

Department: Modern and Classical Languages

Course No: 3258 [258]

Credits: 3

Title: Germans in Africa, Blacks in Germany: Colonial and

Contact: Roger Travis

Content Area: CA1-Arts and Humanities

Diversity: CA4 International

Catalog Copy: Germans in Africa and Blacks in German-Speaking Countries: Colonial and Postcolonial Perspectives. Either semester. Three credits. Conducted in English. No prerequisites. Open to Sophomores. An interdisciplinary course on former German Colonialism in Africa and Blacks in German-speaking societies, past and present. Construction of intercultural and interracial power and dialog in historical perspective. Diversity of black and white experiences across class, racial-ethnic groups, gender, cultures, religions, and national borders. Discussion of selected literary and non-fictional readings, films, other visual images, and recordings.

Course Information: A--COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course focuses on diverse cultural perspectives by and the uneven power relations between people of African decent (Africans, Afro-Germans/Austrians/Swiss, and other black minorities in the German-speaking countries) and white Germans, Austrians, and Swiss. Historically and geographically, the course concentrates on (a) German colonial rule 1884-1918 and its aftermath in Togo, Cameroon, Southwest Africa (Namibia), and East Africa (Tanzania), and (b) on German-speaking societies, past and present (Germany, Austria, Switzerland). It explores the construction of interracial and intercultural power relations as well as cross-cultural and cross-racial dialog in historical perspective. Students investigate the representations of historical events and economic, political and social developments surrounding African-German relations from a variety of cultural and disciplinary perspectives. They reflect on issues of multiculturalism and diversity as well as on racism, human rights, and (im)migration. They expand their knowledge about the world and draw comparisons to experiences and developments in their own lives, times, countries, and racial, gender, ethnic, cultural, and religious affiliations. They thus become conscious of the diversity of human experience and aware of their own cultural and historical make-up. Simultaneously, students acquire the tools for and practice in critically analyzing literary works, non-fictional texts, and visual representations against the backdrop of underlying cultural perspectives and historical contexts. The GERM 258 course proposal has been awarded a Provost's General Education Course Development Grant because the course incorporates interdisciplinary perspectives (humanities, fine arts, social sciences), addresses important social, ethical, economic, political, and cultural issues such as racism, discrimination, cultural identity, intercultural power relations, cross-cultural dialog, and promotes historical and critical thinking, life-long learning, and an appreciation for traditions, values, cultural expressions, and perspectives of cultures other than students' own.

B--COURSE REQUIREMENTS: Course reader, course books, electronic course reserve; two reaction papers with students' reactions to assigned readings; individual and group projects and presentations; midterm; final.

Reading: In the absence of a textbook for this course, the instructor assembles a reader and makes additional material available through WebCT. Selected literary readings (e.g. memoirs, poetry, novels), non-fictional texts from a variety of disciplines (e.g., historical and legal documents, statistics, newspaper and scholarly articles), visuals (e.g., photos, paintings, films), and information from the internet provide points of departure for class discussions. Students are encouraged to select topics of research projects, papers, and presentations according to their disciplinary expertise and interest.

Further activities/assignments may include:

- clarifying and defining historical and theoretical terms and concepts such as Eurocentrism, primitivism, exoticism, racism, cultural identity, multiculturalism, etc. Using, re-visiting, and redefining these terms throughout the course provides continuity and challenges students to develop a personal understanding of and stance toward these concepts;
- critically investigating overarching questions such as "Does Germanness or a specific African heritage create an 'imagined community' (Benedict Andersen)?" "What impacted the relations between Africans and Germans at different historical junctures?" "How can we explain that scholars and the public have only recently become interested in German colonialism and black minorities in German-speaking countries?" "What is the relationship between power and human rights?" "What is 'healthy' crosscultural dialog?" "What are successful strategies of acculturation (integration, assimilation, separation, etc.)?" "What is the relationship between literary/artistic production, historical developments, and social and cultural change?";
- roleplaying: "talk show" debates about, for example, whether or not the current German government owes reparations to the Southwest African Herero tribe for the 1904 genocide; acting out, for example, responses to racist behavior (a) as the black victim of the discriminatory act, (b) as a white bystander;
- collecting up-to-date news on Afro-Germans and Blacks in Germany;
- analyzing of texts and visuals from a variety of historical, literary, artistic, or journalistic sources and cultural perspectives.

C--MAJOR THEMES, ISSUES, TOPICS, ETC.

- German colonialism in Africa around 1900 (Togo, Cameroon, Namibia, Tanzania): the European powers' economic, political, military, and ideological interest in African colonies; human rights violations (e.g., the genocide in German Southwest Africa [Namibia]); the alliance of science and racism and 19th-century biology and ethnography; African resistance to German colonial rule (e.g., uprising of the Ovaherero in Southwest Africa in 1904).
- Black Germany, past and present: Africans as merchants' presents to their courts; the so-called "Rhineland Bastards" of the 1920s; growing up Black in Nazi-Germany; "occupation [GI] babies" after WWII; challenges and successes in establishing an Afro-German and black culture in contemporary Germany since the 1980s; immigration; institutionalized discrimination;

establishing black voices in German culture: art, literature and music; black institutions in contemporary German-speaking countries; research on Black Germany.

- African Vienna, Austria.

- Literary, cinematographic, and artistic representations of African-German/Austrian/Swiss relations in historical perspective.

- Definitions of culture; cultural production as a communicative process; cultural identity as a construction that is impacted by power relations.

- Investigations into the following theories, concepts, and term: Postcolonial theory, multiculturalism, racism, discrimination, cultural identity, intercultural and interracial power relations, cross-racial and cross-cultural perceptions, cross-racial and cross-cultural dialogue; interracial and intergender gaze; the eroticism of the exotic, the binaries of colonial discourse: culture vs.

nature, civilization vs. primitivism, mind vs. body, male vs. female, subject vs. object, self vs. other, familiar vs. exotic, European vs. non-European, power vs. powerlessness.

- Commonalities and differences between Black issues in the German-speaking countries and the United States.

Meets Goals of Gen Ed: Learning about African-German interracial and intercultural relations, past and present, students become sensitized to issues of racial discrimination and interracial dialog in their own era and society. Investigating tensions between diverse cultural groups increases students' moral sensitivity and critical judgement and inspires them to make comparisons to experiences and developments in their own lives, times, societies, and racial, gender, ethnic, cultural, and religious affiliations. They become aware of their own cultural, ethnic, and historical make-up. Exposure to value systems and perspectives of other, in this case African and German-speaking cultures enhances students' understanding of political, cultural, and religious views held by people in other parts of the world and thus expands expands their knowledge about the world. It introduces students to the idea that there is no such thing as the one and only "right" belief system. They develop a consciousness of the diversity of human experience. This course encourages students to remain lifelong learners in the sense that they continue to be sensitive to and critically analyze racism and discrimination as well as cultural differences and commonalities. They learn to remain open-minded toward people, values, cultural perspectives of other races, ethnic groups, and cultures. Applying historical, social, political, and economic as well as cultural, literary, and artistic considerations as tools to critically discuss and assess historical and cultural development, students acquire intellectual breadth and become articulate.

CA1 Criteria: In this course about German-African relations during the colonial era and interracial relations in German-speaking countries today, students are exposed to a large variety of human experiences, perceptions, values, cultural and artistic production, and modes of resistance expressed in different historical periods by people of different gender and a variety of national, religious, racial, cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Students learn to critically investigate and interpret the transformation of human experience into symbolic representations in literature, film, and art as well as historical and journalistic documentation. They acquire the tools for and practice in critically analyzing literary works (i.e., novels, memoirs, poetry), films, non-fictional texts (i.e., scholarly and newspaper articles), music, and visual representations (i.e., photos, drawings, billboards, films) against the backdrop of underlying

cultural perspectives and historical (political, economic, social) contexts. By practicing guided but increasingly more independent analysis of cultural artifacts and expressions (including investigating questions of content, aesthetics, and cultural-historical context), students develop the ability to understand the workings of artistic, cultural, and historical processes. This course thus helps students develop the skill of critically "reading" history as cultural text and culture as historical text. Students become conscious of the relationship between society and aesthetic production and reception.

They learn to decode and interpret cultural and artistic modes of symbolic representation as carriers of meaning that can be relevant to recipients in another time and place--to themselves. The exposure to and critical analysis of other countries'

diverse cultural and historical developments invite students' curiosity about other cultures, races, ethnic groups inside and outside the US and simultaneously make them aware of their own cultural make-up.

The course encourages

students to remain lifelong learners in the sense that they continue to critically notice and analyze cultural development and productions within the historical context of their production and reception.

They learn to be open-minded toward people,

values, cultural products, and art forms of other cultures.

CA4 Criteria: This course is dedicated to critically investigating and evaluating power relations between majority and minority cultures in African-German relations. Central to GERM 258 are issues of diversity and multiculturalism and an appreciation and understanding of the diversity of human experience:

- Through many examples, students learn to appreciate the perspectives of marginalized minority groups, such as Afro-Germans/Austrians/Swiss and other black minorities in contemporary German-speaking countries (Germany, Austria, Switzerland), and of the oppressed African majorities in Togo, Cameroon, Tanzania, Namibia during the colonial era and its aftermath. The inquiry into voices representing these groups allows students to familiarize themselves with a variety of under-represented perspectives at different historical junctures.

- Students develop an understanding of and sensitivity to issues involving racism (e.g., colonialist concepts of racial hierarchies as well as racism experienced by people of African descent in German-speaking countries, today), human rights violations (e.g., the genocide in Namibia in the early 1900s, racist atrocities during the Nazi-era, and hate crimes in contemporary German-speaking societies), migration (e.g., in Togo, Tanzania, Cameroon, Namibia during German colonial rule; immigration into German-speaking countries, today), cultural differences, and cross-cultural dialogue--mostly from the perspectives of marginalized groups. Students acquire an appreciation of how social, political and economic power functions with respect to human rights and human history. They thus become aware of privileged and under privileged minorities and majorities and become sensitized to the plight of marginalized and/or oppressed groups and populations in history and contemporary society. Analyzing the self-assertive or discriminatory connotations of terms such as Afro-German, of African descent, Black, Colored, Negro, Nigger, half-breed, etc., they also become sensitized to the relationship between power and language.

- Students reflect on the diversity of black and white experiences, perceptions, thoughts, values, and perspectives across class, racial-ethnic groups, gender, cultures, religions, and national borders as well

as on the diverse ways in which Africans, Afro-Germans, and Blacks from other countries have resisted the dominant German culture and/or maintained their own cultural identity in military terms as well as cultural life and production.

- Viewing films and reading literary and non-fictional texts by and about marginalized groups, students learn to relate to discrimination from the object's point of view. They learn to interpret the modes of creativity and social, military, and political strategies that marginalized and under-represented groups have chosen to make themselves be seen and heard within a dominant culture.
- Students acquire interpretive tools to investigate the dynamics of social, political and economic power relations, i.e., they learn to identify and analyze patterns in the uses and abuses of power among different cultural groups as they are reflected in artistic, literary, and visual representations, and students learn to compare them to patterns in their own society.
- Students recognize racial, cultural and national identity as well as the understanding of one's own history and tradition not as a fact, but as a result of complex historical and contemporary constructions. Students thus learn both to analyze economic, political, and social structures that allow for Othering and to interpret the creative voices and images of a variety of cultural groups as they use, subvert, and change the conventions of the dominant--in this case German-speaking--cultures. Acknowledging that every major historical development and cultural product needs to be seen from a variety of perspectives, students become aware that monologic interpretative systems, even though capable of determining people's lives, are historical constructs and therefore subject to our interpretation and redefinition. While this course focuses on issues of discrimination and human rights violations (as well as positive intercultural encounters) in African-German relations, students learn to transfer their observations and analytical skills to analogous historical and contemporary situations of injustice and/or marginalization as well as positive and productive cross-cultural support. By studying the ideas, values, and cultural expressions (film, literature, visual arts, music) of diverse groups from the perspective of the groups under study during different historical eras, students gain an appreciation for historical thinking and for differences and commonalities among people. They compare perspectives of the cultural parties under investigation to perspectives in their own time, countries, and ethnic and racial groups as well as in other parts of the world.

Role of Grad Students: Graduate students from Togo, Cameroon, Tanzania, Namibia, Germany, Switzerland, Austria will occasionally be invited to serve as guest speakers or resource contacts.

Supplemental Information: This course on topics of diversity and multiculturalism is interdisciplinary in design, provides an option for multilingual practice, and may prepare students for a study-abroad experience in Namibia:

- Guest speakers: Faculty from a variety of disciplines, graduate students from Togo, Cameroon, Namibia, Tanzania, Germany, Austria, and Switzerland as well as off-campus experts on Black Germany provide multicultural input and interdisciplinary perspectives and/or serve as resource contacts.
- Bilingual option: As part of the Linkage Through Language program, an*optional*, separate but closely linked one-hour/one-credit German-language discussion section will be offered to those students who have a background in German and wish to apply their German skills to this subject matter of GERM 258 by reading and

discussing original German sources (historical and legal documents, newspaper articles, statistics, letters, poetry, etc).

- Study-abroad preparation: This course may serve as a preparatory course for students intending to take a study abroad field-trip to Namibia during UConn's May/June summer session (under discussion with Study Abroad). At the U of Windhoek, Namibia, participating students would deepen their understanding of African-German relations, past and present, through excursions, individual or group projects, meetings with local officials, and lectures by Namibian faculty in various disciplines.