Problems and Issues of Contemporary Africa:  
Transitional Justice  
PO 760 – Spring 2019  
Tuesdays 3:30-6:15  
232 Bay State Road, Rm 312b

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This seminar explores a central challenge for contemporary African societies: how to come to terms with histories of authoritarian rule and violence. As various African countries have sought to consolidate peace and promote democratic rule and stability, their responses to legacies of violence have ranged from the prosecution of perpetrators of violence to ignoring the past. In this course, we explore the diverse forms of transitional justice that have been applied in African cases, including domestic and international judicial action, truth commissions, memorialization and commemoration, and deliberate forgetting of the past. We look at the role of various actors in transitional justice, including states, the international community, and civil society. We focus both on the general theoretical issues and look in detail at specific African cases. We conclude by considering the most appropriate options for African countries still in the midst of conflict or having recently emerged from war or dictatorship.

In this course, we consider a variety of questions related to transitional justice: What social and political legacies do the experience of violence and autocratic rule leave behind? What are the best means to address the legacies of violence? What purpose do trials serve, and what impact do they have on democratization and reconciliation? What is the role of truth-telling in rebuilding societies? Must societies choose between truth and justice? What role does collective memory play in promoting reconciliation, and how much can collective memories be shaped by social policy? What happens if societies fail to address the legacies of a violent past? Are there ways in which transitional justice in Africa is unique? What should be the role of traditional justice mechanisms in transitional justice? What are the comparative advantages and disadvantages of international versus domestic interventions? What are the implications of transitional justice for sovereignty?

Objectives

By the end of this course, students should:

• Understand the various options for transitional justice, including international and domestic trials, truth commissions, hybrid institutions, memorials, and reparations as well as decisions to postpone or reject accountability measures;
• Have developed reasoned opinions about the impact and appropriateness of the diverse transitional justice options for various situations;
• Have a basic knowledge of the cases of Rwanda, South Africa, Sierra Leone, and Mozambique, Uganda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo;
• Have stronger written and verbal communication skills, critical thinking skills, and research skills.
Requirements

• Participation – 30% of grade – Students are expected to come to class having completed all assigned readings and prepared to participate in class discussions. As a seminar, this class is dependent upon the active engagement of each student. The participation grade will also be based on participation in discussion on the Blackboard site for the class. Each student is expected to post comments, thoughts, or questions on the readings for the week each Tuesday night by 10 p.m. Please look over the postings by other students before coming to class so that we are prepared to engage in lively discussion.

• 2 Short Papers – 10% of grade each – Students are also required to write short critical reviews of two of the books from the recommended reading list. These 3-4 page reviews should both summarize and assess the main ideas, arguments, and contributions of each book. Students will be asked to give a 5-minute in-class presentation of each book they read, preferably during the relevant week. Please complete at least one review essay by spring break.

• Research Paper – 50% of grade – Each student is required to complete a substantial research paper on an aspect of transitional justice in Africa, looking either at a specific county we have not covered in the course as a case or looking in greater depth at one of the cases explored in the course. Comparative or thematic projects are also possible. Topics must be approved by the professor. Papers are due by 5 p.m. on Monday, May 6. Late papers will be marked down.

Reading Assignments

The vast majority of the readings are articles and book chapters that will be available electronically on Blackboard. During the semester we will also read the following books, which you should consider purchasing:


I. Introduction to Themes in Transitional Justice – January 22 - WEEK 1

Minow, Between Vengeance and Forgiveness, chapters 1 and 2.
Recommended General Readings on Transitional Justice:

II. Trials

A. Arguments For and Against Trials – January 29 – WEEK 2

Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness*, chapter 3.

Recommended Readings on Trials:

**B. The Rwandan Case I: The ICTR – February 5 – WEEK 3**


**C. The Rwandan Case II: Gacaca – February 12 - WEEK 4**


**Recommended Readings on Rwanda:**


**No Class February 19 – Substitute Monday**

**Research paper proposals due in class February 26.**

### D. The International Criminal Court – February 26 - WEEK 5


Recommended Readings:

E. International Justice and Sovereignty – March 2 – WEEK 6

**Recommended Readings:**


**Spring Recess March 9-March 17**

### III. Truth Commissions

**A. General Overview – March 19 – WEEK 7**


**Recommended Readings:**


B. Truth Commissions – The South African Case – March 26 – WEEK 8


Recommended Readings:


IV. Other Options – Ritual, Reparations, and Memorialization – April 2 – WEEK 9


Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness*, chapters 5 and 6.


Recommended Readings:
Andrew Rice, The Teeth May Smile but the Heart Does no Forget: Murder and Memory in Uganda, Metropolitan Books, 2009.

V. Willful Amnesia – The Mozambican Case – April 9 – WEEK 10


Recommended Readings:
Jessica Schafer, Soldiers at Peace: Veterans and Society after the Civil War in Mozambique, Palgrave, 2007.
VI. Searching for Solutions: Burundi and Central African Republic – April 16 – WEEK 11


**Recommended Readings:**


VII. The Kenya Case – April 23 – WEEK 12

**Guest Lecture by Gabrielle Lynch, 4 p.m., April 23.**


**Recommended Readings:**


**VIII. Wrapping Up: The Future of Transitional Justice in Africa – April 30 – WEEK 13**


**Final research papers due Monday, May 6.**

**Additional Recommended Readings:**


