

RSOC 191:
(Building through Resistance): The Religions of Colonized Peoples (Africa)
Spring 2015
M/W 7:20 -9:05
Kenna

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Course Description

The aim of this course is critically to analyze from an **emic (insider)** perspective, the impact of **colonialism** in Africa and **the response of the colonized** to the phenomenon. Specifically, the course will critically examine the *role of religion in the process of colonizing Africa* as well as in *the process of resistance and in energizing liberation struggles*. Thus, using specific examples, the course will examine the religious underpinnings of resistance to colonialism in its diverse manifestations in Africa. This will include an examination of the role of religion in the African struggle against *political oppression, economic injustices, racism and cultural imperialism*.

Please Note:

1. **This Course fulfils the New Core Requirements: ie. It is an RTC 3 course**
2. **It is also an excellent sequel to RSOC38 and 46: both on African Religions**
3. **It is one of the courses that count towards the Religion and Politics pathway in the new core.**

Specific Objectives Related to the Course: Students who successfully complete this class will:

1. ***Demonstrate a critical/analytical understanding* of the phenomenon of colonization and its implications for society.**
2. ***Show ability* to appreciate and **critically analyze** the social -political role of religion in Africa and its beyond.**
3. ***Demonstrate ability* critically to appreciate the role of religion **both in creating situations of oppression as well as in being a resource to resist oppression.****
4. **Be able critically to analyze the social-political implications of religion in their own contexts.**

Understanding RSOC191 as a Core Course

RSOC 191 is one of the several courses that is *designed to fulfill RTC3 New Core requirements* : According to RTC3 Core Guidelines , these courses build on the first 2 courses ie (RTC 1 and RTC2 (eg ROC 46 mentioned above))and are designed to help students *“apply insights from the study of religion to difficult questions of vital interest to society”*. In the case of RSOC 191, such a difficult/ question is implicit in the central goal of the class which is to analyze , with reference to the African context as a case study *the **ambiguous role of religion in fostering oppression and colonialism** while*

at the same time being a **tool** and , a **resource in the struggles against such oppression**. The question of the ambiguous role of religion in the search for a humane, just global society is an enduring one and this course allows students analytically to step into the **complex** and **contentious discourses** surrounding this issue using **Africa as a case in point**. Note therefore that the course could be done with reference to any **other context** where the phenomenon of colonialism has held sway.

Course Objectives specific to the Core:

In light of the Core Goals for RTC3 spelt out above, it is expected that those students who complete RSOC 191 as an **RTC 3 course will achieve the following 2 Core objectives**:

3 a) Be able to **identify diverse perspectives and evaluate ethical positions on contemporary Questions: (In this case the ethically charged issue of religion and colonization)**

3b) be able to apply insights from the study of religion to open ended questions facing contemporary society. Through the course, RSOC191, students will access insights from historians of African Religions and Cultures ,(eg Sandgren’ s historical account of the relationship between the *Kikuyu and the 19th century Christian missionaries*), Anthropological analyses and Religio-cultural portraits of specific “colonized peoples” (eg Kenyatta’s “*religio-cultural portrait of the Agikuyu*),and insights from theologians and Ethicists mapping the religious and theological dimensions of colonization and liberation struggles in response to the oppression embedded there: (eg *Jean Mac Ela* ’s analysis of the ethical ambiguities of 19th Century mission work in Africa discussed in his book: *African Cry* , or Desmond Tutu’s bold proposals that Africa’s future is pegged on prior healing from wounds of colonialism through forgiveness and reconciliation as the most ethically viable way out of the negative and traumatizing impact of colonization , discussed in his book: *No Future without Forgiveness*) . They will then apply these insights in their own analysis of the open ended question regarding the role of religion in **any people’s struggles for justice, and liberation.**

Mapping Course Activities to Core and Course goals

Course Activities: (AKA: MEANS OF ACHIEVING COURSE AND CORE GOALS)

- 1. Regular attendance and active presence in class: This is a necessary condition for success in other aspects of course requirements: This will be **monitored and will comprise (5) % of final grade.****
- 2. Preparation for and active participation in class:** This too will be monitored. Regular attendance and **adequate preparation** for the classes by a **critical reading** of the required materials is expected. Evidence of such preparation should be manifest in the student’s ability to respond analytically to questions *whether orally or in written format*. It should also be evident in the student’s ability actively to **participate in class discussions** and to raise well *thought out and relevant* questions for discussion. Be sure to **show evidence** of your preparedness for class in each session. Questions to guide readings will be distributed on Canvas prior to class. An annotated reading and engagement with also class materials will become a suitable springboard for your response papers and your midterm. See below. (**10% of final grade**) (**see also role of note cards below**)

(**This requirement fulfils core objective: 3a**): Students will be **assigned readings on** colonization that offer an “*emic*” (*insider*) perspective. They will also more often than not

be assigned **at least 2 different readings on each of the themes** discussed in class: For example, in trying to map 19th century European (*mis*) *Representations of “Pre colonial Africa”*, two articles one by a *non -African Africanist* and another by an *African Africanist* will be assigned to provide the students with **diverse perspectives** and views and thus facilitate their ability to analytically “*evaluate*” the various ethical issues embedded in the *whole question of colonization*

3. **2 response papers:** This should be 3- 4 double spaced typewritten pages and should reveal students’ critical engagement with an *issue or issues arising out of* the readings or class discussions. (see **supplementary reading Keeley, Asking the Right Questions for tips on how to identify and respond to issues**). This should be the students’ opportunity to explore an issue or issues that intrigue them by commenting on or questioning them (**10% each, total 20%**).

(This assignment assumes the *open ended nature of the questions being explored and also encourages Analytical responses that do not prematurely close the path towards further exploration*. The issue of religion and its implication of freedom is a perennial one and defies any quick answers defined once and for all. t

This requirement therefore fulfils Core Goal 3b: Through their analytical response papers, students

are supposed to “*show off*” their ability to “*evaluate and apply insights gained from the study of the social political role of religion as this manifests itself among “colonized peoples” (of Africa in this case)* . *These insights are formulated by historians, anthropologists and scholars of religion contemplating the phenomenon and injustice of Colonization and the role of religion in this context* . (for tips on how to address open ended questions in an analytical manner without “closing” the path for future analysis, see supplementary reading: *Asking the Right Questions:* segments on (i) The Myth of the Right answer ii) Panning for gold iii) Weak sense versus Strong Sense Critical thinking)

4. **Group Project Forma TBA: Students will work in groups to explore topics and various subthemes at the intersection of religion and Colonization in Africa:**

*This will also help achievement of RTC3b: The topics for Group work are cases in point to test students’ ability to evaluate and apply insights from Readings in RSOC 191: The topics for discussion are open ended though they are based off **specific case studies**. (See sample of potential topic from a list to be distributed in day 2 of Class): **20% final Grade***

5. **Midterm:** format TBA :**This will test achievement of course goals** :It will be designed to allow students to demonstrate what they have learnt in terms of content of the class by week six and to demonstrate their *developing ability critically to analyze the role of religion in the African social political landscape*: which is a our case study **25% of final Grade**
6. One **final Essay** : (**A list of possible topics will be distributed by week 7**). This essay will be from a list of **open ended questions designed** to allow the student to **apply** what they have learnt over the quarter in a *synthesized way* : *RTC core goal 3b the fulfillment of RTC 3b goal will thus be tested* .

Final essay: 20% of final grade

Total for the course: 100 %

Criteria for Grading:

“A” will be given for outstanding work both in class and written assignments. An “A” student

Presents his or her work coherently, clearly and analytically. His or her work is *systematic* ,
relevant and *well articulated*, addressing the issues at stake adequately .

“B”. Will be given for work that is of relatively High quality, which adequately and analytically

addresses itself to the issues and is relatively well articulated

“C” Will be given for work which barely meets the requirements of the course

“D” Represents’ poorly presented work, barely relevant, Ill articulated.

“ F” Irrelevant, or , incoherent work that does not meet the requirements of the course at all.

NB :

A Total of 100 points are possible for the course as a whole . A final letter grade will be assigned according to the following percentile scale:

90%-100%	A
80-89 %	B
70-79%	C
60-69%	D
Below 60%	F

NB 2: The bottom 2 and top 2 numbers within each grade category corresponds to plus or minus grade designations .eg: 80%-82% =B- 88%-89% =B+ etc

Class Policies:

1. Academic Integrity:

Students in this class are reminded that plagiarism (ie the use of other peoples ideas words, or work without properly acknowledging and other manifestations of academic dishonesty is a **serious offence that stands to be penalized**. If proven , Charges of plagiarism and academic dishonesty could result in an automatic F.

Consequently , students are encouraged to develop a strong **sense of academic honesty and integrity** at all times , a fact that **is self rewarding both in the**

short and long run . (In this context, students are reminded that use of **internet as a learning tool is encouraged** but academic honesty and integrity is expected even **in the use of internet resources**. Thus, downloading and presenting as **yours other people’s work** from the internet could trigger charges of plagiarism.

Use the **internet creatively but ethically** to advance your learning that of others in the learning community that is **RSOC191**.

- 2 **Attendance** : Class attendance is mandatory **except for emergencies** which should be explained **to me in advance**, preferably in writing with appropriate documentation of your situation in order to determine whether your absence is excusable ..You are expected to arrive to class on time and attend **every class meeting** . More than 2 **unexcused absences** will lower your grade **by a letter**. Missing more than **3 class periods** *invites an F* for the class. If you require special accommodation you should indicate the need for such accommodations in advance and submit the appropriate documentation through the **Student advising center** in timely manner(**not later than 2nd day of week 1**) . Attending another class and/or its requirements, or other commitments that *irrevocably conflict with class scheduling will not count as “excusable absence” unless there are very rare and urgent and specific circumstances under which such an absence can be justified*. In which case, consult with me in good time about your **circumstances** to determine what, if any, accommodations **are possible**. Attendance also means more than mere **physical presence** in the class. It is up to you to demonstrate that you are **actively present**. Distracting yourself via “**activities**” that have little to do with the class (such as on the side conversations that disrupt self and others , or texting and other “misuse’ of electronics (phones and pads) will **dis-count your presence** ! **Tardiness (and abrupt departures) will also undermine your attendance grade , so avoid it!**
- 3 **Academic Accommodation:** If you need special consideration and accommodation due to disability or other pertinent circumstance, please seek this accommodation through the office Disability resource center: Phone 408 554 4111 TYY 408 554 5441.Please indicate your need for accommodation in (no later by Friday week 1) to ensure a timely and meaningful accommodation
- 4 **Collegiality:** It is expected that your participation in this class will be marked by a strong **sense of respect and civility towards all in the learning community in and outside the class**. **Disruptive activities** (eg leaving cell phones on or laptop activities unrelated to class, and other use of electronic devises in a manner that **distracts you** or other members of the class is a mark of lack of collegiality. So is abrupt and disruptive **premature or tardy** arrivals and departures from class. While disagreements and differences of **opinion are expected** and even encouraged as you navigate your way “**from echo to voice**” regarding the admittedly hotly debated and contested nature of the class topics, disrespectful comments or on the side conversations that interrupt, subvert or do not help move the discussion ahead will be marked as lack of collegiality and will **lower your participation grade**. You are encouraged therefore to cultivate and apply a collegial, respectful yet analytical approach to the class and the learning community that’s is RSOC191. **In this class , diligent and consistent attendance, active participation is a big mark of collegiality and class citizenship. This is self rewarding even as it gathers credit along the specific lines outlined above.**

5. **Preparing for Class:** Navigating the readings : *Taking note, Taking notes and Keeping Track* of your analytical thoughts about class topics along the way: (use of Note cards see Below)

Course Outline and Schedule of Classes: Could change to accommodate shifting class demographics and other contingencies

WEEK 1: INTRODUCTORY PRELIMINARIES:

30th March : Introducing the course, its scope and requirements.

No Readings: Lecture/Discussion

Video Resource: Excerpts Basil Davidson: The Africans: Voyage of

Discovery: **kings and cities**

1st April Prelude to Colonization (1): The Roots and Impact of the Myth of the Dark - Continent:

Readings: Bratlinger: *Victorians and Africans: the Genealogy of the Myth of the Dark Continent* (pdf) (on Camino)

Excerpts: *Asking the Right questions:* pdf (Chapter 1 Pdf) On Camino

Week 2: PRELUDE TO COLONIZATION : Issues in the Hermeneutics of African Religions

6th April : a) The Invention of Africa and The power of Discourse: Readings Mudimbe: Discourse of Power and Knowledge of Otherness (Pdf Chapter 1:Page 1-16 pdf on Camino)

b) The Power of Naming: Responding to “**misnamings**” of Africa .

Readings: Excerpts from Idowu: *African Religion: A Definition:* Pdf (on Camino)

Video Excerpts :TBA

8th April : Reclaiming the power of Naming: Reconstructing Pre Colonial Africa: The Gikuyu Case:

Reading: Kenyatta: *Facing Mount Kenya* : Preface: chapters 1-3, 5&6 , 9&10

Video: Excerpts from Basil Davidson: *Africa Voyage of Discovery:* episode : different but equal

Week 3: THE COMING OF EUROPEANS AND THEIR RELIGION:

1st response paper due (Friday 4PM in order to include insights from week 3)

13th April: The *Ambiguity of the 19th Century* missionary movement

Readings: Jean Marc Ela: *African Cry:* Chapter 2, Sandgren Chapter 1

Video Excerpts: Basil Davidson: *Africa: Voyage of discovery:* This

Magnificent African Cake
15th April African Encounter with Missionary Christianity: Kusoma Christianity and the Gikuyu Response...

Readings: Sandgren: *Christianity and the Kikuyu*: Chapter 2 & 3
Video Excerpts: Basil Davidson: *The Bible and the Gun*

WEEK 4: RELIGIO- CULTURAL CONFLICT AND AFRICAN RESPONSES

20th April Religio Cultural Conflict :The 1920's Irua Controversy in Kenya:
Readings: Sandgren, Chapter 4, & 5

Video: The Bible and the Gun continued:

22nd April^h African Responses to Cultural Imperialism: The Gikuyu Case.
Readings: Ngugi WA Thiongo: *The River Between*. (Revisit Kenyatta chapter 6)

Group(1) On Religion and Resistance to Cultural Imperialism) (see separate memo on Group topic Prompts for detail)

Week 5 THE RISE OF POLITICAL MOVEMENTS OF PROTEST.

27th April Colonialism and the issue of landlessness: The Gikuyu case.

Readings : Kanogo: *Squatters and the Roots of Mau Mau* : Introduction Chapter 1-3

(video Basil Davidson: (The Rise of Nationalism)

29th April : Thunder from the Mountains. The Gikuyu Response to Landlessness.

29th April Readings: Kenyatti: *Thunder From the Mountains*

Kanogo: *Squatters and the Roots of Mau Mau* : Chapters 4&5

Group 2. On Indigenous Religion and Quest for Political Freedoms:

Week 6: RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS OF PROTEST: THE RISE OF INDEPENDENT CHURCHES and Black Theologies of Liberation s :

4th May The Historical context of African Independent Churches.

Readings: Hood: *Must God Remain Greek*: Introduction and Chapter 2, African Cry Chapter 4

Video: Zulu Zion

6th May Religion Responses to Racial Injustice : The Rise of Black Theology In South Africa;

Readings: Hood : *Must God Remain Greek*: Chapter 3

Video Resource: Excerpts from Sarafina

Midterms. Modalities TBA

Week 7: Religion and the Economic Decolonization:

11th May : Mapping the Neo-Colonization : Globalization and the New Scramble for Africa: Justice:

Readings: Ela : *Forward & Chapter 5*

Carmody :New Scramble for Africa Introduction 1-3

Video : *To be a Woman or equivalent*

13th May : *Rekindling Hope concluded:*

Reading Ela chapter chapters 5&6,

Carmody chapters 5, 6, 7

Video :Lumo or Pray the devil back to hell: TBA

Group 3: _on Religion and (economic) Justice in Africa

Final paper Guidelines distributed

Week 8: *Reinventing Africa: Religion and the African Quest for a Sustainable Future :*

18th May Religion, **Inculturation** and the Right to be different:

Readings: Marc Ela: Chapters 1&7,

20th May^h : Towards a Livable Future: The enduring Quest for **Authenticity**

Readings :: Excerpts from Wangari' Maathai s Challenge of Africa: Introduction ,
Chapter 2

: Video :Taking Root /or Pray the Devil back to Hell

Second Response paper due: By Friday by 5PM)

Video Resource : Amandla /

Week 9: *Towards a Healed and Livable Future: The Promise and Challenge of the “Third Way”*

25th May Towards a livable Future : *Religion , Peace and Reconciliation*

Readings: Desmond Tutu : *No Future Without Forgiveness* :Chapter 1-4;

27th May : *No Future Without Forgiveness?* Testing the Viability of “the Third Way in Africa”

Readings : More of Tutu: *No Future Without Forgiveness* : Chapter 7 ,10, 11

Video Resource:: **As we Forgive**

Week 10. *March 11th/13th : Conclusions and Synthesis.*

June 1st a) Course synthesis: Mini “conference on Religion and Africa’s Renaissance
(all As resource persons

b) Preparing the final paper

June 3rd Course wrap up :

Reading List:

1. Ela, Jean Marc Ela: African Cry (Orbis books, 1986):Reprints)
2. Kenyatta: Facing Mount Kenya (Vintage Books, 1965)
3. Kenyatti, Maina: Thunder from the Mountain: (Africa World Press, 1990) Collection of Mau Mau Songs.
4. Sandgren D. Christianity and the Kikuyu (Peter Lang)
5. Ngugi Wa Thiongo Ngugi WA: The River Between (Heinemann 1965))
6. Kanogo: Squatters and Roots of Mau Mau (James Curry)
7. Tutu Desmond: No Future Without Forgiveness

Excerpts other pertinent texts will be placed on Canvas as PDFs

Appendix : List of videos and other supplementary resources (some are available on line or in the library)

1. Basil Davidson: Africa: Voyage of Discovery series : Parts 3&4: Caravans of Gold
2. Basil Davidson: Africa: Voyage of Discovery: Parts 5&6 This Magnificent African Cake: The Bible and The Gun
3. Basil Davidson: the **Rise of Nationalism** :
4. Amandla /Sarafina
5. The Long Search Series: Zulu Zion etc (The whole series is available in the library)
6. Taking Root: The Vision of Wangari Maathai (available in the Library)
7. As We Forgive:

Addendum to Syllabus:

1. Navigating the Readings:

Thematic, Analytical and Synthetic Readings: The readings are organized thematically. For each themes, there will be **at least two different texts** to allow for access to **different perspectives** on the theme for you to consider in your analysis. When you approach the readings, remember to **read for the theme** and also to read **synthetically** (ie considering all the texts on the theme) in an analytical manner. Eg. On 14th January for example , the first theme: *Issues in the (Hermeneutics)* interpretation of African Religions: 2 texts are assigned: One Mudimbe : Explores the roots of the rather negative images of Africans and their religions and traces these to the ethnocentric colonial discourse of the 19th century (builds on Bratlinger article on Victorians and Africans which traces *the negative* images to the *myth of the dark continent*) : The second readings by Idowu assumes the negative impact of the “misnaming of African Religions and unpacks why the language used to describe African Religions is Erroneous . The Readings on 16th January are from Kenyatta who expands Idowu’s thesis by reconstructing the **Gikuyu religio-cultural system** as a coherent and meaningful one contrary to the dismissiveness of 19th Century writers . :Reading these texts analytically and synthetically allows you **a holistic an understanding** of the problem of interpretations of Africa for and how these misinterpretations paved the way for and sustained colonialism .

2. Supplementary readings : Keeley: Asking the Right Questions.... (PDF on Camino)

A supplementary reading from **Keeley: Asking the Right Questions** (PDF on Camino) has also been assigned to point you in the direction of **how to conduct an analytical reading** by **asking the right kind of questions**. Eg what is the **central claim being made in any piece of writing readings**? How do you **identify** an issue? What **argument** is being made about the issue in the reading? And how do you respond to the issue in a **panning for gold manner** rather than just “**absorbing**” it as a sponge would? How do you **analytically engage or challenge claims being made in a strong sense rather than just** a weak- sense kind of way? We shall be reading this supplementary texts for the first few weeks to access insights it offers us about **what analytical reading comprises of** ... I will be posting questions to guide this supplementary se reading on Camino as well...Such analysis is deliberately called

for in the kind of courses in the RTC3 category. These courses as indicated earlier focus on **controversial, open ended questions that defy one final answer!**

3. Keeping Track of your Analytical Thoughts: Taking Note and Taking Notes

Remember also to keep track of your analytical thoughts as you process the readings. I will provide you with questions to Guide the readings and will be posting these on Camino at least 2 days before they are due. These questions are to facilitate your understanding of the themes embedded in the particular readings. Writing out your **analytical responses** to these questions on the readings provides you with a well thought out set of notes for your reference during in class discussion of the themes but also for reference as you navigate other aspects of the course requirements such including your group work, Midterm etc. I will signal to you to submit these written responses for me to check at intervals what progress you are making in unpacking/understanding the themes. Keep copies of these notes for your records and submit them also on Camino for my records and for me to offer you feedback as needed

- 4. Use of Note Cards:** In order to keep track of your analytical thoughts as you read in preparation for class, I recommend that you use note cards to jot down at least 3 points that you consider noteworthy in the readings or that summarizes what is being said in the readings. On the flip side of the Card: Jot down your immediate analytical thoughts as you consider these points. Eg to what extent do you agree with the claims being made in the texts? Why or why not? What more could be said about the points raised? What more are you **curious** about as you consider the claims being made in the texts . If you were to engage the writer on this topic, what analytical question would you ask him/her etc

On the **flip side of the card** , jot down what you might consider “**muddy** “ points (what if anything is unclear for you in the readings ... we can consider these muddy points during class discussion in efforts to clarify them

Remember to use strong sense critical thinking .

This regular note taking and taking note will help you keep **track of your thoughts**, as the quarter progresses so that you can use these as a **spring board** for responses papers ,for in class discussion and other aspects of your course requirements (including midterm and final paper. At **regular intervals** , you will be called upon in class to share your analytical thoughts with the rest of the class for further discussion . I may also ask you to **submit the note cards** you have prepared to look at how you are **progressing in that regards**. So bring **both your written notes (responding to the questions to guide readings) and note cards to class for reference**. All this particularly **boosts and documents your preparation and participation grades .!**