

Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
African Sustainable Communities
MA Program in African Studies
Economy, Politics and Society in 20th Century Africa
Fall semester, Sunday 1830-2000, 4 credits

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Summary description

This course explores the Africa's historical experience in the 20th century. It unpacks the social economic and political dynamics shaping African historical development during this century. The twentieth century was a period of dramatic change in Africa largely because of the colonial encounter. This encounter brought about far-reaching changes on Africa's social, economic and political terrain. The second half of the 20th century witnessed the blowing of winds of change culminating in the independence of several African countries. From start to finish, the 20th century was thus packed with cataclysmic historical developments. The post-independent era too, were teething years for young African nations struggling with colonial legacies and also attempting to negotiate a place in the global politics and economies. Adopting largely historiographical approaches, the course takes students through Africa's economic, social and political experiences from the eve of colonial rule to the establishment of young African post-colonial states. The course underscores the importance of understanding colonialism, its legacy and how it shapes current socio-economic and political experiences. It is a course that stresses contexts and meanings and how these are interpreted and re-interpreted by scholarship and affected societies. Using several critical themes, the course will pick case studies from various African countries.

Sessions

1) Lesson 1: Africa is not a Country: Social, economic and political organisation on the Eve of Colonial rule.

The lesson seeks to expose students to debates around the nature and form of African states on the eve of colonial rule. How did these African states relate with each other and how were they organised? To understand the social, economic and political impact of the colonial encounter, it is important that students have an appreciation of that which was destroyed or changed by the colonial encounter. What are some of the prominent debates over African states and their organisation? Cases studies from West and East Africa will be used to explore these dynamics.

2) Lesson 2: "Post-Pacification": Accommodation, Active and Passive Resistance – Colonialism takes root

In this lesson we explore the responses of Africans to colonialism. These responses range from accommodation to resistance. Both passive and active resistance will be explored. We explore the many ways that Africans sought to negotiate, context and even accommodate colonialism. Here we also hope to introduce various approaches to interpreting colonial experiences such as nationalist and colonialist historiographies. We will also introduce subaltern school of thinking, among other perspectives.

3) Lesson 5: Evolution of colonial economic policies in Africa.

In this lesson students are expected to make comparative analysis on various economic policies such as agrarian, industrial and labour policies. Students are expected to examine the various African responses to these policies and debate the outcome of the policies at large. Comparative analysis will also be made between economic policies by different colonisers as well as between different countries colonized by the same colonial master.

4) Lesson 4: Women and colonial societies: Economic and Political engagements

More often than not, the women's colonial experiences are silent in narratives. In this lesson, we hope to re-enact women's experiences in the colonial societies. We will deliberately explore the experiences of colonial/European women as women in the fringes of their own society who were also enjoying privilege in the bigger colonial societies. The experiences of colonized women will also be explored and the lesson will take students through women's efforts at survival under the double yoke of colonization and patriarchy.

5) Lesson 5: Capitalism under crisis, opportunities and costs: The Great Depression and Second World War in Africa

The lesson takes students into the experiences of African countries when the capitalist world plunges into crisis during the great depression and the Second World War. Crisis is also an opportunity of some. A cost-benefit analysis of these crises will also be made.

6) Lesson 6: Africa and the Pathocene: Health and diseases in colonial Africa

Given the current pandemic, it would be critical that students be exposed to historical experiences of specifically infectious diseases such as the Spanish influenza during the colonial period. In this lesson, students are exposed to debates about colonial health policies and how these impacted on colonial populations.

7) Lesson 7: Apartheid and the South African Experience

The world over south Africa's experience with apartheid has become topical. In this lesson students are exposed to debates around South African apartheid system and how it worked. We trace the discussion from the mineral's revolution to understand the historical contexts within which the apartheid system developed. Students will explore the nature, extend and impact of the apartheid system.

8) Lesson 8: The winds of change: Decolonisation in Africa

In this lesson various case studies of African independence will be explored. Students will be encouraged to compare the different paths to independence adopted by different countries and how this may have affected the outcome of the independence.

9) Lesson 9: A false start and a disastrous end? Independence and the search for a sustainable future

In this lesson students will explore various ideologies that were adopted by African governments soon after independence. The lesson will explore ideas behind Pan-Africanism, African socialism and other isms and examine their rise and fall.

10) Lesson 10: Political Crisis, Conflict and the Post-colonial state

Africa has been at the centre of many conflicts. From the DRC, Somalia, Ethiopia, Sierra Leone, Angola to more recently Mozambique, Africa has been wrought with conflict taking various forms. This lesson seeks to explore the various dimensions of conflict, their causes and impact on Africa.

11) Lesson 11: Neopatrimonialism, Governance and corruption

Students will use various case studies to explore issues of (mis)governance and corruption in Africa. Case studies will explore, largely, the experiences of resource laden countries which, arguably, have had greater experiences of corruption and misgovernance.

12) Lesson 12: Nations on the move: African migration and the post-colonial state

Migration in some African states is a critical source of foreign currency. It is also an avenue of survival as many Africans become economic refugees. While migration may have had positive impacts on sending and receiving nations, it has also been a source of tensions and conflicts such as xenophobia. This lesson seeks to expose students to shifting dynamics around migration in post-colonial Africa.

13) Lesson 15: Democracy and elections in Africa

Democracy is a contested terrain. Whose democracy, is it? Who defines the limits and standards of democracy? How are democratic regimes established? What role has been played by elections in Africa in the attainment or suffocation of democracy? This lesson takes students to Africa's experiences with democracy in general and electioneering. It will explore the relationship between democracy, institutions and development in Africa.

14) Lesson 14: Regional and Economic Integration in Africa

Regional and economic integration in the world have been hailed as potential sources for the development of regions as country pool resources and policy frameworks that promote comparative advantage and also healthy economic competition. In this lesson, students debate and explore various pathways of Africa's attempts at regional integration.

15) Lesson 15: Urbanisation and the Post-colonial state

During the colonial era, Africans in most colonies were restricted in their movement into the cities. Upon independence, the African cities opened and this triggered unprecedented rural-urban drifts. Post-colonial rapid urbanisation radically changed the urban spaces. Demands for roads, infrastructure and other urban amenities increased unprecedentedly and pressure was put on post-colonial governments. The lesson seeks to explore the dynamics around African post-colonial urbanisation and the impact this has had.

16) Lesson 16: Feminist movements in post-colonial Africa

Post-colonial Africa has witnessed the emergence of feminist movements challenging women's subordination and exclusion in politics and the economy. International platforms and networks have been established to advance feminist movements in Africa. The lesson evaluates the various feminist movements and their impact on African states and societies.

17) Lesson 17: Food security and Food sovereignty in post-colonial Africa

One of the greatest challenges in many parts of Africa has been food security. The Somalian and Ethiopian famines offer interesting cases studies around precarious food security experiences. We seek to understand the causes of food security and how African states have sought to improve on their food regimes.

18) Lesson 18: China in Africa: Another round of plunder?

The presence of China in Africa has been a source of great debate among scholars today. How can we characterise China's presence in Africa? Is China an all-weather friend or simply an opportunistic imperialist or possibly both and more? What have been some of the results of Chinese presence in Africa and what meanings and interpretations can we make?

19) Lesson 19: Post-colonial Africa and International relations

The topic looks at various nuggets in Africa's international relations, the role of AU and various international pacts at national and continental level. What has been the role of global powers in Africa's socio-economic and political relations? What has been the impact of these relations and how have they informed today's developmental trajectories in Africa.

20) Lesson 20: African Women and politics in Africa

In this session students will examine the roles and status of women in the political spaces of Africa. We will explore the nature and extent of their participation and examine the forces that shape women's degree of participation. We will also evaluate various mechanisms, such as the quota system, which have been put in place by different African governments to try and expand women's participation in politics.

21) Lesson 21: Health and disease in post-colonial Africa

With the current pandemic wreaking havoc in the world, it is important that students get to understand the experience that Africa has had with health and disease. While covid-19 has taken the attention of the world, there remain dozens of diseases that have been obscured and yet they have shaped the social, economic and political terrain of the continent. Beyond covid-19, how have African governments and its global partners dealt with health and disease and what have been the implications?

22) Lesson 22: In quest for industrialisation: African Industrialisation and the post-colonial state.

There have been debates around Africa and the need for it to industrialise if the continent is to progress and achieve modernity. In most parts of the continent, colonialism limited Africa's capacity to industrialise. Upon independence, various African nations attempted at various schemes of industrialisation with mixed successes. In this session, students will examine the various measures and unpack the impact of these measures.

23) Lesson 23: Religion and Religiosity in Africa.

Religion in Africa plays a very huge role in shaping social, economic and political processes. Both Christianity and Islam have sizeable followings and from north to south, east to west, religion has had far-reaching effects. Religion, for example, has been at the centre of some conflicts in the continent. There has also been debates around the relationship between religiosity and development in Africa.

24) Lesson 24: Environment, climate change and the post-colonial state in Africa.

Climate change and the environment have become topical themes today. Students will explore the impact of climate change in different parts of Africa and how societies seek to mitigate their adverse impacts. From cyclones to droughts, the continent has been left struggling to negotiate its survival. Despite this, there have also been stories of resilience and survival in the face of shifting climates and the environment.

25) Lesson 25: Debating Africa's development potential – Seminar debate.

In this session students will engage into a debate around some of the success stories in Africa. The class will be divided into two groups. Those who argue for Africa's potential for development and those who argue that Africa is doomed to fail for one reason or another.

26) Lesson 26: Land reforms and Land deals in Africa

This session is intended at exploring the economics and politics of land reforms in Africa drawing on comparative analysis on causes and outcomes of these land reforms. Temporal and spatial comparative analysis will be made to understand the differences and similarities in land deals and land reform processes across the continent.

Reading list

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J.R. Mailey, *The Anatomy of the Resource Curse: Predatory Investment in Africa’s Extractive Industries*, Acss Special Report, 2015.

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