

GEOG 273: Advanced Topics in Political Economy and Ecology Making Southern Africa

Fall 2015

Dr. Ingrid L. Nelson

Office: Old Mill 212

Office hrs: M 1-2:30pm; F 1-2:30pm; or by appointment

Class Meetings: Lafayette L408

M & W 5:05pm-6:20pm

ilnelson@uvm.edu

Overview and Structure

In the spirit of the popular geopolitical admonition “Africa is not a country,” many university courses focus on historical and contemporary issues in “sub-Saharan Africa,” in part as a way to question broader stereotypes about “Africa.” This course treats sub-Saharan Africa as a contested world region by introducing students to key debates in critical regional geography (CRG) through the lens of southern Africa. Rather than determining an “essence” of southern Africa as a region, we will analyze a combination of in-depth physical and human geography themes to explore the multiple geopolitical and environmental narratives and imaginaries that influence the ways that diverse actors come to know, define and make regions. This is also an advanced political ecology course in which we examine the politics that shape our understandings of and interactions with various forms and ideas of nature in geographically diverse contexts. ‘Nature’ is a historically and culturally contingent concept, deployed unevenly for the benefit of some and to the detriment of others. Through writing-intensive, research-based and creative mapping assignments, this course offers a unique approach to southern African political ecologies and critical regional geography through six key lenses, including:

- i. Excavating origin stories
- ii. Being nuclear and locating nuclearity
- iii. Transforming frontiers through conservation
- iv. Performing embodied politics of race, place and resistance
- v. Engaging trans-boundary river basins and modeling a changing climate
- vi. Crossing boundaries of sexuality, gender and landscape via the ‘invisible realm’

Learning Objectives¹ (Note: We will modify these objectives during the first week of class)

After completing and reflecting on experiences in this course, students should be able to:

- i. Engage in informed conversations that reveal the complex dimensions that popular narratives about ‘Africa’ often hide and the alternative perspectives on region, scale and place that a critical regional geography approach can provide (*knowledge/foundations*),
- ii. Conduct creative and critical research that integrates and synthesizes economic, historical, ecological, cultural and scientific perspectives and that distinguishes and combines conflicting forms of evidence, methodologies and theories (such research entails working independently and in groups, drawing on the diverse strengths of group members and encouraging peer- and self-assessment (*application/integration/skills*),
- iii. Think critically about a diversity of cultural values and across multiple sites of local, national, global and networked relevance, which requires pausing, reflecting and taking the time to listen to the

¹ These draw from the Department of Geography’s Learning Goals and approaches in L. Dee Fink’s *Creating Significant Learning Experiences: An Integrated Approach to Designing College Courses* (2013).

seemingly obvious, the banal and the daily facets of life drowned out by the proliferation of grand narratives (*human dimension/personal/values/skills*),

- iv. Begin, as members of society, to deliberately recognize and assess how specific environmental narratives and technical fixes impact our own lives, shape our behavior and in turn, impact the lives of others (*human dimension/personal*),
- v. Take responsibility for communicating with greater precision through a range of verbal, visual and other genres to express key concerns and listen to other perspectives (*caring/skills*),
- vi. Develop a greater comfort in and desire to read specific ‘texts’ more than once, by relating to and understanding the text differently each time (through this process, students will build a clearer sense of what they would like to learn next and what knowledge and skills will be required to do so) (*learning how to learn*).

Readings

1. Required:

- Büscher, B. 2013.** *Transforming the frontier: Peace parks and the politics of neoliberal conservation in southern Africa.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Dangarembga, T. 1989.** *Nervous conditions: a novel.* Seattle, WA: Seal Press.
- Hecht, G. 2012.** *Being nuclear: Africans and the global uranium trade.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

2. Recommended resources for students needing introductory/prerequisite materials for the course:

- Billig, M. 2013.** *Learn to Write Badly: How to Succeed in the Social Sciences.* Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Robbins, P. 2012.** *Political ecology: A critical introduction, 2nd Edition.* West Sussex and Malden: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Stock, R.F. 2013.** *Africa south of the Sahara: a geographical interpretation.* New York: Guilford Press, 3rd Edition.

3. Additional required readings are available in .pdf format through the course Blackboard page and **must be printed, read and brought to class on the specified dates.**

Assessment	Percentage of Final Grade
Course Engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leading class discussion and a group mapping session (8%) • Group notecard synthesis (twice per semester) (4%) 	12%
Short Evaluations of Foundational Knowledge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiz 1 (4%) • Quiz 2 (4%) • Notecards (5%) 	13%
Reflective and Integrative Work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group mapping activity contributions (10%) • Group mapping activity preparation diary/notebook (8%) • Critical regional geography essay (12%) • ‘Nervous conditions’ response (5%) 	35%
Culminating Project or Paper <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annotated bibliography (5%) • Assessment of primary data and methods check (5%) • Draft check and peer review (5%) • Final presentation during last two class sessions (5%) • Final paper or map project with accompanying material (20%) 	40%
Total	100%

Assessment Guidelines (specific instructions and rubrics will be posted in Blackboard):

Course engagement (12% of the final course grade) includes both attendance and participation in class discussions and activities. This course consists of a seminar format in which the majority of the course engagement assessment involves each student working with another student to prepare for and co-lead 30 minutes of class discussion, and a mapping session during the semester (8% of the final course grade). Students will sign up for their discussion dates during the September 2nd class session. A strong performance will involve engaging fellow students in the Blackboard discussion forum and briefly reading student notecards before the class session. Discussion leaders will encourage participation and input from fellow class members while also presenting:

- i. The 'nuts and bolts' of the author's argument,
- ii. An 'internal' critique of the argument and
- iii. An external critique of the argument.

After each class session, all students can modify their notecards based on further analysis and the discussion and share these with the student discussion leaders who will then create a finalized '**Group notecard synthesis**' or set of notes for that reading and discussion to be shared with the class in the discussion board. Each student will submit up to two co-authored 'group notecard syntheses' during the semester (4% of the final course grade). Discussion leaders who present on Mondays will need to upload the final group notes before 5pm on Friday of the same week and students who present on Wednesdays will need to upload their final notes before 5pm on Monday of the following week.

Short evaluations of foundational knowledge (13%) includes two short quizzes on key words and sites/locations of importance (map quiz) for the course. Much of the foundational knowledge evaluated can be found using the course reserve texts in the library (especially Stock 2013). Each quiz is worth 4% of the total course grade and is already scheduled in the syllabus. These quizzes may be administered in a hard copy format or in an online platform chosen by Prof. Nelson (these are not pop quizzes). **Notecards for each reading (*starred) must be completed and uploaded to Blackboard by 3pm on the day of class at the latest** and brought in hard copy or on a laptop for use during the seminar discussion. Prof. Nelson will post a notecard template and an example notecard in Blackboard and distribute these examples early in the semester. Notecards prepared before class should reflect a student's *initial or draft* reflections, questions about and summary of the reading. Students should edit and make notes on these cards during the discussion and save these changes shortly after class. These more complete notecards should be sent to the discussion leaders to assist in developing the group notecard synthesis. Quizzes and notecards help gauge understanding of core concepts and identify 'trouble spots' needing review before completing more in-depth assignments. Prof. Nelson will frequently review, assess and check the timeliness of students keeping up with these notecards (5% of the total course grade). Students who do not keep up with these short notecards are likely to do poorly on their final course project or paper as they serve as a foundation for this culminating assignment.

Reflective and integrative work (35%) includes group mapping activity work and two individual writing assignments in which students build from their notecards and class discussions to reflect on and integrate the material and concepts at a more advanced level. Prior to the final class session in each of the six key course sections, students should prepare a diary or notebook entry that can be shared with peers and with Prof. Nelson. These entries should have clear headings, a date and a list of key words or concepts. Each entry can include written work, poems, music, doodles, maps done by hand or using a variety of computer applications and other content. These diary entries are worth 8% of the total course grade and are evaluated on an individual basis. Students should bring their diary entries to the last class session in each course theme to work on a collective mapping exercise. We may meet in the geography GIS lab, our regular classroom or in alternate locations for these exercises. At the end of each course theme (some last only one week and others span several

weeks) we will have produced several collective thematic maps informed by our readings, discussions, research, analysis and various modes of presenting our work. Student work during these mapping activities is worth 10% of the total course grade and will be evaluated on a group basis. Students will also write a **formal essay that engages the critical regional geography** literature introduced at the beginning of the course and carried throughout the course discussions. Students are expected to cite additional peer-reviewed literature in their argument. A draft will be due in class on October 7th with some limited time for peer-evaluation in class. The final essay is due on Friday, October 14th by 5pm and is worth 12% of the total course grade. Students will also write a **response paper** (in the style of a short book review or another pre-approved format) on Tsitsi Dangarembga's 'Nervous Conditions' (1989), which is due by 5pm on Friday, December 2nd (worth 5% of the total course grade).

Culminating project or paper (40%) includes several stages of preparation including an annotated bibliography (5% of the total course grade), a preliminary analysis of primary data and description of methods (5% of the total course grade) and a draft check and peer-review (5% of the total course grade). Our final project task is to present, compare, discuss and modify the different versions of the southern African region covered in class (there will be a presentation component for our class as a whole and an individual analytical paper component). The project or paper format and topic needs to be pre-approved by Professor Nelson. The paper must directly connect with the course's critical regional geography theme and with other student's projects in a collaborative way. Prof. Nelson will distribute a full assignment description early in the semester and allow for time during class to brainstorm project ideas with other students. **The prompt will call for students to develop an additional regional theme for understanding and making southern Africa as a 'critical region'.** Students will research key texts and primary data related to this additional theme and approach aspects of this theme in their final writing/project. Students will draw on this theme and the other course material to make an argument in response to the critical regional geography debates (responding to Ferguson 2006, Paasi 2002 & 2004 and Sidaway 2013 among other contributors). The final paper thus refines earlier arguments made in the critical regional geography essay submitted in Week 8 of the course. Students will share their findings and arguments with one another and form groups that will present the new themes and the critical regional geography arguments in the final week of the course (5% of the total course grade). Students will submit their final paper or project during the first 30 minutes of the scheduled exam period for this course (TBA by the registrar in due course) (20% of the total course grade). There is no formal final exam.

Note: Students who specialize in either physical geography, geospatial analysis, human geography or a combination of these will be able to draw on their particular skills, interests and strengths to inform their final paper or project and their role in the class project. For example, a paper that examines hydrological regions or climate analysis will have to connect to the human and political themes and papers emphasizing social science themes such as transforming urban landscapes or developing a sense of place will need to address the key physical and ecological processes relevant to their analysis.

NOTE: This syllabus is subject to change due to scheduling logistics and solicited student input.

Course Grading*

A+: 98-100%; A: 93-97.9%; A-: 90-92.9; B+: 88-89.9; B: 83-87.9; B-: 80-82.9;

C+: 78-79.9%; C: 73-77.9%; C-: 70-72.9%; D+: 68-69.9; D: 63-67.9; D-: 60-62.9; F: below 60%

**Warning letters:* If a student has earned a D+ or lower in class, they and their advisor will receive a warning letter suggesting they seek out ways to improve their work or consider withdrawing from class. If you receive one of these letters, please ask Prof. Nelson for assistance in improving your work.

General Course Policies and Resources

Prerequisites for the course: Geography students should have taken GEOG 040 (an introductory physical geography course), either GEOG 050 or GEOG 070 (introductory human geography courses) and a D1 or D2 course. Students in ENVS or other majors should have had at least one introductory natural sciences course and at least three social science courses (including a D1 or D2 course) in which they have read peer-reviewed academic journal articles. Students who have not studied sub-Saharan African histories before will still be able to join the course, but will be provided with some short background reading and suggested films on the course reserve in the library. This will allow everyone to begin the course with a fairly quick review and overview before we dive into our collective critical regional analysis project.

Fostering a Critical and Responsible Learning Environment: Throughout the course, please feel free to express your ideas and enter into dialogue with your fellow students. Although I encourage you to express your views, I expect that you will be courteous to others, respect different views, and refrain from personal attacks—in class, outside of class and on-line. In this class we do not debate, we discuss. Disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Failure to abide by these expectations will result in a reduced class engagement grade or disenrollment. During class, all phones must be turned off (no texting allowed). Laptops may be used for taking notes or engaging in class activities only and must not be connected to the Internet during class unless otherwise directed during specific activities. All assigned readings must be completed before class and all students must arrive on time.

Late work: No late work will be accepted unless you provide documentation from Student Services in your Dean's Office or contact Prof. Nelson in advance about upcoming conflicts that pose a reasonable need for delay.

Academic Integrity: All submitted work must be your own unless the assignment calls for collaboration. You must distinguish your own words and ideas from those of others by utilizing proper citations and references. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism. Detailed style guides are in our course 'Learning Resources and Guides' folder. Please also refer to UVM's Code of Academic Integrity and the Academic Integrity Program in The Center for Student Ethics and Standards for further clarification.

ACCESS: I encourage students with documented disabilities to contact me in **the first two weeks of classes** to discuss and arrange accommodations in co-ordination with the ACCESS office. In keeping with University policy, any student with a documented disability interested in utilizing accommodations should contact ACCESS, the office of Disability Services on campus. ACCESS works with students and faculty in an interactive process to explore reasonable and appropriate accommodations via an accommodation letter to faculty with recommended accommodations as early as possible each semester. Contact ACCESS: A170 Living/Learning Center; [802-656-7753](tel:802-656-7753); access@uvm.edu; or www.uvm.edu/access.

Athletic and religious schedule accommodations follow UVM policy, which can be viewed at <http://www.uvm.edu/cses>.

Recording and Transmission of Course Materials: Consistent with the University's policy on intellectual property rights, teaching and curricular materials (including but not limited to classroom lectures, class notes, exams, handouts, and presentations) are the property of the instructor. Therefore, electronic recording and/or transmission of classes or class notes is prohibited without the express written permission or request of the instructor. Such permission is to be considered unique to the needs of an individual student (e.g. ADA compliance), and not a license for permanent retention or electronic dissemination to others.

Use of student work: This course may use course participation and documents created by students for educational purposes. In compliance with the Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act,

works in all media produced by students as part of their course participation at UVM may be used for educational purposes. It is understood that registration for and continued enrollment in a course where such use of student works is announced constitutes permission by the student. After the course has been completed, any further use of student works will meet one of the following conditions: (1) the work will be rendered anonymous through the removal of all personal identification of the work's creator/originator(s); or (2) the creator/originator(s)' written permission will be secured.

GEOG 273 Course Schedule 2015 – Please consult Blackboard for updates

Week	Date	Topic	Assignment	Readings
1	Mon. Aug. 31	Course Introduction & Activity	Read syllabus & reflect on our LO's	Course Syllabus; Ferguson 2006, Introduction (p.1-23)
	Wed. Sept. 2	Introduction to Critical Regional Geographies (CRG) and 'Africa'	Notecard #1, Ferguson 2006	Ferguson 2006, Ch. 1 (p.25-49), begin Sidaway 2013
2	Mon. Sept. 7	Labor Day Holiday		
	Wed. Sept. 9	Making Southern Africa (MSA) Part I: Excavating Origin Stories	Notecard #2, Sidaway 2013	Finish Sidaway 2013;
3	Mon. Sept. 14	Continue CRG discussion & MSA Part I: Excavating Origin Stories	Notecard #3, Fabian 1983*	Fabian 1983; Primary documents in course folder
	Wed. Sept. 16		A1: Mapping activity 1 , prepare first diary entry	<i>Granger et al. 2015 (skim)</i> ; Bower 2015; video links; excerpts from McCarthy & Rubridge 2005
4	Mon. Sept. 21	MSA Part II: Being Nuclear, Locating Nuclearity	Notecards (#4), Hecht 2012 chs 1-3*	Hecht 2012, Chs. 1-3 (p.1-106)
	Wed. Sept. 23		Notecards (#5), Hecht 2012 ch 4; draft diary entry; Quiz #1 by Friday	Hecht 2012, Ch. 5 (p.141-181); <i>skim Ch. 4 (p.107-140)</i>
5	Mon. Sept. 28		Notecards (#6), Hecht 2012 chs 6-8*	Hecht 2012, Chs. 6, 7 & 8 (p.183-286); <i>skim p.230-250</i>
	Wed. Sept. 30		A2: Mapping activity 2 , finish second diary entry	Hecht 2012, Chs. 9-10 & Appendix (p. 287-350)
6	Mon. Oct. 5	MSA Part III: Transforming Frontiers through Conservation	Notecards (#7), Büscher 2013, chs 1-3*	Büscher 2013, Chs. 1-3 (p.1-107)
	Wed. Oct. 7		Notecards (#8), Büscher 2013, chs 4-5; Draft CRG Essay due in class	Büscher 2013, Chs. 4 & 5 (p.109-167)
7	Mon. Oct. 12		A3: Mapping activity 3 , prepare third diary entry	Büscher 2013, Chs. 6, 7 & conclusion (p.169-232)
	Wed. Oct. 14	CRG: Revisiting Place, Region and Scale	Notecards (#9), Paasi 2002 & Paasi 2004*; Quiz #2 by Friday	Paasi 2002 & Paasi 2004
8	Mon. Oct. 19	MSA Part IV: Performing Embodied Politics of Race, Place and Resistance	Notecard (#10), Vail and White 1983*	Vail and White 1983
	Wed. Oct. 21		Notecard (#11), Da Luz songs and music videos*; Final CRG Essay due by Friday ,	Da Luz (Azagaia) 2009, 2013 (see all songs posted in Blackboard); Begin Dangarembga 1989

			5pm	
9	Mon. Oct. 26		Notecards (#12), Moorman 2014*	Moorman 2014; Os Lambas (see all songs posted in Blackboard)
	Wed. Oct. 28		A4: Mapping activity 4; finish fourth diary entry; Annotated Bibliography due by Friday, 5pm	Du Preez 2011; <i>Marx and Milton 2011 (optional)</i> ; Russonello 2015 (Petit Noir links)
10	Mon. Nov. 2	MSA Part V: Engaging Trans- boundary River Basins and Modeling a Changing Climate	Notecard (#13); Fox and Sneddon 2007*	Fox and Sneddon 2007; <i>Sneddon and Fox 2008 (optional)</i>
	Wed. Nov. 4		Notecard (#14); Cook 2000; Nicholson 2003*	Cook 2000; Nicholson 2003
11	Mon. Nov. 9	MSA Part VI: Crossing Boundaries of Sexuality, Gender and Landscape via the 'Invisible Realm'	A5: Mapping activity 5; finish fifth diary entry	Dangarembga 1989 (finish Chapter 6 by today)
	Wed. Nov. 11		Notecard (#15); Currier 2012*; Submit primary data analysis activity and methods description by Friday, 5pm	Currier 2012, Intro & Ch. 1
12	Mon. Nov. 16		Notecard (#16); Arnfred 2011*	Arnfred 2011, p.137-251 (consult guidelines on sections to skim)
	Wed. Nov. 18		A6: Mapping activity 6; finish sixth diary entry; Submit draft final paper/project by Thursday, 5pm	Select oral histories from Morgan and Wieringa (eds.) 2005
	Nov. 23-27	Thanksgiving Recess		
13	Mon. Nov. 30	MSA Part VII: Collective work on additional regional themes	'Nervous conditions' response paper due by Friday, 5pm	Complete Dangarembga 1989 by today at the latest
	Wed. Dec. 2	CRG: Making Southern African Regions	Peer-review and group work on seventh theme	TBD
14	Mon. Dec. 7	In class final presentations		No assigned readings
	Wed. Dec. 9	In class final presentations		No assigned readings
There is no final exam in this class. Final papers are due within the first 30 minutes of the scheduled exam period for this class (TBA).				

Full Citations for the Readings Posted in Blackboard:

- Arnfred, S. 2011. *Sexuality & gender politics in Mozambique: rethinking gender in Africa*. Oxford: James Currey.
- Bower, B. 2015. 'Little Foot' pushes back age of earliest South African hominids: New dating suggests lived during same era as Lucy. *Science News*, 1 April 2015.
- Cook, K.H. 2000. The South Indian Convergence Zone and Interannual Rainfall Variability over Southern Africa. *Journal of Climate* 13 (21): 3789-3804.
- Currier, A. 2012. *Out in Africa: LGBT Organizing in Namibia and South Africa*. Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota University Press.
- Du Preez, A. 2011. Antwoord gooi zef liminality: of monsters, carnivals and affects. *Image & Text* 17: 102-118.
- Fabian, J. 1983. *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Ferguson, J. 2006. *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Fox, C. A., and C. Sneddon. 2007. Transboundary river basin agreements in the Mekong and Zambezi basins: Enhancing environmental security or securitizing the environment? *International Environmental Agreements* 7 (3): 237-261.
- Granger, D.E., Gibbon, R.J., Kuman, K., Clarke, R.J., Bruxelles, L. and M.W. Caffee. 2015. New cosmogenic burial ages for Sterkfontein Member 2 *Australopithecus* and Member 5 Oldowan. *Nature*, Research Letter (early online view doi: 10.1038).
- Marx, H. and V.C. Milton. 2011. Bastardised whiteness: 'zef'-culture, Die Antwoord and the reconfiguration of contemporary Afrikaans identities. *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture* 17 (6): 723-745.
- McCarthy, T., and B. Rubridge. 2005. *The story of Earth and life: A southern African perspective on a 4.6-billion-year journey*. Cape Town: Struik Publishers.
- Mooreman, M.J. 2014. Anatomy of Kuduro: Articulating the Angolan Body Politic after the War. *African Studies Review* 57 (3): 21-40.
- Morgan, R. and Wieringa, S. 2005 *Tommy Boys, Lesbian Men and Ancestral Wives: Female same-sex practices in Africa*. Johannesburg: Jacana Media.
- Nicholson, S.E. 2003. Comments on "The South Indian Convergence Zone and Interannual Rainfall Variability over Southern Africa" and the Question of ENSO's Influence on Southern Africa. *Journal of Climate* 16 (3): 555-562.
- Paasi, A. 2002. Place and region: regional worlds and words. *Progress in Human Geography* 26(6): 802-811.
- Paasi, A. 2004. Place and region: looking through the prism of scale. *Progress in Human Geography* 28(4): 536-546.
- Russonello, G. 2015. Meet Petit Noir, The Cape Town Artist Reinventing the African Gaze. Available at: <http://www.thefader.com/2015/06/23/petite-noir-interview> (accessed 3 August 2015).
- Sidaway, J. D. 2013. Geography, Globalization, and the Problematic of Area Studies. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 103(4): 984-1002.
- Sneddon, C., and C. Fox. 2008. Struggles Over Dams as Struggles for Justice: The World Commission on Dams (WCD) and Anti-Dam Campaigns in Thailand and Mozambique. *Society & Natural Resources* 21 (7): 625-640.
- Vail, L., and L. White. 1983. Forms of Resistance: Songs and Perceptions of Power in Colonial Mozambique. *The American Historical Review* 88 (4): 883-919.