African Studies

Director TBA

The concentration in African Studies offers students the opportunity to study Africa, its people, and its societies from a perspective that provides a holistic understanding of the continent. In order to provide concentrators with an in-depth understanding of African peoples and cultures, histories, and the political, economic, and ecological environments, the program draws upon the social sciences, natural sciences, and humanities.

In addition, students will develop a heightened awareness of the long-term and complex relationship between Africa and the West. A core curriculum of courses, coupled with study abroad opportunities and an ongoing series of campus events including speakers, special programs, and visiting scholars, will provide students with a foundation for future work and/or study in African studies and related fields.

Requirements for the Concentration in African Studies

Number of Units
Six units are required.

Required Courses
AFST/HIST 104 Introduction to African Studies
AFST/HIST 276 Civilizations of Africa
AFST/HIST 277 Contemporary Africa

Three additional courses chosen from the following list. Courses should include Africa specific study abroad subject to approval by the Director of African Studies.

AFST/POLS 248 Politics of Sub-Saharan Africa
AFST/HIST 273 Atlantic Slave Trade
AFST/HIST/RELG 274 Islam in Africa
AFST/HIST/RELG 275/SEMN 274 African Christianity
AFST/ANSO 290 Africa in Global Context
AFST/FREN 455 Afro-Perspectives
ENGL 221 African Literature

Concentrators are encouraged to take as many core and elective courses as possible.

Courses taken abroad and at other U.S. colleges and universities, or with guest scholars on campus, may meet a concentration requirement. Students are encouraged to speak with the Director of African Studies as they develop their program.

Kalamazoo College also operates study abroad programs in Africa: Kenya, Senegal, Egypt, and Botswana. These give students an intensive academic and intercultural experience in an African region. The specific African countries in which the College operates are listed in the "Center for International Programs" section of this catalog.

African Studies courses

AFST/HIST 104 Introduction to African Studies
This course introduces students to the history of Africa and its peoples, its activities and traditions in the medieval through the postindependence period. For purposes of organization, the course explores four major themes: Medieval Africa, Africa Meets the World, The Myth and Invention of Africa and Europe Meets Africa.

AFST/POLS 248 Politics of Sub-Saharan Africa
This course offers an in-depth perspective on the study of Sub-Saharan African politics. It examines Africa's post-independence democratic strides, security issues, and the failure and successes of statism. It specifically exposes students to the challenges and the conundrum of the post-independence state and the efforts in dealing with such challenges in Africa. The end of the Cold War as well as the demise of apartheid affected the political landscape in Africa, thus strengthening the role of grassroots organizations and of other external forces to engage in the process of state reconstruction.

AFST/HIST 273 Atlantic Slave Trade
This course examines the complex web of connections that linked together the various lives and fates of Africans, Europeans, and Americans via the Atlantic slave trade. It analyzes the mode of enslavement of Africans by slavers in Africa, the experiences of slaves in the Middle Passage, and the impact of the trade on continental and Diasporan Africans. It also explores the role played by Africa-based abolitionist movements in ending the trade in Atlantic Africa.

AFST/HIST/RELG 274 Islam in Africa
This course explores the spread of Islam from the Arabian Peninsula to the African continent in the seventh century through the nineteenth century and limns the factors, which facilitated this advance. It examines the methods and principles of Islam and how the religion affected the life styles of its African neophytes and adherents. Because of the interaction between Muslim and African civilizations, the advance of Islam has profoundly influenced religious beliefs and practices of African societies, while local traditions have also influenced Islamic practices. Muslims were important in the process of state building and in the creation of commercial networks that brought together large parts of the continent. Muslim clerics served as registrars of state records and played a role in developing inner-state diplomacy inside Africa and beyond.

AFST/HIST 275/SEMN 274 African Christianity
This course explores the complex and disparate trends of Christianity in Africa since the first century C. E. It highlights Africa's role in the development and growth of Christianity as a global religion.
Prerequisite: Sophomores Only

AFST/HIST 276 Civilizations of Africa
Study of Africa south of the Sahara including the origins of man and the emergence of food producing communities; Ancient Egypt and pre-colonial African kingdoms and federations; medieval empires of western Sudan, Ethiopia, and Bantu-speaking Africa; and the Atlantic slave trade. Emphasis on socio-political and economic history.

AFST/HIST 277 Contemporary Africa
Study of Africa south of the Sahara including colonialism and the anti-colonial struggles of the post-WWII period.

AFST 279 Special Topics in African History
This course takes a multidisciplinary approach to analyzing various human-environmental relations within the African Diaspora. Moving through time and space, it begins in medieval Africa, enters the Western Hemisphere via the Atlantic slave trade, travels through the colonial Americas, and then ends in contemporary Africa and the United States. Along the way it blends environmental history with topics in postcolonial studies, ecocriticism, and environmental justice.

AFST/HIST 279 ST: Decolonization in Africa
The course examines the growth of anti-colonial nationalism, the end of colonial rule, and post-independence in Western and Southern Africa. It also identifies and illuminates the complex and contested aims of decolonization in these two regions. We will examine the different ways in which race, ethnicity, class, and gender shaped the African nationalist movement strategies and agendas, and how these identities continued to shape post-colonial state politics and societies. The course reviews these topics within specific African countries' contexts, including Southern Rhodesia/Zimbabwe, South Africa, Mozambique, Nigeria, and Ghana. We will also review these topics within specific non-African countries' contexts, including the United Kingdom, United States, Portugal, and Soviet Union.

AFST/ANSO 290 Africa in Global Context
This course examines the ways that people and places on the African continent have been and continue to be connected to global dynamics and explores the implications of these past and present connections for people's lives as they are lived today.
Prerequisite: Must have taken ANSO-103 ANSO-105 or ANSO-107.

AFST/ARTX 295 Contemporary African Arts
In this course, students will gain familiarity with African material culture and artists, and with broad historical trajectories and major discourses in the field of African art history; develop fluency in formally analyzing and interpreting works of African art in relation to specific historical contexts; and build skills in close reading of texts and images.

AFST/FREN 445/FREN 490 Afro-Perspectives
Today, the channels of knowledge production and distribution are heavily dominated by Western thinkers and institutions. As a consequence of that unequal relationship, voices from former colonial spaces, such as Africa, remain largely unacknowledged in scholarship even when such scholarship address circumstances specific to those marginalized spaces. This course uses a variety of media (comics, films, novels, songs, etc) to emphasize epistemic knowledge produced by African intellectuals about how Africans perceive, interact, and position themselves in relation to local and global questions.
such as fashion, immigration, diaspora, environment, feminism, race, Female Genital Cutting, etc. Course is taught in French. 

Prerequisite: Must have taken FREN-301.

AFST 498 Independent Study

AFST 593 Senior Integrated Project

Each program or department sets its own requirements for Senior Integrated Projects done in that department, including the range of acceptable projects, the required background of students doing projects, the format of the SIP, and the expected scope and depth of projects. See the Kalamazoo Curriculum -&gt; Senior Integrated Project section of the Academic Catalog for more details.

Prerequisite: Permission of department and SIP supervisor required.

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