

## [AS.100.372.01.SP23 African Cities: Environment, Gender & Economic Life](#)

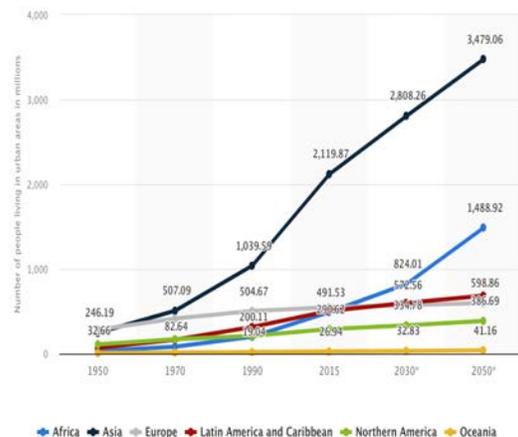
Spring 2023  
Professor [D. Gondola](#)  
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**Nota bene:** This syllabus and other course materials can be found on the web page (<https://canvas.jhu.edu>).

### Course Description

Before their encounter with the West, most Africans (probably between 90% to 95%) lived in communities that can be best defined as “rural units of production.” They were primarily based on agricultural production. In a matter of eighty years, from the early contact with Europeans in the 1880s to the demographic explosion of the 1950s, nearly 30 percent of the African population lived in cities. Sub-Saharan Africa has the world’s youngest and fastest-growing urban population and more than 60 Africans out of 100 will be urbanized by 2050 (a total of 1.5 billion) compared to only 30 in 1950 (32 million). This class is an exploration of the social, economic and cultural (including gender) issues resulting from Africa’s urban revolution. One of the explicit objectives of the course is to analyze how African cities display some sharp contradictions between modernity and tradition, young and old, rich and poor, educated and uneducated, and so forth. The urban battlefield is where Africans are resolving these contradictions. This class is strongly oriented towards discussion and students will be expected to contribute on some level. That being the case, regular attendance is of critical importance to succeed in this class.



### Learning Objectives

- Understand Africa’s urban precolonial urban configurations
- Demonstrate the ability to use primary sources to craft narratives about causality and change in African history

- Analyze significant impact of European colonization on African history and contrast alternative interpretations of historical events
- Identify major cities and key urban issues affecting contemporary Africa

### Requirements and Evaluation

**Nota Bene:** There are no make-ups and no extra-credit assignments in this class. Written Assignments must be turned in on the day they are due. Any late assignment will not be graded. This policy will be strictly enforced.

Assignment	Due Date	%
Film Review   Tsotsi (500-600 words)	March 7	10%
Mid Term (Canvas)	March 16	20%
Book Review   Cruel City by Mongo Beti (500-600 words)	March 28	10%
City Project   Research Oral Presentation	April 4/6	10%
Class Participation (including China-Africa Research)	April 20	10%
City Project   Final (1,000-1,200 words + illustrations)	April 27	20%
Final Exam (Canvas)	May 16	20%
Total		100%

**City Project** is in an individual project based on original research on one specific African city. Students should pick one African city and apply interdisciplinary methods in examining the city: 1) historical background describing the origin and development of the city, 2) A geographic map and description of the city, 3) major research paper of 12-15 double-spaced pages (30 %) on any aspect of one or several African cities. This paper will be graded three times at three different stages.

- A first draft should include a description of the project, a tentative outline and a provisional annotated bibliography including at least three monographs.
- A second draft (revision of the first draft).
- The last stage consists of the final project (1,200-1,500 words, excluding the bibliography).

Twice in the course of the semester I will schedule appointment with students for discussion about the draft and suggest revisions and improvements.

### Readings:

All required readings for the course are available at the Hungry Mind bookstore and I suggest you purchase the required book(s). I will be distributing beforehand texts and articles we will discuss in class. I strongly recommend that you read them at least twice before coming to class. Make notes in your texts or on a separate sheet of paper and highlight or underline the specific passages you want to discuss.

9780253008237 Cruel City by Beti, Mongo PAPERBACK



**Cruel City** PAPERBACK

by Beti, Mongo (9780253008237) - 13  
HOPKINS F

[Digital Requirements](#) ▶

**Current Student Pricing**

Pricing is subject to change

New: \$ 20.00  
Used: \$ 15.00  
Rent,new: \$ 17.70  
Rent,used: \$ 8.80  
eBook, buy: \$ 9.99

(N.B. A reading assignment followed by (\*) indicates that students are required to write a two-page (double-spaced) reading report summarizing the main these(s), idea(s), interest, etc. of the work **and** presenting a critique).

#### Film:



#### **Tsotsi (2005) | South Africa / UK | Directed by Gavin Wood | 95 minutes**

One of South Africa's most successful films, *Tsotsi* (which translates to 'thug') is set in a city slum in Johannesburg. It follows a young street criminal who steals a car and discovers baby. The movie is a moving portrait of the redemption of a forgotten boy from a neglected community. *Tsotsi* won the 2005 Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film and was nominated for the Golden Globe for Best Foreign Language Film in 2006.

#### **Class Participation**

The physical or virtual classroom is an environment of learning *par excellence*. Not only do students learn from the instructor and by their own critical analysis of the material but they also learn from fellow students. It is, of course, an intimate and ever-changing space where students are constantly asked to share opinions and critically analyze the issues as they are being presented by the instructor and fellow students. Participation in class discussions is instrumental in the student's ability to analyze and assimilate information. Do not feel shy to ask a question, raise an issue or interject a thought. There are several ways to get prepared for class discussions. Here are some tips on how you can enrich discussion of the course materials: (1) Spend time before each class preparing for discussion by making notes in your texts or on a separate sheet of paper pertaining to specific passages from the readings that you want to discuss. (2) During class discussions, when raising a question or point about the assigned readings, make specific references to texts, authors and page numbers in question. (3) Listen carefully to an interlocutor's question and position before responding and making your own comment. Try not to make assumptions about your interlocutor's intentions or motivations based on his/her/their gender or origin. Never hesitate to ask your interlocutor to clarify or restate her/his/their position.

#### **Presentation**

The purpose of the presentations is to encourage critical reading and thinking. I usually let students choose their own topic provided that it's related to the issues covered in class. Given

the short timeframe allowed for presentation (10-12 minutes), it's usually more appropriate to cover a very specific issue instead of trying to cover all the ins and outs. When deciding what particular aspect of your topic you want to present in class, always think of something original and thought-provoking that might engage the class in a productive discussion. I encourage you to be creative and responsible. You may use the board, audio-visual materials, etc.

### **Paper Grading Policy**

We believe that a grade is less a reward for or a penalty against the student's intelligence than a reflection of the student's proficiency to write clearly and persuasively a paper on a given topic. Organization and pertinence of ideas, as well as grammar and clarity, are among some the chief criteria we use in grading a paper. We give the following grades:

- A. means that the paper is written with grace and clarity. The student has demonstrated a mastery in writing clearly and organizing ideas methodically on a given topic. Ideas are not randomly thrown here and there but are complementary and cohesive elements of a well-organized paper.
- B. is above average. Ideas flow well. Grammatical errors are minimal.
- C. is for an average paper that complies with the topic assigned or chosen. The student has done just what I asked for. Grammar is fair and content is intelligible.
- D. is for a paper written with a level of grammatical errors that sometimes hinders the comprehension. Ideas exist but are arranged without a clear logic. Some of them are obscure and unintelligible. Sentences are confusing...
- F. is for a paper quickly and poorly written, with incomplete sentences, and often off-subject. This grade signifies an unacceptable performance in writing a specific assignment. Usually, the content can hardly be grasped because of a lack of clarity and organization.

### **Here are some writing tips:**

1. "Have something to say, and say it as clearly as you can. That is the only secret of style." Matthew Arnold.
2. "The great enemy of clear language is insincerity." George Orwell.
3. When writing a paper, do not make unsupported assertions. Try to present the most convincing case for your argument. Think carefully and thoroughly about the evidence you will use to support your position. Always anticipate opposing critiques of your position and opposing arguments. Try to answer or address opposing positions as you present your own position. This will demonstrate that you are aware of alternative viewpoints and that you can propose and defend a thesis.
4. Your paper should not be a first-draft presentation and organization of your thoughts. Give yourself ample time to read the assigned materials and to consult appropriate sources before making final decisions about your thesis statement and the supporting evidence which will provide structure for your argument and conclusion. For example, you might begin writing your final paper by making very strong statements about a point you aim at defending. However, in consulting the works of scholars in the field, you may see the need to modify your original thesis, or you may be compelled to abandon it altogether. This is to be expected in scholarly research and writing. You should not feel reluctant to change your

argument if your reasons for changing it are more convincing than your original reasons for posing it.

5. Please take advantage of all the resources available to you when planning to write your paper. Never hesitate to ask reference librarians for help in trying to locate scholarly sources. Never hesitate to ask me for extra help in thinking through your ideas for the paper. Discussing a topic before researching and writing can help you think of new ideas and new approaches and sources. It can also save time.
6. Always use page numbering and a 12 inch-font. Do not hesitate to use footnotes if you think they might clarify your demonstration. A bibliography should always figure at the end of your paper. Double-spacing is a requirement.
7. Finally, always proofread your paper before you hand it in to be graded. Not only does proofread help rid your paper of any grammatical errors and typos that can make its content less comprehensible and appealing, but it also helps to consider re-wording a sentence or improving an existing idea. Proofreading can make a difference in your grade.

**plagiarize** \vb -rized; -riz.ing vt [*plagiary*] (1716)

: to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own

: use (a created production) without crediting the source ~ vi : to

commit literary theft : present as new and original an idea or product

derived from an existing source — **plagiarizer** n

— from the *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, Tenth Edition, 1997, p. 888.

We've entered an age where the amount of information generated and the technology available to retrieve it have made it easier for anybody to take *verbatim* words and ideas belonging to somebody else, without the author's permission, without reference to the authorship, and by passing them as his or her own. This is unacceptable, especially in the academic environment where copyright laws are supposed to be known and respected by all. Please always abide by the following rules:

- a. Never use an idea, that you have borrowed, without referring to the authorship.
- b. Figures, when not your own, should always be referenced.
- c. There is nothing wrong in inserting quotes in your work, but always give the source (author, work, date and place of publication, publisher and page number)

While it is hard for some of us to assimilate that words and ideas are also property and as such are subject to copyright laws, we should always remember the Golden Rule. Canvas has also a unique agreement with "Turnitin.com" that allows faculty to run electronic papers submitted by students through this document search utility. **We have a zero-tolerance policy for plagiarism and will give a grade "0" to any plagiarized assignment and report the student to the Office of the Director of Student Conduct.**

**Civility Statement.** The physical and virtual classroom is a learning community in which we all need to collaborate in order to meet our goals. We can only create a positive learning environment through positive speech and positive behavior. Rude, sarcastic, obscene, disrespectful, insensitive speech and behavior will negatively impact the classroom learning community and impede the process of learning. Positive speech and behavior create and nurture a safe learning environment where the instructor and the students respect one another

and freely share knowledge. All students enrolled in this course have a responsibility to create and maintain a safe and positive environment conducive to learning and intellectual growth. A learning-friendly and safe environment is one that is free of distractions, engages and nurtures all participants in the learning process, does not inhibit, frustrate, demean or dehumanize any individual or group. Students who use rude and inflammatory language, who distract other students, who engage in inappropriate behavior, and thus obstruct the learning process, will be asked to leave as a first preventive step.

## Schedule of Classes

(Subject to change)

### I. Introduction

- January            24: Introduction to the Course: What's A City?
- Wirth: Urbanism as a Way of Life
- 26: Did Cities Exist in Precolonial Africa?
- Hull: Introduction
  - Coquery-Vidrovitch: The Process of Urbanization in Africa

### II. Ancient and Islamic Cities

- 31: Great Zimbabwe
- Koutonin: The Plundering of Great Zimbabwe
  - Connah: Great Zimbabwe and Related Sites
- February            2: Kongo Kingdom's Mbanza Kongo
- Thornton: *Mbanza Kongo/São Salvador*: Kongo's Holy City
- 7: **NO CLASS**
- 9: Islam, Trans-Saharan Network and the Rise of Trading Centers
- Trimingham: The Process of Religious and Culture Change
- 14: Three West African Cities: Timbuktu, Jenne, and Gao
- Conrad: Empires of Medieval West Africa
  - De Villiers & Hirtle: Life and Learning in the City of Gold
- 16: Hausa City-States and Swahili Cities
- Griffeth, The Hausa City-States from 1450 to 1804
  - Berg, The Swahili Community of Mombassa, 1500-1900

### III. Forts, Ports, Cities and the Slave Trade

- 21: Kumasi and the Asante Kingdom
- Ndokoh: Kumase: Ambiance of Urbanity
- 23: European Settlements in West Africa
- Yarak: Elmina and Greater Asante
- 28: Presence and Prestige in Medieval European Cities
- Lowe: Visible Lives: Black Gondoliers and Other Black Africans in

- Renaissance Venice
- March 2: Slaves and Concubines in Middle Eastern Urban Societies
- Mirzai: Slave Trade and African Diaspora in Iran
  - Lee: Enslaved African Women in Iran

#### IV. Colonization and Urban Revolution in Africa

March 7  
FILM REVIEW OF  
TSOTSI DUE

- 7: Migration and Urbanization
- Njoh: Colonial Philosophies, Urban Space, and Racial Segregation
  - Bigon: Urban Planning, Colonial Doctrines and Street Naming in French Dakar and British Lagos, c. 1850-1930
- 9: African Women in Town
- Little: Women in the Urban Economy

March 16  
MIDTERM EXAM  
CANVAS (20%)

- 14: South Africa's Segregated Cities
- Posel: Race as Common Sense
  - Lemon: The Apartheid City
- 16: MIDTERM EXAM #1 (CANVAS | 9AM EST to 11:59PM EST)

SPRING BREAK March 18-26 SPRING BREAK

#### V. Colonial Cities and Social Issues

- March 28: Urban Proletariat, Marginalization, and Liminality
- Ilife: Urban Poverty in Tropical Africa
  - Gondola: Tropical Cowboys

March 28  
BOOK REVIEW OF  
CRUEL CITY DUE

- 30: Popular Art in the City: Walls that Talk
- Martin: The Emergence of Leisure
  - Parisel & Nzuzi: Walls that Speak
  - Mamadou Diouf (2005), "Wall Painting and the Writing of History: Set/Setal in Dakar" GEFAME: Journal of African Studies, 2.1.

- April 4: City Project | In-Class Research Presentation
- 6: City Project | In-Class Research Presentation

April 4/6  
CITY PROJECT  
IN-CLASS RESEARCH  
PRESENTATION (10%)

#### VI. Post-colonial African Cities

- April 11: Urban Fashion and Cosmopolitanism
- Gondola: Dream and Drama
- 13: Urban Explosion and the Environment
- Greenpeace: Poisoned Gifts: From Donations to the Dumpsite: Textile Waster Disguised as Second-Hand Exported to East Africa
  - Hansen: The Work of Consumption

- Hansen: Conclusion: Other People's Clothes?

18: Cities and the Informal Sector

- Toteng: Informal Sector and Urban Growth in Botswana
- Kinyanjui: Women Garment Traders in Nairobi

20: China-Africa: Reshaping African Cities (PROJECT)

- Sautman & Hairong: China and Africa

**April 20**  
**CHINA-AFRICA (ORAL)**  
**PROJECT DUE (CLASS**  
**PARTICIPATION 10%)**

25: In the Times of AIDS

- Grundfest-Schoepf: 'Mobutu's Disease': A Social History of AIDS in Kinshasa

27: Conclusion: From the Periphery to the Center: African Migration to European & North American Cities

- Balakrishnan: Afropolitanism and the End of Black Nationalism

**April 27**  
**CITY PROJECT FINAL**  
**DUE (20%)**

May 16: **FINAL EXAM (CANVAS | 9AM EST to 11:59PM EST)**

**May 16**  
**FINAL EXAM**  
**CANVAS (20%)**