The Culture of Race, Resistance and Revolution in South Africa, Then & Now

Winter 2017 Study Abroad: Cape Town, South Africa
Professor Baz Dreisinger
John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY
524 west 59 Street
Room 7.01.14
212-237-8197
BDreisinger@jjay.cuny.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course provides students with a deeper understanding and appreciation of the key issues facing South Africa, then and now, as related to three things that have shaped the nation: race, resistance and revolution. Starting with pre-colonial South Africa and lingering in the contemporary cultural sphere, we look to understand the "why" and "how" of South Africa’s recent history, and the deep roots of debates in the country up to the present day. Our aim is to get a handle on South African culture beyond the too-simple Mandela-savior veneer, with an emphasis on the "born-free"/post-Apartheid generation and the country’s present-day criminal justice crisis.

Our class is interdisciplinary in nature, exploring South African culture in the form of literature, film, memoir, music, journalism, pop culture, primary and secondary historical sources and criminal justice texts. Our class is also hands-on, involving daily visits to profound historical landmarks, meetings with cultural influencers and history-makers, and—most critically—time engaging with incarcerated individuals inside two storied Cape Town prisons that have played vital roles in South Africa’s struggle since the Apartheid era.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
- Gain an overall understanding of the key issues facing South Africa, then and now, as related to three things that have shaped the nation: race, resistance and revolution
- Become better readers of a range of cultural texts, both contemporary and historical
- Become adept at using culture to better understand history and using history to better understand culture
- Compare the complex cultural dynamics of two countries (the US and South Africa) with similar yet very different historical legacies
- Engage with another culture’s rich achievements and profound complexities
- Draw connections between history and modern-day cultural politics
- Write clearly and cohesively about culture, history and contemporary experience

COURSE POLICIES
- You cannot miss any of the course meetings or outings. Attendance is mandatory, all the time.
- Maturity is a must. Travel demands it; travel to South Africa, on the other end of the globe, absolutely mandates it. I will support your international transition and am here as a source of guidance and support throughout.
- No late papers accepted. Period. All assignments are due when they are due.
- Consumption of illegal drugs is grounds for immediate dismissal from the program.
REQUIRED TEXTS
While in SA, you must read the Cape News every day
Thompson, *A History of South Africa*
Crais and McClendon, *The South Africa Reader: History, Culture, Politics* (R)
Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*
Mathabane, *Kaffir Boy: The True Story of a Black Youth's Coming of Age in Apartheid South Africa*
Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*
Posel and Simpson, *Commissioning the Past: Understanding South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission*
Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness*
Gordimer, *July's People*
Haffajee, *What if There Were No Whites in South Africa?*
Dreisinger, “For Black Comedians in South Africa, the Power is in the Punch Lines” (*New York Times*)
Other readings in course packet, per below syllabus
*As this is a highly condensed course with a heavy reading load, I strongly recommend that all students get a head start on their readings, attempting to get through as much of the material before leaving the US.*

COURSE ASSESSMENT
Active participation: 40 points
- You will be assessed on your engagement with the course material, excursions and guest speakers, as well as your understanding of key issues discussed.
Journal entries: 25 points
- You will keep a daily journal during the overseas dates of the course, during which you reflect on everything you are reading, seeing, feeling, encountering and thinking that relates to being and learning in Cape Town.
Final paper: 35 points
- You will write a final research paper of 10-15 pages on a topic of your choosing, to be approved by the professor while abroad. You will utilize at least three sources from the class readings and three of your own choosing. Papers are due 10 days after returning from South Africa.

COURSE SCHEDULE
**December 2 (at John Jay):** Setting the stage, part one (6-8:30 English conference room)
Chapters 1-5, Thompson, *A History of South Africa*

**December 9 (at John Jay):** Setting the stage, part two (3-5:30 English conference room)
Chapters 5-10 Thompson, *A History of South Africa*
Mathabane, *Kaffir Boy: The True Story of a Black Youth’s Coming of Age in Apartheid South Africa*
Excerpt from Fredrickson, *White Supremacy: A Comparative Study in American and South African History*

**January 12:** Travel day
Fly to Cape Town, South Africa, arriving the 13. Check into dorm rooms at the University of Cape Town. Meet for orientation and dinner.

**January 13:**
Morning:
Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*

Afternoon:
Walking tour of Cape Town and conscious tour of the townships: Gugulethu/Langa

**January 14:** Close lens on Apartheid and Mandela

**Morning:**
Excerpts from Clark and Worger, *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*
Verwoerd’s explanation for Apartheid
Watch Mandela speeches and his first TV interview, 1961
R 470-472
Excerpts from prison writings of Govan Mbeki, Walter Sisulu and other leaders

**Afternoon:**
Visit to Stellenbosch art galleries to explore representations of Madiba and the struggle.

**January 15:**
**Morning-Afternoon:**
Visit to Robben Island
Discuss Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom* and R 433-435 (Struggle songs)

**Evening:**
Overnight stay on Robben Island led by former ANC leader Philip Dexter, current chair of the Robben Island Foundation

**January 16:** The culture of revolution

**Morning:**
Excerpts from Krige, *Soweto 16 June 1976: Personal Accounts of the Uprising*

**Afternoon:**
District Six Museum, Bo Kaap Museum

**Evening:**
Watch *Mama Africa* (film about Miriam Makeba)

**January 17:** The Truth and Reconciliation Commission

**Morning:**
Posel and Simpson, *Commissioning the Past: Understanding South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission*
Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness*
Excerpts from Zehr, *Changing Lenses*

**Afternoon:**
Guest Speaker: Thulani Grenville-Grey, former South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission Mental Health Specialist

**January 18:** SA’s contemporary criminal justice crisis

**Morning:**
Excerpt from Dreisinger, *Incarceration Nations: A Journey to Justice in Prisons Around the World*
Excerpt from Steinberg, *The Number*

**Afternoon:**
Visit to Pollsmoor Prison, where Mandela was incarcerated for six years, with Hope Prison Ministries, to learn about its groundbreaking restorative justice work there.

**Evening:**
Dinner in Constantia accompanied by PJ Pote, local hip-hop artist who was incarcerated at Pollsmoor

**January 19:** The contemporary racial fray, from politics to culture

**Morning:**
Haffajee, *What if There Were No Whites in South Africa?*
Dreisinger, "For Black Comedians in South Africa, the Power is in the Punch Lines" (*New York Times*)
R 524-530, 552-581
Watch: Clips from “Late Night News” and “Pure Monate Show”; Zuma cartoons
Listen: Kwaito music CD, South African hip-hop

**Afternoon:**
Visit to Media24, South Africa’s biggest media company, to meet with Naeemah Maoset, Editor, Media24’s Kwela Books, devoted to black/coloured South African writers

**Evening:**
Cape Town Comedy Club

**January 20:** Reconciliation? Resolution?

**Morning:**
Gordimer, *July’s People*

**Afternoon:**
Visit to Drakenstein Prison, formerly Victor Verster Prison, where Mandela was released from. We will be led by radio host and prison activist Preston Jongbloed and will spend much of the day engaging with the incarcerated men he teaches, mentors and assists in reentry.

**Evening:**
Farewell dinner, Camps Bay, accompanied by pioneering coloured rugby star Conrad Jantjes

**January 21:** Fly back to NYC

**February 1:** Final papers due, emailed to Professor Dreisinger