



RECKONING WITH THE PAST IN MODERN AFRICA

HIS 295-04, Spring 2022

MWF 8:00-8:50, Jan 24-Mar 18, HSSC S2311

In April 1994, two watershed events in sub-Saharan Africa seemed to signal conflicting bookends of history: the first democratic elections in South Africa, and the devastating genocide in Rwanda. These converging milestones ostensibly marked the end of one history of violence and the start of another, but in fact they were both manifestations of longer processes of colonialism, state power, and social inequality that demanded difficult reappraisals of communal relations before the worst effects of the violence had passed.

This course explores the state and community mechanisms instituted in the wake of apartheid in South Africa and the genocide in Rwanda to document histories of violence and confront legacies of injustice. Transitional and restorative justice practices (especially the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Rwandan *gacaca* community court system) will provide a focal point of comparison, but we will also consider other post-conflict means of collective self-reflection through cultural expression, public commemoration, and grassroots and student activism. Together, these case studies will help us consider how post-conflict societies have confronted their past by telling stories; how historical narratives were fashioned and refashioned by the (sometimes contradictory) desires for justice and healing; and how historical truths became at once necessary and contested under the terms and conditions of peace, reconstruction, and reconciliation.

Instructor contact details:

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Spring '22 office hours: Tues & Wed 1:30-3:00 pm, & by appointment

Course goals

Students in this class will:

- Examine and compare how two post-conflict societies have made sense of their past
- Develop their skills of analytical writing
- Develop their skills of critical reading of primary and secondary sources
- Develop their skills of engaging in collective dialogue

Course requirements and evaluation

Class citizenship & contribution (30%)

History happens in dialogue, and I evaluate class participation accordingly. Each person in the class must take a share of responsibility for generating ideas and ensuring that all voices have the opportunity to be heard. In evaluating your contributions, I will be looking for:

- evidence-based points that marshal specific examples and passages from the texts;
- multi-layered responses to the questions that build on and develop your peers' comments, and that engage positions rather than people;
- "I" statements that respect differences of opinion and experience and that grapple with historical complexity while avoiding the replication of offensive language and ideas;
- self-awareness of your role within the group dynamic (Is it a time to speak up or to listen? To assert or rethink a position? Are my contributions concise enough to allow others to add to them? How can I phrase my points in a way that invites, rather than shuts down, further conversation?);
- a willingness to keep an open mind and to learn from new encounters with texts, people, ideas;
- devotion of your fullest possible attention to the discussion or task at hand.

Writing assignments (see below for deadlines; assignment sheets will be posted on Pweb):

- Paper #1 (on South Africa): 20%
- Paper #2 (on Rwanda): 15%
- Paper #3 (comparative; may build on one or both of the previous): 25%
- Area of strength: 10% added to highest grade

All work must be typed and double-spaced (unless otherwise noted), in 12-pt font and 1-inch margins. Citations must be in footnotes or endnotes using Chicago/Turabian Style – see document on Pweb for guidelines. Academic honesty expectations follow college policy.

Writing & research support:

I am available to offer feedback at all stages of your work! Additionally:

Grinnell's Writing, Reading, and Speaking Center supports students working on papers, projects, presentations, and applications. Schedule a session with one of the Center's professional instructors and

get feedback as you interpret readings, talk through your ideas, analyze evidence, develop and organize arguments, craft introductions and conclusions, rewrite sentences and paragraphs, or plan presentations. Center instructors do not proofread papers, but they can show you how to edit your own work effectively. Make an appointment online: <http://mywco.com/grinnell>

Chris Jones, the college archivist, is the consulting librarian for our class. For help with research strategies, you can contact him at joneschr@grinnell.edu. You can also do a live chat or book a library lab with reference specialists (links on front page of library website).

Expectations of written work:

Although each assignment will entail specific criteria, the same general questions will guide my evaluation of your writing:

- Have you followed the assignment?
- Have you framed and stated a compelling argument that goes beyond a superficial or overly simplistic interpretation?
- Do you develop the argument logically and coherently through sound organization?
- Do you support the argument with appropriate evidence, properly cited?
- Is your language clear, concise, and free of major grammatical errors?

When returning your papers, I view the purpose of my feedback as helping you improve your writing rather than justifying a grade. For that reason, my comments will be selective and strategic (rather than comprehensive) about the strengths and weaknesses of the paper.

Course texts

The following books are required and are available through the college bookstore, online vendors, or library reserve:

- Nancy L. Clark & William H. Worger, *South Africa: The Rise & Fall of Apartheid*, 3rd ed. (Routledge, 2014)
- Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, *A Human Being Died That Night: A South African Woman Confronts the Legacy of Apartheid* (Mariner/Houghton Mifflin, 2003/4)

Other required texts will be available online, through the college libraries, or on Pweb, as noted below.

Managing workloads & deadlines

I have designed the syllabus to keep expectations reasonable and workloads manageable, while still challenging students to do their best work and grow beyond their initial skills and knowledge levels. If you are finding any aspect of the workload overly demanding or any expectations difficult to meet, please be in touch with me sooner rather than later so we can develop productive strategies together.

Deadlines for written work are timed when they are for a reason. I will post assignments and guidelines well in advance, and I will not require any other work on the days paper drafts or finals are due; for this reason, I ask that you make every effort to meet the published deadlines so that you do not get behind in other work. If there is a serious health or personal issue that threatens to undermine your ability to meet a deadline or to keep up with the other work of the course, please let me know as soon before the deadline as possible; I will exercise my best judgment in deciding whether to renegotiate the deadline and/or the paper expectations.

Note: The college requires that ALL coursework be submitted by the last day of the term unless you are taking an incomplete in the class. Work turned in after that time cannot be counted or considered.

Access & accommodation

Grinnell College makes reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Students need to provide documentation to the Coordinator for Disability Resources, Autumn Wilke wilkeaut@grinnell.edu, and discuss their needs with her. Students should then speak with me as early as possible in the semester so that we can discuss ways to coordinate accommodations and ensure full participation in the course.

Religious observation

Grinnell College acknowledges and embraces the religious diversity of its faculty, students and staff. Faculty and students share responsibility to support members of our community who observe religious holidays. Students will provide faculty members with reasonable notice of the dates of religious holidays on which they will be absent, and this notice would be expected to occur no later than the third week of the term. Faculty members will make reasonable efforts to accommodate students who need to be absent from examinations or class due to religious observance. Students are responsible for completing any part of the course work, including examinations, they have missed due to religious observance, and faculty members are responsible for giving them the opportunity to do so. (Approved by the Faculty, September 21, 2009)

Trigger warning

This course deals with histories of violence (physical, psychological, sexual, cultural, racial, ethnic, state, civilian, militant, and otherwise). The course material includes descriptions and portrayals of this violence and the trauma it induced, sometimes in quite graphic terms, which may be very hard to read, watch, see, hear, and imagine. Please be kind to yourself and the others in the class as you encounter and sit with this difficult material.

Some of the texts also make reference to terms that have historically demeaned and dehumanized Africans, people of African descent, and people of color. It is college policy that the N-word must not be spoken aloud in class, even when quoting directly from a text; please also exercise the same judgment and sensitivity about other offensive labels and terms that you may encounter in the readings and the films. Remember, too, that we are not here to judge each other but to learn from one another, so just do the best you can to navigate the historical complexities of language and feel free to ask questions any time.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Note: Required readings, films, & assignments are listed under the class day for which they should be prepared. Questions to guide your reading and prepare for discussion are posted on Pweb, along with occasional lists of supplementary readings you may wish to explore on your own time.

Also note: Although this schedule constitutes our core framework, I reserve the right to make changes to accommodate ongoing course rhythms or unforeseen circumstances.

I. South Africa

Apartheid & its afterlives

Mon Jan 24

- Obits on Tutu and de Klerk—Pweb

Wed Jan 26

- Clark & Worger, *South Africa: Rise & Fall of Apartheid*, chapters 1-3 (pp 1-71) & documents 1-7 (pp147-174)

Fri Jan 28

- Clark & Worger, chaps 4-6 (pp72-144) & docs 8-19 (pp174-203)

The Truth & Reconciliation Commission

Mon, Jan 31

- *Facing the Truth* (Bill Moyers documentary, 1999) – available on various streaming services or on reserve in Burling
- Wilmot James & Linda Van de Vijver, eds., *After the TRC: Reflections on Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa* (Ohio Univ Press, 2001), chaps 5 (Mamdani) & 6 (Van Zyl Slabbert) – Pweb

Wed, Feb 2

- *After the TRC*, chap 7 (Boraine) – Pweb
- Transcript of Ilan Lax interview – Pweb

Fri, Feb 4

- Gobodo-Madikizela, *A Human Being Died that Night*, chaps 1-4

Mon Feb 7: No class (“Work Differently” Day)

Wed, Feb 9

- Gobodo-Madikizela, chaps 5-7 & epilogue
- TRC transcripts – Pweb

Cultural Politics of Commemoration

Fri, Feb 11

- Annie Coombes, *History After Apartheid: Visual Culture and Public Memory in a Democratic South Africa* (Duke, 2003), ch. 1 (apartheid monuments) – Pweb
- *After the TRC*, ch. 13 – Pweb

Mon, Feb 14

- Coombes, chaps 2 & 3 (Robben Island & District 6 Museum) – Pweb

Wed, Feb 16:

- Alex Von Tunzelmann, *Fallen Idols* (ch. 9 on Rhodes statuary) – Pweb
- Media coverage of the “Rhodes Must Fall” movement.

Fri, Feb 18

- Paper #1 due

II. Rwanda

Genocide: Causes, experiences, & consequences

Mon, Feb 21

- David Newbury, “Understanding Genocide,” *African Studies Review* 41 (Apr. 1998), 73-97 (Pweb)
- Robert Melson, “Modern Genocide in Rwanda,” in Gellately & Kiernan, eds., *The Specter of Genocide* (Pweb)

Wed, Feb 23

- Testimonials from Genocide Archive of Rwanda: <https://genocidearchiverwanda.org.rw/>

Fri, Feb 25

- Sources on regional conflict – Pweb

Faces of justice

Mon, Feb 28

- Articles on International Criminal Tribunal of Rwanda – Pweb
- Documents on ICTR findings – Pweb

Wed, Mar 2

- Readings on the *gacaca* (TBA) – Pweb

Fri, Mar 4:

- *Sometimes in April* (Raoul Peck, 2005) – available on various streaming services or on reserve in Burling
- You’ll meet in small groups today to discuss the film (see separate instructions on Pweb)

Mon, Mar 7: No class

- Paper #2 due

(Re)telling stories

Wed Mar 9

- Annie Coombs, Lotte Hughes, & Karega Munene, *Managing Heritage, Making Peace* (Taurus, 2014) – chapters on Pweb
- Nicole Fox, *After Genocide: Memory and Reconciliation in Rwanda* (Madison, 2021) – chapters on Pweb

Fri, Mar 11

- Timothy Longman article on Des Forges's *Leave None to Tell the Story*, *Journal of Humanitarian Affairs*, 2020-05-01, Vol.2 (2), p.40-47 – Pweb

III. Comparisons

Living truths

Mon, Mar 14

- Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, ch. 7 – Pweb
- Antjie Krog, *Country of My Skull*, ch. 10 - Pweb

Wed, Mar 16

- Comparative readings on restorative justice – Pweb

Fri, Mar 18

- Comparative paper due

