee flows and hosts
- Borders artificial and logic
- Peopling of Africa
- Discussion of wealth in people
- Nigerians and Ethiopians in Bay Area

Required Reading:

Supplemental:

Paper Assignment 3 Due (Monday): Thesis Statement for Research Paper

Do look online for guides also about crafting thesis statements, for example:
‘Tips and Examples for Writing Thesis Statements’, Purdue University, Writing Center, https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/the_writing_process/thesis_statement_tips.html
Week 10, October 29: Environment, Climate Change, & Sustainability

Topics:

- Climate change
- Colonial environments
- Malthusianism
- Population
- Deforestation
- Electronic waste

Required Readings:

Supplemental:

Country Assignment 3 Due (Monday): Geographer
Identify a geographer from your country, and briefly describe what topic(s) and locations they work on. If possible, state where they are based (which institution and city). In addition to Google, try looking in WorldCat.org, African Geographical Review[https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rafg20] and Google Scholar.

Ethiopian & Nigerian Food Samplers

Week 11, November 5: Resources, Wealth & Inequality

Topics:

- State, class, accumulation
- Resource curses
- BRICS

Required Readings:
Supplemental:

**Week 12, November 12: Violence, Militarism**
Topics:
- Patterns and types of violence and conflict
- Budgets
- Militarism

Required Readings:
https://books.google.com/books?id=oL0FAwAQAQBAJ&pg=PA41

Research Paper Assignment 4 Due (Monday): First Draft of Paper (6 pages minimum)

**Week 13, November 19: Aid, Humanitarianism, Development**
Topics:
- International organizations, NGOs

Required Readings:
Selections from World Bank Reports - TBA
Facebook, ‘Map with AI,’ https://mapwith.ai/#13/6.14921/6.76873/0/55 - have a look through the website, including watching the 2-minute video.

Supplemental:

Country Assignment 4 Due (Monday): World Bank or IMF Report
Look online to find (1) a World Bank report specific to your country and issue, or (2) a World Bank or IMF report that is a country strategy, memoranda, or overview on your country. You may look via the Bank’s documents database or the IMF’s reports database. Give the reference for the report and a sentence or two summarizing it.

Guest Speaker: Facebook AI Mapping Work
Please see also OSM, and try editing with editing tools such as iD Editor, JOSM Editor:
OpenStreetMap (OSM): https://www.openstreetmap.org/#map=19/21.11667/42.88333
OSM wiki: https://wiki.openstreetmap.org/wiki/Main_Page
iD Editor: https://github.com/openstreetmap/id
Week 14, November 26: Digital Technologies
Revisit Nyabola [from Week 7]

Week 15, December 3: Infrastructure, Mega-Cities
Topics:
  • Urbanization
  • Afropolitanism
  • Infrastructure

Required Readings:

*FINAL RESEARCH PAPER DUE via CANVAS MONDAY DECEMBER 16th 12:00PM*