Syllabus for GEOG 328C: Topics in Regional Geography: Sub-Saharan Africa

Course objectives: To develop an understanding of the geographic contexts of Sub-Saharan Africa, including an overview of the physical, bioclimatic, historical, cultural, political, demographic, health and economic geographies of Sub-Saharan Africa. Students will ‘fill in the map’ of Africa by studying the spatial distribution within each of these geographic domains. In addition to an overview of geography South of the Sahara, the Congo will be taken as a more intensive case study through additional readings, lectures and discussions.

Learning outcomes: Students will demonstrate knowledge of the relevant geographical information domains of Sub-Saharan Africa. Students will demonstrate critical thinking in evaluating topical issues concerning the human and physical environments of Sub-Saharan Africa. Students will understand the diversity and complexity of Sub-Saharan Africa and its context within global geography.

Lecturer: Dr. Matthew C. Hansen, Professor, Department of Geographical Sciences

Meeting time: Tuesday/Thursday 12:30pm - 1:45pm, LeFrak Hall 1201

Office hours: Tuesday/Thursday 1:45 - 2:45, LeFrak Hall 1135

King Leopold’s Ghost, by Adam Hochschild
Congo (Global Political Hot Spots), by Thomas Turner

Schedule (subject to change)
September 3 – Introduction – Chapter 1 and 2, Physiography – Chapter 7, 25, 26
September 5 – Physiography
September 10 – Climate – Chapters 8
September 12 – Vegetation – Chapter 9, 27
September 17 – Land cover from satellite data
September 19 – Hydrology of Africa – Yolande Munzimi
September 24 – Human evolution
September 26 – Language, hunter/gatherers and agriculture
October 1 – Cultural and political hearths – Chapters 4 and 5
October 3 – Pre-colonial history – Chapter 10
October 8 – The colonial period
October 10 – The colonial period – Chapter 11
October 15 – Discussion – King Leopold’s Ghost
October 17 – Mid-term examination
October 22 – Independence – Chapter 12
October 24 – Post-independence – Research paper outline due
October 29 – Post-Cold War
October 31 – Emerging countries – Chapter 16, 17
November 5 – Emerging countries – Chapter 18
November 7 – Demography – Chapters 13, 14 and 15
November 12 – Rural, Urban and Social geography – Chapters 6, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 and 24
November 14 – Health and disease – Chapter 28, 29 and 30
November 19 – Discussion – Congo
November 21 – Bernard Adusei – Ghana overview
November 26 – Student presentations and Research papers due
November 28 – Thanksgiving Holiday
December 3 – Student presentations
December 5 – Student presentations
December 10 – Student presentations
December 12 – Student presentations

Dr. Hansen may be contacted by email at mhansen@umd.edu with a GEOG 328 subject heading

Grading
Mid-term examination – 25%
Research paper – 25%
Individual presentation – 15%
Final examination – 35%
Class attendance/participation – 10%

Both exams will consist of short answer/essay questions and the final examination will include a map-based section. All materials from required texts, lectures, including guest speakers and student presentations will be included as potential examination material.

Research papers will represent a synthesis of a topic of current interest in Sub-Saharan Africa. A list of possible subjects is presented below, and students may propose their own ideas on what subject to research. Papers will be 10-15 pages of double-spaced text, 12-point Times New Roman font and 1” top and bottom page margins. At least 5 references are required, and their listing is not considered part of the main body of the text. Appropriate references include peer-reviewed journal articles, edited books and news periodicals. All references must exist in print editions. An
alternative to this format is a synopsis of a relevant full-length text on Sub-Saharan Africa. An outline of each research paper is due on October 25.

Presentations will be made during the last two weeks of class and consist of a 10-minute presentation of the main ideas and conclusions of the research paper. Two additional minutes will allow for one question from the audience.

Potential Research paper/Presentation topics:
Health cluster – AIDS in South Africa, Guinea Worm eradication, Malaria prevention and treatment, Famine causes and monitoring
Economic development cluster – Resource curse, Leapfrog technologies, Chinese investment, Agricultural development, Centers of manufacturing, Conflict diamonds, Bottom Billion, Dead Aid
Environment cluster – Ivory, Protected areas and human livelihoods, Great Apes, Desertification
Democratic governance case study cluster – Ghana, Senegal, Botswana, Kenya, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Namibia
Recent conflicts – Sudan (Darfur and/or South Sudan), Mali, Cote D’Ivoire
Past conflicts - Somalia, Angola, Ethiopia/Eritrea

5% of the participation grade will be a student-presented synopsis of a current event news item concerning Sub-Saharan Africa. Each student will select a news item and send an email prior to the next class notifying Dr. Hansen of the topic. 3-5 minutes at the beginning of that class will be spent discussing the news item.

Students with disabilities
Please see the instructor and register with Disability Support Service in Shoemaker Hall.

Honor Code
The University of Maryland, College Park has a nationally recognized Code of Academic Integrity, administered by the Student Honor Council. This Code sets standards for academic integrity at Maryland for all undergraduate and graduate students. As a student you are responsible for upholding these standards for this course. It is very important for you to be aware of the consequences of cheating, fabrication, facilitation, and plagiarism. For more information on the Code of Academic Integrity or the Student Honor Council, please visit http://www.studenthonorcouncil.umd.edu/whatis.html. Please keep the following pledge in mind when you are writing papers or submitting exam material: “I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this assignment/examination.”