

AFR 215 Introduction to African Studies

Generously shared with colleagues by Professor Doris Payne

Critical Thinking

Students will develop the skills and habits of mind necessary for the comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts, and events in the evaluation and formulation of opinions and conclusions. Critical thinking requires students to question critically, think logically and reason effectively in the context of discipline-specific methodologies.

Course will engage students in developing at least half of the following:

1. Explanation of issues, assumptions, or hypotheses.
2. Using relevant and credible evidence, information, or hypotheses to describe, investigate or analyze a situation, or draw a conclusion.
3. Facility with methods of reasoning appropriate to the discipline (such as inductive, deductive, scientific, or esthetic reasoning, or statistical inference).
4. Modeling: capturing the essentials of a situation in language or symbolism suitable for deriving conclusions about it.
5. Influence of context and assumptions.
6. Logical conclusions and related outcomes (implications and consequences).

Which criterion? (must address 3 of 6)	Please describe <i>how</i> this course has been designed to fulfill the selected core education criterion: What kinds of activities, assignments, experiences allow students to practice and/or demonstrate attainment of the criterion? Please <i>provide specific examples</i> of activities, assignments, or experiences from the syllabus. You are also welcome to upload additional course materials as illustrations. (Add rows to the table as needed)
1,2	<p>Students do written reading responses to a short prompt on an assigned reading for 8 out of 10 weeks. In the responses, students must provide relevant, well-reasoned, and specific examples to substantiate claims in response to a prompt. E.g. for Week 2 “Answer one of the following based on Graham (2016): (1) What was the ‘scramble for Africa’ and how did it play out in West Africa? (2): Is Egypt an African Country? Support your answer with arguments from the reading.”</p> <p>To help them succeed: In Week 1, students devote 15 minutes of group in-class discussion to identifying typical Western presuppositions about Africa evident in Wainana (2005) “How to write about Africa,” followed by instructor’s introduction to prompt responses. The syllabus explains the grading rubric for reading responses and criteria are explained and modeled in Week 1, as follows: 3 pts.: response to prompt is relevant; and fact and/or logic based; 3pts: <i>clear, scholarly writing</i>; 3pts: <i>evidence/examples from the reading to support claims</i>.</p>
1	<p>Midterm and final exam probe knowledge of historical, post-colonial, and modern African issues. To help them succeed: Students discuss issues, assumptions and hypotheses in the readings and lectures, in small groups in class, followed by full-class summaries by the professor.</p>
5	<p>Students write 1,000-1250 word critical review papers of two novels by African authors, in which they respond to questions that ask them to identify, compare, and contrast relationships between traditional cultural, colonial-era government, post-colonial, and modern geopolitical values, policies, economics, identity issues, etc. that relate to Africa.</p>

	To help them succeed: Via lectures and in-class discussion, students engage with faculty experts in literature, economics, human rights, law, environmental studies, linguistic and cultural diversity, gender, etc. who discuss issues bearing on diverse African vs. Western (and sometimes Asian) contextual assumptions pertaining to African concerns.
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Ethical Reflection

Students will develop the capacity to identify, examine, and critically revise ethical positions, map them onto larger ethical ideas (theoretical traditions, moral frameworks, prevailing social frameworks), and reflect on how decisions and actions (including, sometimes, inaction) shape our relations to others and self. Students will develop the capacity to articulate the ends sought in a range of endeavors in personal, social and professional contexts. Students also will develop concepts, practices, and other tools appropriate to valuing those ends in relation to their means of attainment and their impacts on self and others.

Course will engage students in developing at least half of the following:

1. Awareness of one’s own values and capacities for self-questioning.
2. Language and tools to examine ethical issues, including discipline-specific frameworks.
3. Recognition of the presence of ethical issues, especially where typically neglected.
4. Awareness of the impact of our decisions and actions (both personally and as members of groups).
5. Application of ethical inquiry to subject-specific issues.

Which criterion? (must address 3 of 5)	Please describe <i>how</i> this course has been designed to fulfill the selected core education criterion: What kinds of activities, assignments, experiences allow students to practice and/or demonstrate attainment of the criterion? Please <i>provide specific examples</i> of activities, assignments, or experiences from the syllabus. You are also welcome to upload additional course materials as illustrations. (Add rows to the table as needed)
1	<p>Certain reading response prompts and the critical novel reviews ask students to reflect in writing on cultural facts and values that may differ from their own relative to issues raised by the reading.</p> <p>To help them succeed: Based on assigned readings, students formulate discussion questions prior to class, to ask the class presenters regarding cultural facts and values.</p>
3	<p>In the critical review of Chinua Achebe’s <i>Things Fall Apart</i>, students evaluate in writing what was “good” versus “bad” (if anything) in culturally-based decisions about killing members of the culture who violated traditional norms; and other ethical/moral differences between British colonialists and different sectors of a West African culture.</p> <p>Students turn in two questions based on reading, in preparation for class-wide discussion of whether and why International Criminal Court charges against specific African leaders regarding “crimes against humanity” present ethical problems for Western governments.</p> <p>To help them succeed: Students have approximately four weeks to read the novel and prepare for a preliminary class discussion on it prior to when the paper is due.</p>

	Students read multiple documents related to the history and mandate of the International Criminal Court.
	Students read materials online about the International Criminal Court, and the International declaration of human rights.
4	In Week 3 response papers, students identify actors and stakeholders around water in the Nile basin, articulate impacts of decisions on various groups, and evaluate who is benefitted vs. harmed. Students complete reading assignments in preparation for a class lecture on cultural facts and practices, issues surrounding human rights, foreign policy, conflicting values pertaining to economic development, etc. in the Nile basin.

CULTURAL LITERACY TEMPLATES

Global Perspectives

Courses in the *Global Perspectives* category will foster student encounters with and critical reflection on cultures, identities, and ways of being in global contexts. Each course will include substantial scholarship, cultural production, a variety of perspectives, and proximity to voices from members of communities under study, as sources permit.

Each course will undertake *one or more* of the following:

1. Teach respectful listening and civil conversation as critical tools for involving students in topics that are controversial today.
2. Provide critical vocabulary and concepts allowing students to engage in and discuss topics with which students may be unfamiliar.

Each course will include *one of more* of the following:

3. Texts, literature, artworks, testimonies, practices, or other cultural products that reflect systems of meaning or beliefs beyond a US context.
4. Power relations involving different nations, peoples, and identity groups or world regions.
5. Consideration of hierarchy, marginality, or discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, nationality, or ability (or combinations of these).

Which criterion? (Address 1 and/or 2, and at least one of 3-5)	Please describe <i>how</i> this course has been designed to fulfill the selected core education criterion: What kinds of activities, assignments, experiences allow students to practice and/or demonstrate attainment of the criterion? Please provide <i>specific examples</i> of activities, assignments, or experiences from the syllabus. You are also welcome to upload additional course materials as illustrations. (Add rows to the table as needed)
1,2	Students write critical essays about two novels responding to specific issues dealing with non-US beliefs and systems. (One novel depicts a traditional West African culture in contact with British Colonial government norms, and resultant cultural and individual conflict, and another is set in post-colonial southern Africa. The novels deal with issues of intra-family conflict, power relations and cultural and religious norms, different ideologies, etc.)

	<p>To help them succeed: Students are given approximately four weeks to read the novel and prepare for a preliminary class discussion on each novel prior to when the paper is due.</p> <p>Students read multiple articles and engage with lectures via class discussions related to traditional and modern African cultures that differ from US contexts.</p>