

History, Culture and Development – Spring 2013

Njala University/University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Overview: At and around Njala University, students will engage in diverse and competing interpretations of history and development in Sierra Leone. Focusing on themes of ethnicity, gender, production, violence and anti-violence, our reading group will allow for us to analyze distinct as well as the more general qualities of Sierra Leonean history and development. Discussions, tours and presentations (by students and guests) will familiarize students with the Njala area, the politics and practices of development, and with the present uses of and debates over history within and outside of Sierra Leone.

Activities: We will be reading, working, eating, meeting, and travelling together. We'll share and interpret everyday experiences, use and analyze Sierra Leonean media, and become as familiar as possible with our new surroundings. We will get to know Njala University and the area around the campus through walks, tours and meetings. We will make at least three off-campus weekend excursions—possibly two mid-range and one long-range excursion. Since this is also the first part of your semester we will also take the time to help prepare for the rest of your spring. Our discussions and excursions will introduce you to issues related to diet and rice, oral interview methods, the practice of micro-finance and development, and we will also interact with researchers and experts working at Njala, Freetown and Bo.

Plan: We will have approximately four weeks together. Each week will be balanced with coursework, campus-based activities, and off-campus trips and site visits. The coursework includes readings, writing, discussion and small presentations. On campus we will visit farms, labs, housing, classrooms, the library, and visit students, staff and faculty where they live. Off-campus visits will be to the Bo area, Freetown and Rokupr or around Makeni.

Requirements: We will be meeting almost every day for either a short or long period. We all need to do the following: Complete reading and writing assignments. Participate and facilitate group discussion. Chronicle your experience and ideas with your journal and other mediums (camera, drawings).

Flexibility: How we plan and design our time together needs to be flexible. Assignments will be scheduled to keep us working but not overburdened, and it is a guarantee that plans and assignments will be adjusted.

Schedule and Readings: What is below is divided into four sections. We will be travelling around the campus and the country each week. Each section includes goals for campus and off-campus excursions. The reading list below covers what will likely be in a final course pack, and we will get through as much of the readings as we can over the course of each week. The minimum will be 20-30 pages of reading per day, daily journal entries, and a few pages of writing every few days.

- Novel in common: Yulisa Amadu Maddy, *No Past, No Present, No Future* (African Writer Series). You will probably be bringing books of your own, but this way we have an important piece of Sierra Leonean fiction in common.
- Do not get overwhelmed when looking at the reading list. Many of these are six to twelve pages in length. And you will have a good amount of time to share the reading load together.

ONE: Sierra Leone in the World

- Multiple tours to campus farms, facilities, FAO and SLARI.
- Tour Mokunde and meet community members.
- Afternoon and evening visit with faculty and students.

Joe Alie, *A New History of Sierra Leone*, excerpts on early-modern politics, trade, and ethnicity.

“The making of scientific knowledge in an age of slavery: Henry Smeathman, Sierra Leone and natural history,” Douglas Starr; and “A ‘Disgrace to the Very Colour’: Perceptions of Blackness and Whiteness in the Founding of Sierra Leone and Botany Bay,” Emma Christopher; from *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, (2008).

“How to Write About Africa,” 4pgs; Binyavanga Wainaina.

“Notes from down under,” Linda Tuhiwai Smith, 95-106; from *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (Zed: 2004, 7th ed).

“Indigenous Commerce and Entrepreneurship: The Sierra Leone Hinterland in the Nineteenth Century,” C. Magbaily Fyle, 61-80; from *History and Socio-Economic Development in Sierra Leone* (1988).

“War Machines” and “The Mano River War: A chronology,” Danny Hoffman; from *The War Machines: Young Men and Violence in Sierra Leone and Liberia* (2011).

“Small Worlds: The Democratization of Capital and Development,” and “Subprime Markets: Making Poverty Capital,” Ananya Royl from *Poverty Capital: Microfinance and the Making of Development* (2010).

TWO: Policy, Colonialism and Governance

- Travel to Bo for a weekend: visit shops, markets, agencies and other Njala campus.
- Go up the road to spend a day in Taiama: visit secondary school, farms, refugee camps and YWCA.
- Tours to campus farms, facilities, FAO and SLARI.
- Revisit Mokunde and meet community members.
- Afternoon and evening visit with faculty and students.

“British Colonial Policy toward Education and the Roots of Gender Inequality in Sierra Leone, 1896-1961,” 3-16, Sylvia Ojukutu-Macauley; from *Stepping Forward: Black Women in Africa and the Americas* (Ohio U, 2002).

“Definition of Women and Development: An African Perspective,” 299-303, Achola O. Pala; from *African Gender Studies: a reader* (2005).

“Three Interludes” and “Ambiguity and Gendered Practices,” Mariane Ferme; from *The Underneath of Things: Violence, History and the Everyday in Sierra Leone* (2001).

“Rice varieties and farmer experiments,” “Rice R&D in Sierra Leone: a farmer-first-and-last scenario,” Paul Richards, from *Coping with Hunger: Hazard and experiment in African rice-farming system* (1986).

No Condition is Permanent: The Social Dynamics of Agrarian Changes in Sub-Saharan Africa (1988), Introduction (2-21) and “Time is of the Essence: Intensification, Instability and Appropriate Technology” (181-201).

“The Colonial State and Wage Labor in Postwar Sierra Leone, 1945-1960: Attempts at Remaking the Working Class,” Ibrahim Abdullah, ILWCH, 1997.

THREE: International Relations from Below

- Return visit to Taiama.
- Weekend in Freetown with focus on government facilities, education, infrastructure, commerce and transportation.
- Small group presentations.
- Joint meetings with Njala students and faculty.

“The Origin of Street Boys” and “Interviews with Mohamed and James” from *Bras, Greens and Ballheads: Interviews with Freetown ‘Street Boys’* (Sierra Leone People’s Education Assoc. 1989).

“Smallest Victims; Youngest Killers’: Juvenile Combatants in Sierra Leone’s Civil War,” 238-253, Ibrahim Abdullah and Ismail Rashid, from *Between Democracy and Terror: The Sierra Leone Civil War* (2004).

“Corruption and Political Insurgency in Sierra Leone, 90-103, Sahr Kpundeh, from *Between Democracy and Terror: The Sierra Leone Civil War* (2004).

“Globalizing Africa?: Observations from an Inconvenient Continent,” 25-49; “Decomposing Modernity: History and Hierarchy After Development,” 176-193; James Ferguson, from *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order* (2006).

“The Birth of the Interview: The Thin and the Fat of it,” Abdullahi A. Ibrahim, 103-124; from *African Words, African Voices: Critical Practices in Oral History* (Indiana, 2001).

FOUR: Life, Resources and the Future

- Long-range excursion to north-central districts.
- Prepare for transition to next part of the semester.

“Conservation, gender and the environment,” Chapters 1 and 2, Melissa Leach; from *Rainforest Relations: Gender and Resource Use among the Mende of Gola, Sierra Leone* (Edinburgh, 1994).

“The agricultural impasse: creating "normal" post-war development in Northern Sierra Leone,” Catherine Bolten, 2008.

“The (In)significance of Development,” 124-137, and “The Political Instrumentalization of Disorder,” 141-163, Patrick Chabal & Jean Pascal Daloz; from *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument* (James Currey, 1999).

“Bush Path to Destruction: The Origin and Character of the Revolutionary United Front,” 41-65, Ibrahim Abdullah, from *Between Democracy and Terror: The Sierra Leone Civil War* (2004).