426: Urban Redevelopment and Social Justice: Cities in Contemporary Africa

Instructor: Martin Murray Fall 2010
E-mail: murraymj@umich.edu Class time: Tuesday 4:00pm-7:00pm
Office: Fifth Floor, Haven Hall 2255 Classroom: MH 1437
Office Hours: Tuesdays 3:00-4:00pm and by appointment

Aims of the Course
This course explores cities in contemporary Africa through the lens of architecture and the built environment, informal economies and survivalist strategies, art and culture, social justice and citizenship. There is an unfortunate tendency in journalistic, scholarly accounts to portray cities in Africa as examples of distressed, distorted, truncated, or failed urbanism. This view that “cities in Africa just don’t work” is a fairly widespread perception that has embedded itself in popular culture. Rather than treating cities in Africa as undifferentiated places of socio-economic malaise, famine and war, infrastructural failure, and service breakdown, the course seeks to understand the complexity of processes at work that produce cities in Africa today. The course focuses the multiple ways that cities actually do work in Africa, but perhaps in ways that are invisible to planners, experts, journalists, and travelers.

Students will be evaluated through a combination of written assignments and class participation. The methods of instruction are lecture and discussion. While some books will be required, most class sessions will revolve around critical readings of three or four articles.

Course Requirements
Students will be required to write three short papers (3-4 pages each) based on a choice of topics covered over the term. Each is worth 20 percent of the grade. Students are required to write a longer term paper in their research area. This is worth 40 percent of the final grade.

Required Books


With the exception of the books, all required readings available on CTools.

**Week One: Overview and Introduction**

**Themes**
Overview of the course and description of the thematic focus

**Week Two: Approaches to Studying Africa**

**Themes**
Historical origins of the present conjuncture
modernism and modernity versus tradition and backwardness: on the” worlding” of African cities

*Debate 1: What can we learn from history?*

*Debate 2: How do we conceptualize historical continuities (deep structures) versus historical discontinuities (ruptures)?*

**Readings**

James Ferguson, *Global Shadows* [Introduction pp. 1-22; Chapter One, pp. 26-49].

**Recommended**


**Week Three: Urban Dystopias**

**Themes**

Dystopian Imaginings

**Readings**

Mike Davis, Planet of Slums

Film: *Darwin’s Nightmare*


**Recommended**


**Week Four: Cities in Contemporary Africa**

**Themes**

Urban Political Economy and its Discontents: Micro-Perspectives

**Themes**

Informal versus formal economies; Cultural Life

*Debate 1:* Is African urbanization an exemplary expression of failed or distressed urbanism?

*Debate 2:* how do we theoretically specify urbanization processes in Africa?

*Debate 3:* why is it important to make a distinction between cities in Africa and African cities?

*Debate 4:*

What are the analytic and practical connections between formality and informality?

**Readings**


Anne Pitcher with Aubrey Graham, “Cars are Killing Luanda: Cronyism, Consumerism, and other Assaults on Angola’s Postwar, Capital City,” in Cities in
Contemporary Africa, pp. 173-194. [along with accompanying photo essay, pp. 195-200]

Recommended


**Weeks Four/Five: Johannesburg**

**Themes**
What can Johannesburg tell us – or not tell us – about cities in Africa?
*Debate 1: Is Johannesburg an Exception or not?*

**Readings**
Martin Murray, *Taming the Disorderly City*


**Week Six: Crime and the City**

**Themes**

**Film Hyjack Stories**

**Readings**


**Weeks Seven/Eight: City Life in Africa**

**Themes**

City building in Africa: comparison and contrast

**Readings**

AbdouMaliq Simone, City Life from Jakarta to Dakar

**Recommended**

Simone, For the City Yet to Come


**Week Nine: Lagos**

**Themes**

Fixing the African City

*Debate 1: Can urban planning models borrowed from leading Western cities work in Africa?*

Film: Rem Koolhaas, *Lagos Wide and Close*

**Readings**


**Recommended**


Pieterse, *City Futures*

Week Ten: Movement and Circuits: Immigrants and Migration

Themes
Immigrants and immigration
Mobility and movement

Readings


Recommended


Week Eleven: Networks and Connections
Readings


Week Twelve: Cities and Globalization
Themes
Modernity, Development, Globalization
Readings
James Ferguson, *Global Shadows* [Chapter Four, pp. 89-112; Chapter Seven, pp. 176-193, Chapter Eight, pp. 194-210].

**Week Thirteen: Power**

**Themes**
Micro-physics of Power
Predatory Urbanism

**Readings**