



African, Middle Eastern, and South Asian Languages and Literatures

01:013:205 | Cultural Forces in International Politics | Spring 2026

Instructor: Thato Magano

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Lecture: M/Th, 12:10-1:30pm, GSE 025B

Office Hours: Thursdays, 2-3:30pm (by appointment on Zoom)

Course Description:

Most courses on politics and international relations focus on such issues as power, political economy, the military and military balance, diplomacy and inter-governmental relations. There is a missing agenda in the study of world affairs — and that is the role of **culture** at both the national and global level. This course seeks to explore some of the cultural forces in politics, with a focus on language, literature and popular culture as important factors in the shaping of political relations within and across societies and nations. In addition to providing a specifically cultural framework for understanding national and international politics and political relations, the course will show how political ideologies have responded to and/or led to the galvanization of languages, literary texts, translated texts, and films to influence politics at the national and international levels.

Course Objectives:

The course will enable students to appreciate and analyze, from a multidisciplinary perspective, how different cultures, as enacted in responses to language and literary issues and/or texts, engender different “ways of seeing” which, in turn, affect both perception of and policy towards

“the other” across global contexts. The course fulfills the SAS New Core Curriculum learning objective (a) in the 21st Century Challenges category.

The course fulfills the SAS Core requirements of AHo and AHp.

Required Texts:

All required texts are available on canvas.

Course Requirements:

Attendance and participation	20%
Weekly Reflections	20%
Case Study	20%
2 x Response Papers	20%
Final Paper	20%

Grading scale:

A=90-100; B+=87-89; B=80-86; C+=77-79; C=70-76; D=60-69; F=59 and below.

Attendance and participation

Class participation is necessary and you must come to class ready to discuss the text chosen for that day. **Not having read the assigned texts for class is equivalent to an absence. Please ensure that you have a physical copy of the text we are reading in order to minimize the reliance on electronic devices during class time.** This class will be discussion oriented course thus our collective attention and participation will result in a pleasant and beneficial experience for everyone.

Weekly reflections (150 words)

Each week you will respond to a reflection prompt based on the readings for the week. You will pull a quotation from the reading and analyze its intellectual merit in advancing the argument of the author and how it benefits your understanding of the themes of the class.

Case Study and presentation (Short Essay and Presentation)

You will also write a short paper (2 pages, double-spaced) on any current case study of your choice on the interplay between culture and politics. The papers will be presented in class during Week 15.

Response papers (500 words)

These short response papers are intended to measure your comprehension of the course material to develop your analytical skills in both reading and writing. You will be given a choice of topics to write about in advance of the due date. All response papers should be divided into paragraphs, with an introduction that states an argument, and a following section that develops and proves the argument laid out in the introduction.

Final paper (1000 words)

Your final paper is designed to measure your comprehension of the course material to develop your analytical skills in both reading and writing. You will be asked to compare and contrast between two readings/texts and develop an argument that integrates both perspectives of the texts.

Academic Integrity

Students and instructors have a duty to each other and to our community to abide by norms of academic honesty and responsibility. Plagiarism is a violation of University policy. Plagiarism includes quoting or paraphrasing the work of others without properly citing sources and passing off the work of others (including the output of artificial intelligence technology such as ChatGPT) as one's own.

Students agree that by taking this course all required essays may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com (directly or via Canvas) for the detection of plagiarism. Submitted papers may be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the Usage Policy posted on the Turnitin.com site. Students who do not agree should contact the course instructor immediately.

Academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, will have severe consequences, in accordance with the University Policy on Academic Integrity and the Code of Student Conduct. For details about the University's academic integrity policies, please see:

<https://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/> .

Students with disabilities should contact the Office of Disability Services immediately (if they have not done so already) and should also get in touch with me at the earliest convenience for any special arrangements needed. See here for details:

<http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/>

Reading Schedule:

Week 1: Introduction

Jan 22: Introductions

Week 2: Culture and Politics Today

Jan 26:

Penny dale, "I want to show the world what Africa is': YouTube star brings joy and tears on tour"

Addis Insight, The Hard Truth iShowSpeed's Africa Tour Revealed: Africans Are Strangers to Africa

Jan 29:

Olaronke Alo, Chiamaka Enendu, and Ijeoma Ndukwe, "Are Christians being persecuted in Nigeria as Trump claims?"

Jaroslav Lukiv and Makuochi Okafor, "US launches strikes against Islamic State in Nigeria"

Week 3: Defining Culture

Feb 2

Stuart Hall, "The Centrality of Culture: Notes on the Cultural Revolutions of Our Time."

Feb 5

Kwesi Wiredu, "Are there Cultural Universals?"

Week 4: Cultural Schisms

Feb 9

Samuel Huntington, “Clash of Civilizations”

Feb 12

Edward Said, “The Myth of Clash of Civilizations”

Week 5: Culture and Language

Feb 16

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, “The Language of African Literature”

Feb 19

Sam Kriss, “Why Does A.I. Write Like ... That?”

Temitayo Jailola, “Online uproar over Nigerian English flagged as ChatGPT-ish”

Week 6: Language and Conflict

Feb 23

Robert D. King, “Language Politics and Conflicts in South Asia.”

Feb 26

Eric A. Anchimbe, The English language and the construction of a Cameroonian Anglophone identity

Guest Speaker

Week 7: Intercultural Identity

Mar 2

Lesley Higgins and Marie Christine Leps, “Passport, Please”: Legal, Literary, and Critical Fictions of Identity

Thomas King, “Borders”

Mar 5

Theresa M Mares, “Vulnerability and Visibility in the Northern Borderlands”

Week 8: Identity and Mobility

Mar 9

Jesper Gulddal And Charlton Payne, “Passports: On The Politics And Cultural Impact Of Modern Movement Control”

Swaminathan Natarajan, “The man who spent decades befriending isolated Sentinelese tribe”

BBC, Andamans: US man's death puts spotlight on 'tribal tourism'

Mar 12

Moussa Touré, *La Pirogue: Goor Fitt* (2012)

Jeanne Garane, “How to Get to Barcelona or Die Trying: Postcolonial Poverty and Migration in Moussa Touré’s *La Pirogue*”

Response paper 1 due

WEEK 9
SPRING BREAK (MARCH 14-22)

Week 10: Culture and Gender

Mar 23

Elahe Ismaili, “A Move (2024)”

Mar 26:

Suad Musa, “Introduction: Conflict in Darfur and the Role of Rural Darfuri Women”
Guest Speaker

Week 11: Culture and Religion

Mar 30

Judith Ezekiel, “French Dressing: Race, Gender, and the Hijab Story”
Human Rights Law Centre, “European Court upholds France’s burqa ban”

Apr 2

Ali Mazrui, “The Satanic Verses or a Satanic Novel: Moral Dilemmas of the Rushdie Affair.”

BBC documentary: The Satanic Verses Affair

The Conversation, “Why Salman Rushdie’s ‘The Satanic Verses’ remains so controversial decades after its publication”

Week 12: Media and Social Change

Apr 6

Mohamed Arafa and Crystal Armstrong, “‘Facebook to Mobilize, Twitter to Coordinate Protests, and YouTube to Tell the World’: New Media, Cyberactivism, and the Arab Spring”
Sabiha Gire, “The Role of Social Media in the Arab Spring”

Apr 9

Wunpini Fatimata Mohammed, “Television must assist in the socialist transformation of Ghana”
Guest Speaker

Week 13: Politics of International Recognition

Apr 13

Wendy Larson and Richard Kraus, “China’s Writers, the Nobel Prize, and the International Politics of Literature”

Sarah Bowskill, “Politics and Literary Prizes: A Case Study of Spanish America and the Premio Cervantes”

Apr 16

Khaled Moustafa, Nobel Prize Paradox: Nobel Prize, Not a Noble Prize

Jeffery Gettleman, “Trump Links His Push for Greenland to Not Winning Nobel Peace Prize”

Max Matza, Venezuelan Nobel Peace Prize winner presents her medal to Trump

Response paper 2 due

Week 14: Sports and Politics

Apr 20

Barrie Houlihan, "The Olympic Movement"

Jennifer Hubbert, "The Darfur Olympics: Global Citizenship and the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games"

Apr 23

Kristine Hogg and Ralph Sundberg, "Reconciliation through sports?: The Case of South Africa."

Clint Eastwood, *Invictus* (2009)

Week 15

Apr 27

Case Study Presentations

Apr 30

Case Study Presentations

Week 16

May 4

No class – Final Papers due