Desmond Tutu recently wrote,

I have always had hope in humankind. I know what marvellous things people can accomplish. I have also seen what mistakes they can make. Worse, they can be guilty of corruption and wickedness. In my lifetime, Africa has had its share of all of these. Its recent history is a mixed record of both achievement and disappointment. I have no doubt that this is true of every continent as well, which serves to make the point that in the end, we Africans are like everyone else. We are capable of the best and the worst (in Ellis, 2011).

The purpose of this class is to reflect on Tutu’s exclamation, exploring some of the ‘best’ and ‘worst’ – the marvellous and the mistakes – that characterize Africa’s history and contemporary ‘place in the world’. We will explore many of the key issues facing the continent, historicizing them and understanding them in political economic context. Stephen Ellis’ (2011) comprehensive book, *Season of Rains: Africa in the World* will provide a general framework for discussion. Drawing on Ellis’ work, each class will draw out several key topics that underlie persisting patterns of power and politics in Africa.

A few things to keep in mind about the nature/design of this class:

i. As a “capstone”, this course is intended to offer African Studies degree students the opportunity to meet together and discuss a general array of issues related to Africa in an integrated, interdisciplinary context. We will discuss a breadth of issues, incorporating various disciplines, including economics, political science, anthropology, sociology, geography and environment studies.

ii. As a “seminar”, the course is designed to promote high degrees of student participation, and student-led discussions. This is not a conventional, lecture-based class, and, hence, will require different levels of engagement and participation. Most importantly, students will be required to complete readings before class, and be prepared to participate fully in discussions.

iii. As a “research seminar”, one of the class’ key aims is to provide a constructible space for students to explore, present, and discuss their specific research interests related to the topic of “Africa in the World” and corresponding issues. With this in mind, up to 4 weeks of class time will be dedicated to student-designated research topics. Every student will be expected to identify a topic, submit a proposal, select a few core readings to share with the class, conduct a presentation (20 min), and help facilitate a discussion. This will provide an opportunity to begin framing your research topic and engage in critical discussion, which will provide a basis for your Final
Research Paper. While such responsibility may seem intimidating for some, you will be well-supported through the process, and we will ensure a constructive, supportive environment.

**Learning Outcomes:**
The primary goal for the class is to further develop understanding and critical engagement with contemporary issues in African studies. This will be underpinned by the following three core objectives: (1) Students will gain confidence in presenting their critical analyses of given readings in informal class discussions. Picking out key themes, making connections and comparisons between different texts, and responding to differing or opposing viewpoints in a clear and constructive manner will be practiced in each class; (2) Presentations will allow students to improve their formal presentation skills, as well as further develop their ability to give constructive and insightful feedback; (3) students will improve their analytical skills and academic writing skills in the preparation of an original and critical research paper.

**Books and Readings:**
There is one required book, which is available for purchase at Paragraph Bookstore – also note that electronic versions can be purchased online. All other readings are available for download on myCourses, or found online. Students should complete all assigned readings prior to each class.

Book to purchase:

**EVALUATION:**
Students will be evaluated on two mainstays of a “research seminar”: (1) participation, engagement & contribution to discussion fora (2) the development, articulation, and analysis of a research topic.

This will be broken down as follows:

i. **Participation 30%**
Because this is a small seminar, participation is crucial, and a substantial portion of each student’s mark will be based on in-class and online participation. The participation grade will consist of four components:

a. Class Attendance: Class attendance is *MANDATORY*. All absences must be approved in advance by the instructor or justified with a doctor’s note or other proper documentation.

b. Class Participation: Students are expected to come to class having done the assigned readings and prepared to offer specific insights or ask specific questions. Students should be attentive in class and participate actively in class discussions.

c. Contribution to ‘myCourses Discussion Forum’: Students are also expected to participate in the class through the myCourses discussion board. Students can use the discussion board to share links to interesting articles or other resources with their classmates, as well as to comment on one another’s posts and discussion questions.

d. In accordance with ISID conventions, students are required to participate in the ISID conference being held in March (20-21??) as part of the class. Specific expectations will be discussed in class.

ii. **Research Proposal 10%**
Each student will be required to identify a key research interest, which will form the basis of their class presentation as well as final paper. The topic of research should be relevant to the themes of the class, and be approved by the instructor. A 2-3 page paper proposal must be submitted by email to the instructor before class on Wednesday, February 11th. The proposal should provide a clear statement of the problem/issue you intend to discuss, pertinent research questions, aims and objectives, the relevance/importance, some background, and the strategy/methods that will be employed. The proposal should also include a preliminary bibliography of at least eight academic sources.

iii. Research Presentation 25%
Students will conduct a short presentation pertaining to their proposed research topic. Presentations should provide background and explanation of the issue, and then undertake a detailed analysis. Presentations should be 15-20 minutes maximum in length. **It is important to practice timing the presentation beforehand to ensure you can fit everything into the allotted time.** Students are encouraged to use visual aids (e.g. power point, prezi, etc.) and media clips (if feasible) to enhance their work. Beyond the actual presentation, students will also be assessed on how well they field questions from classmate and facilitate critical discussion following their presentations.  

**NOTE:** students are required to submit 1-2 readings one week prior to their presentations. This will serve to orient classmates to your research topic and foster critical discussions following your presentation.

iv. Final Paper 35%
Students will submit a final, 4000-5000 word paper that critically engages their proposed research topic. The final paper and paper proposal must conform to APA formatting and citation guidelines. Final papers must be submitted by email to the instructor by 11:59 p.m. on Monday, April 13th. Late papers will be docked one third of a letter grade per day or portion of a day late unless prior arrangements are made with the instructor. For example, an A paper becomes an A- if it was submitted one day late.

**Academic Integrity:** "McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures. See [www.mcgill.ca/integrity](http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity) for more information."

**Language of Assignments:** "In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.”  
"Conformément à la Charte des droits de l’étudiant de l’Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté."

**Resources for news on African Current events (and relevant course topic):**
- AfroBarometer: national public attitude surveys on democracy and governance in Africa. [http://www.afrobarometer.org](http://www.afrobarometer.org) (State Power in Africa)
- [www.allafrica.com](http://www.allafrica.com) (General current events news)
- [http://afripod.aodl.org/](http://afripod.aodl.org/) (History and current events pod-casts)

**SYLLABUS**
*A note on the syllabus design:*
i. As mentioned in the Summary, the class is designed around Ellis’ book, Season of Rains. Readings for each week include, first, a chapter of Ellis’ book (listed as “Primary Reading” each week); and, second, readings pertaining to one or two selected key topics (listed under “Key Topics & Readings”) that will be investigated more thoroughly.

ii. In several cases, the reading list is too large and/or some readings are “Too Be Determined” (TBD). In these cases, specific required readings will be identified and posted on a weekly basis.

Week 1 (Jan 5 & 7): Introduction

**NOTE: NO CLASS ON Monday, JAN 5.**

**Primary Reading:**

**Key Topics & Readings:**

i. Africa in the World

Week 2 (Jan 12 & 14): Africa in Time

**Primary Reading:**
Ellis, Chapter 1: Africa in Time

**Key Topics & Readings**

i. Teaching & Learning Africa

**NOTE:** in preparation for this class, students will be expected to bring to class an images or excerpts from popular media that convey, for one, popular, negative images of Africa; and second, positive images that should be more conveyed. We will build two collages in class that respect these opposing images.

This class may also include a panel of African diaspora representatives who will contribute to our discussion about Teaching & Learning Africa.

- Ellis, Chapter 6: Development for the Twenty-first Century. READ: the section on Decolonizing the Western Mind

**Recommended:**

ii. Colonialism & its legacies

Recommended:

Week 3 (Jan 19-21): A World of Light & Shade Part I

Primary Reading:
Ellis, Chapter 2: A World of Light & Shade

Key Topics & Readings
i. Encountering Development & the ‘Aid Debate’
• Audio Resource: Truman’s Inaugural Address 1949: http://www.trumanlibrary.org/educ/inaug.htm
• Video: The Munk Debates: Foreign Aid does more harm than good

Recommended:

ii. Globalization, neoliberalism & its discontents
  o READ Ch 1: Globalizing Africa? Ch 4: Transnational Topographies of Power

Recommended:
Week 4 (Jan 26-28): A World of Light & Shade Part II

Primary Reading:

n/a

Key Topics & Readings

i. Dependency, corruption & its allies
     - READ: Ch.8 (ab)use of corruption; Ch.9 The bounties of dependence

Recommended:
   - Video (documentary): Stealing Africa OR Congo: Oil-gotten gains

ii. China at large!

Recommended:
   - Video: BBC The Chinese are coming! (Also, see Dambisa Moyo’s “Schism” TedTalk)

Week 5 (Feb 2 & 4): How to be a hegemon

Primary Reading:

Ellis, Ch 4: How to be a hegemon

Key Topics & Readings

i. The State & Democracy in Africa

Recommended:
**Hagmann & Peclard. “Introduction: Negotiating Statehood: Dynamics of Power and Domination in Africa”. In Negotiating Statehood: Dynamics of Power and Domination in Africa**


**Barkan, J. D. (January 01, 2002). DEMOCRACY - THE MANY FACES OF AFRICA - Democracy Across a Varied Continent. Harvard International Review, 24, 2, 72.**

**Week 6 (Feb 9 &11): Matters of State**

**Primary Reading:**
Ellis, Ch 5: Matters of State

**Key Topics & Readings**

**i. Limits of Sovereignty & International interventions**


**Recommended:**


**NOTE:** Students will be designated groups according to the following categories, and will be responsible for respective readings and summarizing key issues to the larger class.

**a. Military & Peacekeeping**


**b. International Criminal Court**


c. Human Rights Conventions

**Week 7 (Feb 16 & 18): Money & Land Part I**

**Primary Reading:**
Ellis, Ch 3: Money & Land

**Key Topics & Readings**

i. The “New Scramble for Africa” – ‘land grabbing’ in Africa

**Recommended:**

ii. The ‘network society’ & ‘land grabbing’: the role of social media in resisting land appropriations

*NOTE: this class will hopefully include a guest presentation regarding a study in southern Kenya.*
• Readings TBD.
Week 8 (Feb 24 & 26): Money & Land Part II

Primary Reading:

n/a

Key Topics & Readings

i. Politics of neoliberal conservation & displacement
   • Video: Place without People

Recommended:
   • Azarya, V. (November 01, 2004). Globalization and International Tourism in Developing Countries: Marginality as a Commercial Commodity. Current Sociology, 52, 6, 949-967.
   • Other readings TBD, including selections from

ii. ‘Suffering for territory’, indigeneity, & resistance

Recommended:

Week 9 (March 2 & 4)

NO CLASSES – READING BREAK!!

Week 10-13 (March 9 to April 1): Student-identified research topics & presentations
Key Topics & Readings

TO BE DETERMINED BY STUDENTS.

Note: each student must identity at least 2 primary readings related to their topic, which must be circulated to everyone at least one week prior to the presentation date. These readings will help foster/facilitate critical discussion following your presentation.

Week 14 (April 6 & 8): Twenty-first Century Development

Primary Reading:
Ellis, Chapter 6: Twenty-first Century Development

Key Topics & Readings

i. Post-development & social movements
Note: this class may include a guest presentation from an Africa Diaspora researcher/activist who will share about his experience with international alliances and social movements in Africa.

READ: selections TBD

Recommended:

ii. ‘Turbulent terrains’: complexity, resistance, and new hope
- Case Studies TBD

*** FINAL PAPERS DUE BY 11:59PM ON MONDAY, APRIL 13th***