20.08 Comparative Studies in Cultures and Transformation
3 hours; 3 credits

Multidisciplinary exploration of the cultures and history of at least two societies. Thematic emphasis. Themes drawn from issues such as colonization, gender, urbanization, social movements, race and ethnic relations, north/south/east-west dyads, religion, nationalism, geography, encounter, diasporic communities, core-periphery, modernity and modernization, globalization, and transnationalism. A minimum of two world areas chosen from Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America, the Middle East and the Pacific Islands. Comparison of selected cultural clusters and social themes.

Prerequisite: Junior standing and satisfaction of all lower-tier requirements in Philosophical and Social Inquiry.

Common General Education Goals addressed by this Course

To understand the arts, histories, and cultures of the past as a foundation for those of the present (3, 4)

To understand the development and workings of modern societies in the different cultural contexts of a global and interdependent world. (6, 25)

To be capable of integrating knowledge from diverse sources using the various perspectives of the social sciences. (7, 28)

To express one’s thoughts orally and in writing with clarity and precision (11, 12, 13)

Objectives of this Course

Students will develop a comparative understanding of social change in two societies and the way that change impacts the culture and history of those societies. (3,4)

Through a study of the themes of the course, students will develop an understanding of the process and pressures of modernity as they impact two societies (6, 25).

Students will be able to read and understand a variety of primary sources using the lenses of different disciplines (7, 28)

Using the themes of the course, student will be able to compare two societies in writing (11,12,13)
Outcomes for this course

Students will be able to recognize and describe cultural patterns in each of the areas studied. (3, 4, 25)

Given a primary text, students will be able to write an essay identifying its key social or cultural elements and how those elements change. (7,28)

3. Students will be able to write comparative essays on the major themes of the course. (11,12,13)

4. Students will be able to write an essay examining one region from the point of view of several transformative themes. (6, 28)

Students will be able to develop an integrated vision of change and transformation using two or more themes. (25, 28)

Course Outline:

[This course introduces sources and themes drawn from Africa and China, but faculty may choose specific regions of their specialty]

Unit One Introduction to Course

Week 1 The Geographical Regions

Week 2-3 Theoretical Overview

Introduction to the concept of culture and cultural comparison
Introduction to theories of social change in a global context

Unit Two Religious Change and Transformation

Weeks 3-5

Religious Change in Africa
John Mbiti, “The Nature of God”
Yoruba Creation Narrative
Ibn Battuta, Ibn Battuta in Black Africa [Excerpt]
Uthman dan Fodio, The Proper Treatment of Women

Religious Change in China
“The Attack on Hell, A Popular Funeral Ritual.” In Sources of Chinese Tradition, Volume II.
“Opera: Religious Epic: Mulian Rescues his Mother.”
“Lu Hsun’s Critique of Tradition: The New Year Sacrifice.”
“Mao Tse-tung Overthrows Religious Authority.”

Unit Three  The Making of Empires and Kingdoms
Weeks 6-8
African States and Kingdoms
  D.T. Niane, *Sundiata: an Epic of Old Mali*
  Ibn Battuta, *Ibn Battuta in Black Africa* [Excerpt]
  Mazisi Kunene, “The Rise of Shaka”

Imperial China and the Confucian Way
Kangxi’s Sacred Edict and Wang Yupu and Yongzheng’s Amplification.”
“Wu Jingzi: From *The Scholars (Rulin waishi)* (Fan Jin Passes the *Juren* Examination).”
“A Murder Case from the Records of the Office for the Scrutiny of Punishments, 1747-1748.”
“Two Accounts of the Suzhou Riot, 1601.”

Unit Four  The European Encounter
Week 9-11
Africa and Europe
  Letter from King Affonso of Kongo
  Olaudah Equiano (aka Gustavas Vassa) *Narrative of Olaudah Equiano*
  “Frederick Lugard Envisions Empire in Africa”

China and Europe
  Qianlong’s Rejection of Macartney’s Demands: Two Edicts.”
“Memorials, Edicts, and Laws on Opium.” Cheng & Lestz
Unit Six Gender and Modernity
Week 12-14

Gender Constructions and Transformations in Africa
  Selections from Sundiata: an Epic of Old Mali
  “Wanja-A Woman of Changing Kenya”
  Growing Up in Rural Kenya:
    Oyeronke Oyewumi, “Inventing Gender”
    “Wanjiku-A Traditional Gikuyu Woman,” Growing Up in Rural Kenya
    Oyewumi, “Inventing Gender”

Black Sisters Speak Out [Excerpt]

Gender Constructions and Transformations in China
  “Two Women,” “A Woman’s Hundred Years,” “The Shrew,”
  “Pan Chao, Lessons for Women.”
    “The Correct Handling of Love, Marriage, and Family Problems.” Ebrey,
      “Ding Ling: ‘Thoughts on March 8, 1942’”

Methods of Evaluation

Classroom participation 10%
First Exam 25%
Second Exam 25%
Final Exam 40%

Methods of Assessment

Students will be given excerpts from primary sources, literary passages, and/or examples of artistic production, and will be asked to describe how those excerpts, passages, or images explain or lead to a moment of cultural or social transformation (Outcomes 1 and 2)

Students will write thematic essays that compare one aspect of change in two regions and its internal or external motivations. The essays will focus on the theme of a unit. (Outcome 3)

Students will write essays discussing transformations in one region using a set of themes. (Outcome 4)

Students will be asked to write essays that specifically discuss and compare two or more course themes as agents of transformation using primary sources from one or more regions. (Outcome 5)
Bibliography


Thiam Awa. *Black Sisters Speak Out*

