African Studies (AFST)

* AFST 015b / AFAM 016b / ENGL 015b, South African Writing after Apartheid  Stephanie Newell
An introduction to creative writing published in South Africa from the end of Apartheid in 1994 to the present. Close readings of contemporary fiction with additional material drawn from popular culture, including films, magazines, and music. Enrollment limited to first-year students. Preregistration required; see under First-Year Seminar Program.  WR, HU

* AFST 092a / THST 092a, 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 112b / ARCG 222b / NELC 112b / RLST 141b, Egyptian Religion through the Ages  John Darnell
Diachronic approach to topics in Egyptian religion. Religious architecture, evidence for protodynastic cults, foreigners in Egyptian religious celebrations, music and vocal expression in Egyptian religion, Re and Osiris, the Amarna interlude and the Ramesside solar religion, and the goddess of the eye of the sun. Readings in translation.  HU

* AFST 135b / PLSC 135b, Media and Conflict  Graeme Wood
The theory and practice of reporting on international conflict and war, and its relation to political discourse in the United States and abroad. Materials include case studies of media coverage of war in Europe, Africa, and the Middle East.

AFST 175a / PLSC 175a, Africa in International Relations  David Simon
This course examines key facets of how African countries interact with the rest of the world, and with other countries on the continent. Focusing mostly on Sub-Saharan African countries, it looks at international economic relations (focusing on aid but also addressing trade, investment, and debt); peacemaking and peacebuilding; and regional governance institutions.  SO

AFST 238a / AFAM 192a / AMST 238a / ER&M 238a, Third World Studies  Gary Okiihiro
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

* AFST 295a / ENGL 295a / LITR 461a, Postcolonial Ecologies  Cajetan Iheka
This seminar examines the intersections of postcolonialism and ecocriticism as well as the tensions between these conceptual nodes, with readings drawn from across the global South. Topics of discussion include colonialism, development, resource extraction, globalization, ecological degradation, nonhuman agency, and indigenous cosmologies. The course is concerned with the narrative strategies affording the illumination of environmental ideas. We begin by engaging with the questions of postcolonial and world literature and return to these throughout the semester as we read the primary texts, drawn from Africa, the Caribbean, and Asia. We consider African ecologies in their complexity from colonial through post-colonial times. In the unit on the Caribbean, we take up the transformations of the landscape from slavery, through colonialism, and the contemporary era. Turning to Asian spaces, the seminar explores changes brought about by modernity and globalization as well as the effects on both humans and nonhumans. Readings include the writings of Zakes Mda, Aminatta Forna, Helon Habila, Derek Walcott, Jamaica Kincaid, Ishimure Michiko, and Amitav Ghosh.  WR, HU

* AFST 324a / EP&E 317a / HIST 3681a / 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 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

* 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
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 385a / EP&E 350a / HIST 391a / HLTH 385, Pandemics in Africa: From the Spanish Influenza to Covid-19  Jonny Steinberg
* AFST 414b / FREN 414b / LITR 269b / MMES 261b, Afterlives of Algeria's Revolution  Jill Jarvis
* AFST 425b / FREN 425b / MMES 360b, North African French Poetry  Thomas Connolly
* AFST 433a / THST 335a, West African Dance: Traditional to Contemporary  Lacina Coulibaly
* AFST 443a / FREN 442a / LITR 484a / MMES 402a, Decolonizing Memory: Africa & the Politics of Testimony  Jill Jarvis
* AFST 449b / AFAM 449b / ENGL 378b, Challenges to Realism in Contemporary African Fiction  Stephanie Newell
* AFST 481a / AFAM 213a / HIST 381a / HSHM 481a, Medicine and Race in the Slave Trade  Carolyn Roberts
* AFST 486b / HIST 374b / HSHM 486b, African Systems of Thought  Nana Osei Quarshie

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, Camus, Sebbar, Etcherelli, Dib, Cixous, Kateb, Fanon, De Beauvoir, Mechakra. The course is conducted in French. If you have any questions about your French ability, contact the instructor. 15, HU

* AFST 458b / FREN 458b / MMES 360b, North African French Poetry  Thomas Connolly

Introduction to North African poetry composed in French during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Works explored within the broader context of metropolitan French, Arabic, and Berber cultures: juxtaposition with other modes of expression including oral poetry, painting, dance, music, the Internet, and film. The literary, aesthetic, political, religious, and philosophical significance of poetic discourse. 15, HU

* AFST 433a / THST 335a, 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. 15, HU

* AFST 443a / FREN 442a / LITR 484a / MMES 402a, 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, Oulouguem, Sebbar, Diop, Head, Krog. Films by Djebar, Leuvrey, Sembène, and Sissako. Theoretical readings may include works by Arendt, Azoulay, Césaire, Derrida, Fanon, Mbembe, Ngågé, Spivak, and Trouillot. 15, 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. 15, HU

* AFST 481a / AFAM 213a / HIST 381a / HSHM 481a, Medicine and Race in the Slave Trade  Carolyn Roberts

Examination of the interconnected histories of medicine and race in the slave trade. Topics include the medical geography of the slave trade from slave prisons in West Africa to slave ships; slave trade drugs and forced drug consumption; mental and physical illnesses and their treatments; gender and the body; British and West African medicine and medical knowledge in the slave trade; eighteenth-century theories of racial difference and disease; medical violence and medical ethics. 15, HU

* AFST 486b / HIST 374b / HSHM 486b, 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 or b, 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.