Youth Culture and Education in Botswana: Tentative Course Syllabus
AMC Botswana Program: University Immersion in Southern Africa

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These windsongs that blow/From the Kgalagadi
Are the birthsongs/And lifesongs
Of an ageless people/Come of Age

--Baralong Seboni

Course Description

Botswana bordered by Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and South Africa is comparable in size to France, with a population of nearly two million. Independent since 1966, as a country noted for its high economic growth and perceived western development, it has many distinguishing characteristics worth investigating. For example, Batswana people speak 28 languages and many speakers are trilingual; they speak the official language (English), the national language (Setswana), and a local language. By utilizing trifocal language patterns, Batswana people have advantages over monolingual Americans, but at the same time they may be at a distinct disadvantage when they try to negotiate the formal education system. Why? While a few upwardly mobile Batswana have easy access to globalized geographical spaces, others, such as those in Francistown may face the same types of squatter issues as someone living in the gecekondu in Istanbul, Turkey. Why is this the case? In November 1994 a brutal murder of a 14-year old female in Mochudi, Botswana caused a cultural crisis that was debated in the newspapers. Subsequent to the event, there were riots, rumors, and outright denials, which suggest that Botswana society had a challenging time trying to come to terms with the changes in family structures, shifts in gender roles, differences in group status, and revolutions in youth culture. What is happening to the youth, and why has this population targeted as problematic?

In order to bring these situations under more scrutiny, the purpose of reading, discussing, and experiencing aspects of Botswana in this course will be to address specific themes, which include township and rural spaces, student political movements, indigenous knowledge, media’s role in society, immigration issues, language and literacy education, and religious and gender in schools. The approach to investigating these topics will be based on concepts from sociology, anthropology, linguistics, history, the arts, political science, economics, and literature. Readings will often be provided by Botswana scholars, and a local/global analysis and interpretation will be developed through discussions, guest lectures, student presentations, writing, and field study. As the semester unfolds, the expectation is
that we will be building a rich vocabulary of terms, which describe a wide range of theoretical positions, and will promote a full spectrum of opinions and interpretations among participants. The focus will be on expanding complexity and generating multiple conclusions to increase the depth of understanding, as participants are not expected to become definitive experts but rather thoughtful, careful, and respectful scholars.

To this end, this course will include discussions that require participants to attend classes regularly, to be active conversationalists, and to engage as critical readers, listeners, and observers. At times, the schedule may deviate from the syllabus, in order to accommodate guest speaker(s) and/or to engage in on-site visits. However, the assigned readings are to be read and digested regardless of schedule changes, as they provide a foundation from which Botswana experiences can be analyzed and understood. More specific details will be provided for each of the assignments listed, and due dates will be provided at the first class meeting.

Assignments

1. Discussion leader for two topics for the semester: In order to facilitate the readings, you will be presenting a summary of the readings, directing a discussion on prepared questions, and providing a vocabulary and concept handout (or providing a power point, overhead, visual).
2. Short interview on social/cultural life in Botswana: When you read Bessie Head's *Serowe: Village of Rain Wind*, you will get a sense of a rural community and its history, education, family structures, and occupations. Interview someone in the community and focus on the social/culture contributions s/he makes. Look to Head’s entries for a guide as to how to approach your subject. 3pgs.
3. Critical Paper: Take any student at UB and inquire about the language(s), s/he speaks. Focus on a language issue and write-up what you learned first-hand through your discussion; put it in the context of a class reading on language. 5pgs.
4. Response Paper: After you have participated in a scheduled music, art, or dance event, write up a summary and critique of the event. Emphasize the cultural aspect(s) that you found most rewarding.
5. Ten-page research paper: Take an issue on the topic of media, indigenous knowledge, or immigration and write a very focused piece. Provide at least eight sources—only three of which may be websites—include a “Works Cited” section.
6. Oral presentation: You will have visited an educational site in Botswana. Critique the education in terms of how indigenous knowledge did or did not play a part in the experience and also critique aspects of knowledge production in which students participated.
7. Mochudi Log: TBA
Grading:

Discussion Leader 10+10 pts.
Short Interview 30 pts.
Critical Paper 30 pts.
Response Paper 30 pts.
Research Paper 50 pts.
Oral Presentation 20 pts.
Attendance and Participation 20 pts. = 200 pts. total for semester

A 93-100%, A minus 90-92%,
B plus 87-89%, B 83-86%, B minus 80-82%
C plus 77-79%, C 73-76%, C minus 70-72%
D plus 67-69%, D 63-67%, D minus 60-62%

Attendance and Participation Policies

Students are expected to attend all classes and also to participate in discussions at every class meeting. Missed classes will affect a student's grade, as per the limit of absences set at the beginning of the semester. No late assignments will be accepted.

Required Texts: to be purchased prior attending the first class


Week One, Jan. 21-25: An Introduction to Botswana and Its Youth
(International Student Cultural Excursion)


Week Two, Jan. 28-Feb. 1: The Significance of African Language Development


Additional Readings


* Due: Discussion with language speaker

Week Three, Feb. 4-8: Language Issues in Botswana
(Mochudi Home Stay?)


Additional Readings


*Due: Mochudi Log*

**Week Four, Feb. 11-15: Rural Life in Botswana as Seen by a Young Botswana Writer (Optional: Serowe)**


Additional Readings


*Due: Interview on social/cultural life in Gabs*

**Week Five, Feb. 18-22: Student Movements: Activist and Radical Responses**


Additional Readings


**Week Six, Feb. 25-Mar 1: Township Issues for Youth: Considering Vulnerabilities of Place (Soweto)**


**Additional Readings**


**Week Seven, Mar. 4–8: Justice and Media in Botswana Politics**


**Additional Readings**


6/6/11

**Additional Books**


**Week Eight, Mar 11-15: Break (Okavango Delta)**
Week Nine, Mar. 18-22: Botswana Culture: Music, Art, and Dance (Optional, Odi Weavers)


Botswana Art and Music Websites
http://www.knowbotswana.com/botswana-music.html
http://www.maitisong.org/


Week Ten, Mar 25 – 29: Indigenous Knowledge and Knowledge Production


Additional Readings


Week Eleven, Apr. 1-5: The Global Challenge of Educating Immigrant Youth in Botswana (Jwaneng Diamond Mine?)

Campell, EK. (2006)."Reflections on Illegal Immigration in Botswana and South Africa."  


Additional Readings


Crush, Jonathan. Series Editor "Changing Attitudes to Immigration and Refugee Policy in Botswana."


http://www.newsdayer.co.zw


Week Twelve, Apr. 8-12: Final Paper, Oral Presentations

Week Thirteen, Apr. 15-19: Educating Botswana Youth (Schools)


Additional Reading


Week Fourteen, Apr. 22 - 26: Religious Education in Botswana


Week Fifteen, Apr. 29-May 3: Finals Week