African Studies (AFST)

* AFST 001b / ARCG 001b / NELC 001b, Egypt and Northeast Africa: A Multidisciplinary Approach  John Darnell
An introduction to Egyptology, examining approximately 10,000 years of Nile Valley cultural records and 3,000 years of Egyptian history. The course presents an overview of the historical and archaeological study of Egypt and her southern neighbor Nubia. Various original written and visual sources are used, including the collections of the Peabody Museum and the Yale Art Gallery, with some material accessible in the classroom. Students gain a basic understanding of the hieroglyphic script and the Ancient Egyptian language, and are able to read some inscriptions in museum visits at the end of the course. Enrollment limited to first-year students. Preregistration required; see under First-Year Seminar Program.  WR, HU

* AFST 028b / ENGL 028b / LITR 025b, African Literature in the World  Cajetan Iheka
This seminar introduces students to a subset of African literature that has entered the canon of world literature. Bookended by the writings of Chinua Achebe and Chimamanda Adichie, we explore the marks of regional specificity in these works and how they transcend local geographical markers to become worldly artifacts. Our considerations include why certain texts cross the boundaries of nation and region while others remain confined within territorial bounds. We also examine advantages of the global circulation of African literary works and the pitfalls of a global readership. The class moves from an introductory unit that orients students to African and world literature to focus on close reading of primary texts informed by historical and theoretical nuances. From analyzing works responding to the colonial condition and the articulation of anticolonial sensibilities, to those narrating the African nation at independence and the postcolonial disillusionment that followed, the seminar attends to the formal and thematic implications of globalization for African literary writing. Authors include Chinua Achebe, Mariama Ba, Ngugi wa Thiong’o, Mbolo Mbue, NoViolet Bulawayo, Taiye Selasie, and Chimamanda Adichie. Enrollment limited to first-year students. Preregistration required; see under First-Year Seminar Program.  WR, HU

* AFST 092b / THST 092b, African Rhythm in Motion  Lacina Coulibaly
This first-year seminar traces the transnational migration of the polyrhythms inherent in African dance. Based in movement practice, the course considers the transformation of rhythm through time and space, moving from traditional African dances of the 20th century into the work of contemporary African artists and far-flung hybrid dance forms such as samba and tango. Part dance history, part introduction to the art of dance, the course is open to movers of all backgrounds and physical abilities. The professor works with students who require necessary adaptations of the physical material to meet special needs. Enrollment limited to first-year students. Preregistration required; see under First-year Seminar Program.
AFST 128b / ARCG 128b / EGYP 128b / NELC 129b / RLST 251b, Magic and Ritual in Ancient Egypt and the Near East  John Darnell
Introduction to ancient Egyptian magic and rituals with an overview on the use of magic and discussion of the different rituals and festivals attested in Ancient Egypt and the Near East.  HU

AFST 184b / AFAM 160b / AMST 160b / HIST 184b, The Rise and Fall of Atlantic Slavery  Edward Rugemer
The history of peoples of African descent throughout the Americas, from the first African American societies of the sixteenth century through the century-long process of emancipation.  WR, HU

AFST 208b / AFAM 184b / HSAR 208b, African Arts and Expressive Cultures  Cecile Fromont
This course is an introduction to the arts and expressive cultures of a selection of regions from the African continent, and the Americas. Lectures, readings, and discussions explore the relationship between art and leadership, religion, society, and history on the continent and within African diasporic communities in the Americas. Class meetings and assignments make use of the distinguished collection of African objects at the Yale University Art Gallery.  HU

AFST 238a / AFAM 192a / AMST 238a / ER&M 238a, Third World Studies  Staff
Introduction to the historical and contemporary theories and articulations of Third World studies (comparative ethnic studies) as an academic field and practice. Consideration of subject matters; methodologies and theories; literatures; and practitioners and institutional arrangements.  SO 0 Course cr

AFST 277a / ANTH 235a / ER&M 277a, Introduction to Critical Border Studies  Leslie Gross-Wyrtzen
This course serves as an introduction into the major themes and approaches to the study of border enforcement and the management of human mobility. We draw upon a diverse range of scholarship across the social sciences as well as history, architecture, and philosophy to better understand how we find ourselves in this present “age of walls” (Tim Marshall 2019). In addition, we take a comparative approach to the study of borders—examining specific contemporary and historical cases across the world in order to gain a comprehensive view of what borders are and how their meaning and function has changed over time. And because there is “critical” in the title, we explicitly evaluate the political consequences of borders, examine the sorts of resistances mobilized against them, and ask what alternative social and political worlds might be possible.  SO

AFST 324a / EP&E 317a / HIST 368Ja / PLSC 324a, Nelson and Winnie Mandela  Jonny Steinberg
A study of Nelson and Winnie Mandela’s marriage and public careers and the political and philosophical questions the marriage raises. Students examine the Mandelas’ conflicting ideas on race and on the colonial experience and compare them to those of Mohandas Gandhi and Franz Fanon. Students also read recent philosophical work on forgiveness and on violence in order critically to assess the politics of reconciliation that so divided the Mandelas. The course examines the politics of global celebrity and the portrayal of men and women in public media.
AFST 335b / ER&M 325b / HIST 335b, A History of South Africa  Daniel Magaziner
An introduction to the history of southern Africa, especially South Africa. Indigenous communities; early colonial contact; the legacies of colonial rule; postcolonial mismanagement; the vagaries of the environment; the mineral revolution; segregationist regimes; persistent inequality and crime since the end of apartheid; the specter of AIDS; postcolonial challenges in Zimbabwe, Angola, and Mozambique.  HU

AFST 340b / HIST 340b, Africa in the Era of the Slave Trade  Robert Harms
Examination of the tumultuous changes experienced by African societies during the era of the Atlantic slave trade, approximately 1450–1850. Focus on the complex interaction between the internal dynamics of African societies and the impact of outside forces.  HU  o Course cr

* AFST 344a / HIST 344a, African Independence: A Cup of Plenty or a Poisoned Chalice?  Staff
In every African colony after World War Two there emerged nationalist movements which no longer called for civil rights as in the pre-war years but demanded self-determination. While many of them got it easy, some had to fight long and bloody wars for it. By the 1960s the colonial edifice had crumbled except for the few settler colonies in southern Africa. But even here the winds of change could not be stopped. But what did decolonization and independence mean to Africa? Did Africans get what they wanted? Was independence a cup of plenty or a poisoned chalice? In addressing these questions, this course charts the economic, political, and cultural transformations of postcolonial Africa from the 1960s to the present. The argument is this: there can be no understanding of Africa's challenges today without an inquiry into the nature of what the continent got from the departing colonial powers.  HU  o Course cr

* AFST 352b / AKKD 350 / HIST 352Jb, Culture and Politics in Lusophone Africa, 1885-1992  Benedito Machava
The peculiar nature of Portugal as a colonial power produced a very distinct history in the five Portuguese-speaking African countries, namely Angola, Guiné-Bissau (Guinea-Bissau), Moçambique (Mozambique), and the Atlantic islands of Cabo-Verde (Cape Verde) and São Tomé e Príncipe. Lusophone Africa is a lose term that refers to the world created by Portugal's colonialism in Africa. This course explores this distinct history through the lens of culture and politics. Focusing on the long twentieth-century, we consider Lusophone Africa as a study unit, dissecting its disparate societies, cultures, and political trajectories, while remaining anchored in the general context of Africa. Military conquest, colonial rule, race/lusotropicalism, nationalism, and liberation struggle are some of the core themes of the course. We begin with a brief assessment of Portugal's efforts to retain its colonial enclaves amid the voracious expansion of British, French, Belgian, and German presence in Africa in the late 19th century. But our focus is on the twentieth-century, from the establishment of the colonial administration in the early 1900s to the fall of the Portuguese empire in 1974. We dedicate a good portion of the term to exploring the multiple ways (cultural and political) in which Africans responded to Portugal's encroachment and how they navigated the color bar that came to dictate their social mobility under colonial rule. We end with the multifaceted longings for self-determination that led to the longest and bloodiest liberation wars in Africa. Our readings include scholarly essays (old and recent), primary sources, literary works (novels, poetry and short stories), photographs, music and films. We become acquainted with Portuguese-speaking African voices, faces, and places. Luís Bernardo
Honwana’s collection of short stories in *We Killed Mangy Dog and Other Stories* (1964) and Zezé Gamboa’s film *The Great Kilapy* (2012) carry us through the important theme of race and race relations. While cautious in situating the discussion of race in its historical context, these and other materials challenge us to think about race relations and emancipation in our time.  

* AFST 368a / EVST 369a / HIST 366Ja, Commodities of Colonialism in Africa  
Robert Harms  
This course examines historical case studies of several significant global commodities produced in Africa to explore interactions between world market forces and African resources and societies. Through the lens of four specific commodities—ivory, rubber, cotton, and diamonds—this course evaluates diverse industries and their historical trajectories in sub-Saharan Africa within a global context from ~1870-1990s. Students become acquainted with the historical method by developing their own research paper on a commodity using both primary and secondary sources.  

* AFST 378a / EVST 378a / S&DS 38a, Foreign Assistance to Sub-Saharan Africa: Archival Data Analysis  
Russell Barbour  
This course reviews the many years of U.S. development assistance to Africa using archival data from the Agency for International Development (USAID), nonprofit organizations, and specialized agencies such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture and nineteen U.S. government agencies involved in development assistance to Africa. Students analyze the effectiveness, perception, and shifting development paradigms of such assistance, looking at four specific areas: agriculture, water and sanitation, child survival, and refugee relief. Advanced text-mining analysis in the R package tm and web-scraping algorithms in Python are applied to both archival and current data to enhance analysis.  

* AFST 385a / EP&E 350a / HIST 391Ja / HLTH 385a / PLSC 429a, Pandemics in Africa: From the Spanish Influenza to Covid-19  
Jonny Steinberg  
The overarching aim of the course is to understand the unfolding Covid-19 pandemic in Africa in the context of a century of pandemics, their political and administrative management, the responses of ordinary people, and the lasting changes they wrought. The first eight meetings examine some of the best social science-literature on 20th-century African pandemics before Covid-19. From the Spanish Influenza to cholera to AIDS, to the misdiagnosis of yaws as syphilis, and tuberculosis as hereditary, the social-science literature can be assembled to ask a host of vital questions in political theory: on the limits of coercion, on the connection between political power and scientific expertise, between pandemic disease and political legitimacy, and pervasively, across all modern African epidemics, between infection and the politics of race. The remaining four meetings look at Covid-19. We chronicle the evolving responses of policymakers, scholars, religious leaders, opposition figures, and, to the extent that we can, ordinary people. The idea is to assemble sufficient information to facilitate a real-time study of thinking and deciding in times of radical uncertainty and to examine, too, the consequences of decisions on the course of events. There are of course so many moving parts: health systems, international political economy, finance, policing, and more. We also bring guests into the classroom, among them frontline actors in the current pandemic as well as veterans of previous pandemics well placed to share provisional comparative thinking. This last dimension is especially emphasized: the current period,
studied in the light of a century of epidemic disease, affording us the opportunity to see path dependencies and novelties, the old and the new. 

* AFST 396b / HIST 396Jb, Revolutions and Socialist Experiments in Africa  
  Benedito Machava  
  This seminar explores the contours of Africa’s embrace and engagement with the most influential ideology of the twentieth-century. Why, and through which channels, were Africans attracted to socialism? Did particular forms of colonialism and decolonization push African political actors towards revolution and socialist experiments? Is it legitimate, as some scholars have suggested, to speak of genuinely African socialisms? If so, what was the nature of these socialisms and how did they differ from the versions of socialism around the world? What political, social, economic, and cultural ends did socialism serve in Africa? And what were the consequences and legacies of African socialist experiments? The seminar addresses these questions. Our goal is to place Africa in the mainstream of conversations about socialism. We begin with the assumption that, like any doctrine, socialism was the object of multiple interpretations, modification, and appropriation from its inception. In so doing, we challenge orthodox understandings of socialism, which hold the European versions as the pure models and the rest as diluted if not populist façades of the ‘true’ doctrine. We begin with theoretical readings that help us situate the major debates about socialism in general and socialism in Africa. We then proceed to examine the overall historical context in which African nationalists adopted socialism. We differentiate the first branch of “African Socialism” from the second wave of “Afro-Marxism.” We also pay close attention to issues of decolonization and political imagination; ideas and experiments of development; gender, morality, and social engineering.  

* AFST 411a / HIST 163Ja / HSHM 419a, Madness and Decolonization  
  Marco Ramos  
  This seminar traces the history of psychiatry through its encounters and entanglements with colonial and postcolonial power. We begin with a discussion of how psychiatry has been used as an imperial tool of control in the 18th and 19th centuries. We pay particular attention to colonial scientific encounters with Indigenous and enslaved people, and how the psychiatric pathologization of Indigeneity and Blackness informed the construction of settler European whiteness. Then, we move to decolonization in the twentieth century to explore the emergence of international mental health, as former colonies transitioned to independent states. We discuss the attempts of African and Latin American thinkers, such as Frantz Fanon and Ignacio Martín-Baro, to use psychiatry for the liberation of oppressed groups in emerging postcolonial spaces. The seminar finishes with a discussion of the recent emergence of the global mental health movement and calls from former patients, BIPOC and disability activists, and others to “decolonize mental health” so that it serves—rather than harms—those traditionally marginalized by Western psychiatry. Throughout the course, students learn to trace the contours of psychiatry and decolonization through a variety of sources, including movies, music, photography, and monographs.  

* AFST 412b / AFAM 287b / AMST 465b / FREN 412b / LITR 250b, Postcolonial Theory and Literature  
  Fadila Habchi  
  A survey of the principal modes of thought that have animated decolonization and life after colonialism, as seen in both theoretical and literary texts. Concentration on the British and French imperial and postcolonial contexts. Readings in negritude,
orientalism, psychoanalysis, poststructuralism, and novels. Lectures in English; readings available both in French and in English translation. HU TR RP

* AFST 435a or b / THST 335a or b, West African Dance: Traditional to Contemporary  
  Lacina Coulibaly
A practical and theoretical study of the traditional dances of Africa, focusing on those of Burkina Faso and their contemporary manifestations. Emphasis on rhythm, kinesthetic form, and gestural expression. The fusion of modern European dance and traditional African dance. Admission by audition during the first class meeting. HU RP

* AFST 443b / FREN 442b / LITR 484b / MMES 402b, Decolonizing Memory: Africa & the Politics of Testimony  
  Jill Jarvis
This seminar explores the politics and poetics of memory in a time of unfinished decolonization. It also provides students with a working introduction to anticolonial, postcolonial, and decolonial critique. Together we bring key works on the topics of state violence, trauma, and testimony into contact with literary works and films by artists of the former French and British empires in Africa. Reading literary and theoretical works together permits us to investigate archival silences and begin to chart a future for the critical study of colonial violence and its enduring effects. Literary readings may include works by Djebar, Rahmani, Ouologuem, Sebbar, Diop, Head, Krog. Films by Djebar, Leuvrey, Sembène, and Sissako. Theoretical readings may include works by Arendt, Azoulay, Césaire, Derrida, Fanon, Mbembe, Ng#g#, Spivak, and Trouillot. WR, HU

* AFST 449b / AFAM 449b / ENGL 378b, Challenges to Realism in Contemporary African Fiction  
  Stephanie Newell
Introduction to experimental African novels that challenge realist and documentary modes of representation. Topics include mythology, gender subversion, politics, the city, migration, and the self. Ways of reading African and postcolonial literature through the lenses of identity, history, and nation. Formerly ENGL 449. WR, HU

* AFST 457a / AFAM 457a / AMST 470a / ER&M 467a / FREN 481a, Racial Republic: African Diasporic Literature and Culture in Postcolonial France  
  Fadila Habchi
This is an interdisciplinary seminar on French cultural history from the 1930s to the present. We focus on issues concerning race and gender in the context of colonialism, postcolonialism, and migration. The course investigates how the silencing of colonial history has been made possible culturally and ideologically, and how this silencing has in turn been central to the reorganizing of French culture and society from the period of decolonization to the present. We ask how racial regimes and spaces have been constructed in French colonial discourses and how these constructions have evolved in postcolonial France. We examine postcolonial African diasporic literary writings, films, and other cultural productions that have explored the complex relations between race, colonialism, historical silences, republican universalism, and color-blindness. Topics include the 1931 Colonial Exposition, Black Paris, decolonization, universalism, the Trente Glorieuses, the Paris massacre of 1961, anti-racist movements, the "beur" author, memory, the 2005 riots, and contemporary afro-feminist and decolonial movements. HU
* AFST 486a / HIST 374Ja / HSHM 486a, African Systems of Thought  Nana Osei Quarshie
This seminar explores the effects of colonialism and post-colonial power relations on the production of scientific, medical, and embodied knowledge about Africa. The course focuses on three broad themes covered across four units. First, we read debates over the nature and definition of science and tradition. How have colonialism and post-colonial power relations defined the tasks of an African science? What does it mean to decolonize African thought or culture? Second, we examine the nature of rationality. Is reason singular or plural? Culturally-bound or universal? To what extent are witchcraft, African healing practices, and ancestor veneration rational practices? Is there a “traditional” rationality? Third, we explore the relationship between scientific representations, social practices, and local culture. What relationship exists between social practices and culturally shared categories of knowledge? Lastly, we examine the intersection of capital and medical expertise. How have shifting conceptions of value and capital, reshaped scientific and medical authority in Africa?  WR, HU

* AFST 491a, The Senior Essay  Veronica Waweru
Independent research on the senior essay. By the end of the sixth week of classes, a rough draft of the entire essay should be completed. By the end of the last week of classes (fall term) or three weeks before the end of classes (spring term), two copies of the final essay must be submitted.

* AFST 497a / ANTH 497a / ER&M 447a / MMES 400a, Migration and Transnationalism in the Muslim World  Leslie Gross-Wyrtzen
This seminar is an introduction in three respects: first, it provides an overview of the various experiences of mobility (and immobility) studied by ethnographers of migration and the issues or questions that emerge from these studies. Second, the course explores multiple geographies and imagined communities categorized as “Muslim” to understand how movement continually shapes not only these geographies and communities but also those labeled “non-Muslim.” Finally, this course represents a diverse range of methodological approaches, quandaries, and concerns that “doing migration ethnography” engenders, especially grappling with questions of anthropology and geography’s entanglements with colonialism and white supremacy. Through these studies, we explore how identities are formed and reformed, how citizenship is performed or denied, how spaces are made and struggled over, how people get stuck or cut loose, and how home is lost and remade. Fundamental to these explorations are questions of identity and belonging expressed through registers of race, religion, and gender.  SO