

DEPARTMENT OF AFRICAN, MIDDLE EASTERN AND SOUTH ASIAN LANGUAGES
AND LITERATURES

01:013:205: CULTURAL FORCES IN (INTER)NATIONAL POLITICS
SPRING 2021

Instructor: Meredith Shepard

Course Meetings: Mondays and Thursdays 11:30am-12:50pm

Office Hours: Friday 12-1pm and by appointment

Course Description

Most courses on politics and justice focus on such issues as power, political economy, the military, diplomacy, inter-governmental relations, constitutions, and court systems. There is a missing agenda in the study of world affairs — and that is the role of **culture** at both the national and global level. Through examinations of literature, film, and theater, this course explores how culture shapes conceptions and systems of politics and justice within and across nations. Contexts studied include South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the transition to democracy after apartheid; the Rwandan village court system of Gacaca and national reconciliation after genocide; and the ongoing struggle for racial justice in the United States. In addition to providing a specifically cultural framework for understanding national and international politics and justice, the course will consider how judicial practices and political systems influence the cultural realm. Prerequisites: None.

The course fulfills the SAS New Core Curriculum learning objective (a) in the 21st Century Challenges category. The course fulfills the SAS Core requirements of AHo and AHp.

Course Objectives:

Through readings and discussions of cultural productions alongside critical secondary texts, this course will enable students to analyze the role of culture in politics and justice through multiple paradigms, including the cultivation of sympathy for “the other;” the normalization of foundational values; the exposure of injustices; the “therapeutic” process of storytelling; and the articulation of alternative futures.

Required books for purchase:

Louise Erdrich, *The Round House* (978-0062065254)

Required Films for rent

Long Night’s Journey into Day ([available to rent](#) on Vimeo)

Hotel Rwanda ([available to rent](#) on YouTube)

*All other readings and films available on Canvas, Course Reserves, or for free online

Course Policies

Attendance: The success of this class depends upon your participation and engagement; thus, attendance and active participation are mandatory. In recognition that things come up, particularly during a global pandemic (!), you can have two unexcused absences without penalty, no questions asked.

After a second unexcused absence, each subsequent unexcused absence will result in one-third of a grade point off the final grade (B becomes B-, etc.). Seven or more unexcused absences will result in a failing grade for the course.

Absences will be excused only if you submit college documentation or in the case of a religious holiday (of which you must notify me in advance). You are still responsible for any homework scheduled for the day/s you are absent. If, after the automatically excused first two absences, you expect to miss another class, please use the University absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me.

Class participation: Not having read the assigned texts for class is equivalent to an absence. Please make sure you have ordered and received the relevant texts in time for the start of class. This will be predominantly a discussion oriented course, so tardies, inattention or not participating actively in the class will detract from the learning experience of others as well as yourself, and will be penalized as an absence. Keep in mind, however, that respectful listening is also an important form of participation.

Zoom sessions: These are the replacements for the face-to-face meetings. The zoom link will be posted on the announcement page on Canvas and also emailed to you. You will need a password to join in the session and *I will request videos-on/audio-muted for the class*, except for when you wish to talk, in which case, please do unmute yourself.

Catching up: Please make sure you have at least one classmate's email contact so that should you be absent for any class and want to catch up with the rest, you can email him or her and find out. Please do not email me with questions like "What did I miss yesterday?"

Late Assignments: Late assignments will result in a penalty of one-third of a grade point off the assignment grade (B becomes B-, etc.) I am much more likely to look favorably on extension requests if they are made far in advance. Last-minute extensions for personal emergencies require subsequent documentation from your advisor and/or doctor.

Statement on Disability Accommodation: If you are a student with a disability and have a DS-certified 'Accommodation Letter' please come to my office hours to confirm your accommodation needs. If you believe that you might have a disability that requires accommodation, you should contact Disability Services. **See here for details:** <http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/>

Statement on Inclusivity: This course covers challenging and sensitive topics. It is therefore especially important to treat your fellow classmates and their perspectives with respect, even if in disagreement with their viewpoints. Our goal is to foster class discussions that include all students and the diverse perspectives that they bring.

Statement on Academic Integrity: You must document all of your source material. If you take any text from somebody else, you must make it clear the text is being quoted and where the text comes from. You must also cite any sources from which you obtain numbers, ideas, or other material. If you have any questions about what does or does not constitute plagiarism, ask! Plagiarism is a serious offense and will not be treated lightly. The most common penalty is suspension from the university, but students caught plagiarizing are also subject to lowered or failing grades as well as the possibility of expulsion. See the link here for details:
<http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml>

Assignments

All of the following work must be submitted in order to receive a passing grade.

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| - Attendance and In-class Participation | 20% |
| - Midterm Exam | 25% |
| - Final Research Paper | 35% |
| - 12 response posts on Canvas forum* | 20% |

*(This works out to just under 1 post every other week. To ensure an even distribution of posts throughout the semester and to avoid heavy-loading your labor at the end of the semester, you are required to post at least 6 times before Spring Break.)

Reading Schedule:

(Please note that readings and readings schedule are provisional and subject to change during the semester)

Lesson 1, Th Jan 21: Introduction (no readings)

South Africa

Lesson 2, M Jan 25: Es'kia Mphahlele, "Mrs Plum;" Richard Rorty, "Human Rights, Rationality and Sentimentality"

Lesson 3, Th Jan 28: Nadine Gordimer, "The Pet" ([listen to the story](#) read and discussed on *The New Yorker* Fiction Podcast)

Lesson 4, M Feb 1: Glenn Mills, "Space and Power in South Africa: The Township as a Mechanism of Control"

Lesson 5, Th Feb 4: Don Mattera, "Afrika Road"

Lesson 6, M Feb 8: Elaine Scarry, "The Difficulty of Imagining Other People"

Lesson 7, Th Feb 1: Mahmood Mamdani, “Beyond Nuremberg: The Historical Significance of the Post-apartheid Transition in South Africa”

Lesson 8, M Feb 15: *Long Night’s Journey into Day* (film)

Lesson 9, Th Feb 18: *The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report* (Foreword and Volume 6, Section 1); Christian Gade, “The TRC and Ubuntu”

Lesson 10, M Feb 22: Antjie Krog, *Country of My Skull* (Chapter 3); Nicole Ephgrave, “Women’s Testimony and collective memory: Lessons from South Africa’s TRC and Rwanda’s *gacaca* courts”

Lesson 11, Th Feb 25: Richard Wilson, “The Politics of Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa: Legitimizing the Post-Apartheid State”

MIDTERM EXAM DUE FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 26 by MIDNIGHT

Rwanda

Lesson 12, M March 1: Transcripts of *Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines* “hate radio”; Meredith Shepard, “[Trump’s Radio Machete](#)”

Lesson 13, Th March 4: Alisa Solomon, “Who Gets to be Human on the Evening News?”

Lesson 14, M March 8: *Hotel Rwanda* (film)

Lesson 15, Th March 11: Makau Mutua, “Savages, Victims, and Saviors: The Metaphor of Human Rights”

SPRING BREAK

Lesson 16, M March 22: *My Neighbor, My Killer*

Lesson 17, Th March 25: Andrew Schaap, “Recognition” in *Political Reconciliation*

Lesson 18, M March 29: *Shadows of Memory* ([view](#) on YouTube); Nigel Eltringham, “The Past is Elsewhere: The Paradoxes of Proscribing Ethnicity in Rwanda”

Lesson 19, Th April 1: NO CLASS, ATTEND GLOBAL AFRICAS SYMPOSIUM EVENTS

The United States

Lesson 20, M April 5: Andrew Schaap, “Remembrance” in *Political Reconciliation*

Lesson 21, Th April 8: Saidiya Hartman, “The Time of Slavery”

Lesson 22, M April 12: Ta Nehisi-Coates, “The Case for Reparations”

Lesson 23, Th April 15: Claudia Rankine, “liminal spaces i”

Lesson 24, M April 19: Louise Erdrich, *The Round House* (pp 1-83/Chaps 1-4)

Lesson 25, Th, April 22: Louise Erdrich, *The Round House* (pp 84-148/ Chaps 5-7)

Lesson 26: M, April 26: Louise Erdrich, *The Round House* (pp 149-241/Chaps 8-9)

Lesson 27, Th, April 29: Louise Erdrich, *The Round House* (pp 242-317/Chaps 10-11); Jon’a F. Meyer, “History Repeats Itself: Restorative Justice in Native American Contexts”

Lesson 28, M, May 3: Conclusion

FINAL RESEARCH PAPER DUE FRIDAY, MAY 14