

COURSE INSTRUCTOR: Antoine Rutayisire, MA

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Fast traveling means and fast communication have shrunk the world into almost one village. However, the ease of contact does not necessarily mean ease of mutual understanding and it has become imperative to understand other cultures to be able to relate to each other as human beings.

The aim of this course is to provide the students with the academic tools for social and cultural analysis with a specific focus on the African traditional culture and religion in general with a special emphasis and examples drawn from the Rwanda culture and religion.

The course will explore some of the characteristics of the African cultures and traditional religions, the values and social perspectives they vehicle and it will look at the influence of those cultures on the receptivity to Christianity, Islam and development.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

At the end of the course, the students will have:

1. Acquired the scientific tools for exegeting a culture.
2. Acquired the skills to use those tools with specific application to the African/Rwandan context.
3. Received a good grasp of major contents of African traditional culture and religion.
4. Understood how cultural values influence spiritual receptivity and impact community change and transformation.
5. Been acquainted with the skills required to relate to people of other cultures.

COURSE READINGS:

1. Paul G. Hiebert, Daniel Shaw and Tite Tienou. 1999. Understanding Folk Religion: A Christian Response to Popular Beliefs and Practices. Grand Rapids: Baker Books.
2. Paul G. Hiebert. Anthropological Insights for Missionaries:
3. G. Lingenfelter. 2006. Ministering Cross-Culturally: An Incarnational Model for Personal Relationships. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.
4. John Mbiti. 1969. African Religions and Philosophy. Oxford: Heineman

COURSE CONTENT:

The course will run for 45 hours spread over 17 days, spread over 5 weeks.

The course will be carried out through:

1. Academic lectures based on assigned readings with compulsory written assignments, class participation and group presentations. The weekly short papers and presentations will count in the final grading of the course.
2. Field visits and interviews with specific groups of Rwandans to exegete the traditional Rwandan religion and culture.
3. A final paper will be submitted at the end of the course exploring one of the major areas covered through the course.

COURSE EVALUATION:

Class presentations and papers: 20 points

Site visit paper: 20 points

Final examination: 20 points

Research paper: 40 points

GRADING SCALE:

95-100 A	85-88 B	75-78 C	65-68 D
92-94 A-	82-84 B-	72-74 C-	62-64 D-
89 -91 B+	79-81 C+	69-71 D+	0-61 F

COURSE POLICIES:

Attendance is required at all class sessions. Success in the course depends heavily on your attendance, preparation and participation.

Students shall practice academic honesty. All academic dishonesty, cheating, and plagiarism is prohibited, including, for example:

- giving or receiving aid during a quiz or examination;
- turning in written work prepared partially or wholly by another;
- presenting another's ideas or work as your own without proper citation;
- failure to cite sources used in a research paper or oral presentation.

If you are uncertain about how to comply with academic integrity standards, including how to avoid plagiarism, please ask.

Students are expected to produce written work that is focused, well developed, organized, and relatively free of grammatical, punctuation and spelling errors. Papers that do not meet

standard will be returned to the student for revision within a reasonable time.

At a minimum, the paper shall have:

- a clear thesis and maintain a focus;
- paragraphs that are well developed with topic sentences and adequate support;
- smooth transitions and flow of ideas;
- correct grammar and academic style;
- proper documentation of borrowed ideas using MLA (or other recognized) citation format.

Papers should be written with a logical flow, using headings and subheadings to organize your thoughts and the reader's attention. Additional criteria for papers will be discussed in class. All assignments are due on time. Late assignments will be penalized. Permission for extensions must be requested in advance of the due date, and the assignment is still subject to grade reduction. Assignments turned in late without a request for extension will not be graded.

GUIDELINES FOR THE FINAL PAPER:

1. Choosing the topic: Work in small groups of no more than 3 people by "elective affinities" around a given topic that is interesting for each member of the group and relevant to religion or any other element of culture studied in the course. Choose an issue, or a problem that calls for change/transformation. Research the topic through interviews, focus groups or any other method, and write a 15-20 page paper.
2. Format for the paper:
 - a. Title page: title of paper, names of the writers and date (ex. April 2015).
 - b. Introduction: explain the importance and interest of the topic. Explain why you think that topic is worth studying, in line with the course content, relevance to your studies and the community you have served or intend to serve in the future. Maximum 2 pages.
 - c. Literature review: using books and articles you can find (including the internet), find out what others have written about the issue under study and critically summarize their arguments about the problem, its manifestations, its causes, its consequences and way of changing the situation. 5 pages.
 - d. Field Research: choose whatever method you find suitable to your case (interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, etc.) and summarize your findings in a well organized argumentation. 5 pages.
 - e. Conclusion and recommendations: draw your conclusions from the literature review and your field research and combine them to make recommendations that would help change the situation you studied. 3 pages.

COURSE OUTLINE:

CLASS	CONTENT	READINGS	ASSIGNMENT
April 1st	Introductions, course objectives and student expectations.	Mbiti: Ch. 1 & 2 Hiebert: <i>Anthropological Insights</i> Ch. 2, pp. 28-59	Browse the reading materials and write down some of the concepts to be used in your final paper; identify the people you will interview. Form the groups for the final research paper. Write a tentative summary of your final paper, including your motivation, your thesis statement, your methodology and some expected conclusions. 2 pages.
April 2nd & 6th	Issues in studying and understanding African culture.	Mbiti: Ch. 4, 5, 6, 7 & 9	Compare the perception of God and the creation of man in African culture with the Biblical perspective. What are the major similarities and differences? What implications do they carry for those engaged in the evangelization of African communities?
April 7th & 8th	African traditional religion: God in African culture and the creation of man.	Mbiti: Ch. 8 & 14	Some compare the dead ancestors to Christian saints. They interpret the cult of dead ancestors not as acts of worship but of respect. How do the readings help to confirm or negate that affirmation? 1 page.
April 10th	African traditional religion: Spiritual beings, spirits and the living dead. Death and the hereafter.	Mbiti: Ch. 15 & 16	Analyze the role of the different specialists, their powers and the individual and collective needs they responded to. Christianity tried to discard them but they seem to thrive in many communities. Why? 1 page.
April 13th & 14th	African traditional powers, magic, witchcraft, sorcery and the specialists.	Mbiti: Ch. 10, 11, 12 & 13	Complete a proactive reading of the 4 assigned chapters by asking yourself intriguing questions about the African families and different related topics and show how the reading has answered your curiosity.
April 15th & 17th	African traditional family: childhood, adulthood, marriage and related rites.	Mbiti: Ch. 3 Lingenfelter: Ch. 3, 5 & 6	Using your own experience in Africa, describe two cases of conflict around time and goals.

INCL 340: AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION & CULTURE

CLASS	CONTENT	READINGS	ASSIGNMENT
April 20th & 21st	The concept of time in African culture. Tension about time, goals, and crisis management.	Lingenfelter: Ch. 9 Hiebert: <i>Anthropological Insights</i> Ch. 3, pp. 61-89	Based on your experience on the terrain, is there any area of your work or relationship that could have been better if you had read this material before?
April 22nd	Ministering cross-culturally.	Mbiti: Ch. 18, 19 & 20	Write a one page paper on the role of culture in development with an extrapolation to evangelism.
April 24th	Culture and change.	Hiebert, Shaw, Tienou: Ch. 14 & 15	From the different discussions and information you already have from the course, show how this could inform your work as a missionary or development agent in Africa.
April 27th	Missionary work in light of African traditional religion and culture.		
April 28th	Wrapping up.		Wok on final papers.
April 29th	Submit final papers. Final exam and course evaluation.		

Class dates are approximate. Lecture topics, reading assignments and due dates will be confirmed in class. This syllabus is intended to facilitate the exchange of information between the instructor and student and in no way should be construed as legal document or commitment.

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