

Welcome. When China was selected to host the 2008 Olympic games, it was taken by some—certainly by the Chinese government—to signify China’s “arrival” as a respectable world player, its emergence from a dark and painful past. Scaled down somewhat, some see South Africa’s selection as host of the 2010 World Cup the same way. This was the country where less than 20 years ago three-quarters of the population was not permitted to vote; where for most of the 20th century the systems of segregation and apartheid imposed a brutal regime in the name of white supremacy, where bitter poverty and exhausting labor migration were the life prospects for most people. For these reasons, South Africa was publicly shunned by most of the world.

“That was then”—or so proponents of the new South Africa would argue. One man above all symbolizes the change in South Africa: Nelson Mandela, nearing his 92nd birthday and the subject of the popular current film *Invictus*. And much unquestionably *has* changed. Four consecutive open and fair elections with universal adult suffrage denote the progress of a democratic culture. Remarkable stories of new opportunities seized, of upward mobility, of social tolerance and cooperation are moving and genuine—stories unthinkable a generation ago. The country’s economy, until the recent world downturn, continued to grow. There is a lively arts scene, a vibrant press. South Africa is a lot freer than China, before or after the Olympics. On the other hand, South Africa has much more crime, and much more disease.

There is no shortage of critics, at every level, who charge that the system has not really been fundamentally transformed—that racial privilege remains, and where it doesn’t, it’s merely been replaced by class; that the life prospects for most are *still* nothing but bleak. In terms of rates of homicide, robbery, and rape this is one of the most violent and crime-ridden countries on earth. It has more people with HIV/AIDs than any other. It faces monumental challenges in education, land redistribution, poverty and unemployment, race and gender equality. Mandela’s successor as President was forced out of office by his own party in September 2008, and the new one raises many concerns in many quarters [though he has also surprised many people—pleasantly—so far].

I have visited the country (as well as neighboring Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi and Namibia) on numerous occasions over the past 27 years. I was there in March and May of 2008. On that trip I was reminded, again, of the astonishing physical beauty of the place. More moving and relevant, however, is the historical drama--the struggles and pain, the horrors and triumphs, juxtaposed on this spectacular land.

I’ve already noted problems based in the segregation and apartheid eras. But these, in turn, are the products of a history stretching back several centuries. In other words, we cannot hope to understand today’s situation by beginning in the 1990s. Hey, it’s a HISTORY course! Perhaps we should note at this point that South Africa’s history bears much comparison to that of the United States, especially the U.S. South. It is appropriate to take our credo from the southern writer *par excellence*, William Faulkner: “The past isn’t dead; it isn’t even past.” To really understand the new South Africa, we must understand the old.

And that is what we are going to do.

COURSE OUTLINE

This outline should be treated as an approximation, EXCEPT for the items in capitals.

Week	Subject
1	Looking Back, Coming to Terms: The Truth and Reconciliation Commission
2	This was an AFRICAN place: geography, the Khoisan, and the Bantu JAN. 21—GEOGRAPHY QUIZ
3-5	The Cape Colony: prototype for apartheid? The “Mfecane”--the remaking of the southern Bantu world FEB. 2—3PP PAPER ON “A HUMAN BEING”
6-7	The Frontier, the Great Trek, and the new territories FEB. 18--TEST I
8-10	The Mineral Revolution--diamonds and gold
11-12	Unification: the birth of “South Africa”

13-15 Segregation and the beginnings of black protest
Capitalism, labor and race: the origins of apartheid
APRIL 20—WILLIAMS PAPER DUE
Apartheid and resistance: the polarizing dialectic
Black Consciousness and the Soweto rebellion
The ANC in exile
The eighties insurrection
The transition, 1990-1994
The New South Africa
MAY 6--TEST II

BOOKS (available at campus bookstore):

L.M. Thompson, A HISTORY OF SOUTH AFRICA, Third edition

J.A. Williams, FROM THE SOUTH AFRICAN PAST

P. Gobodo-Madikizela, A HUMAN BEING DIED THAT NIGHT.

We will make use of reserve and internet sources as well. I start you out with three good sources for current news:
allafrica.com

mg.co.za

news.bbc.co.uk

REQUIREMENTS

We will have a very short geography quiz on Jan. 21. We will have two in-class tests on the dates listed. Tests will have identification, short answer and essay portions.

At certain points students will bring short response paragraphs to class as basis of discussion.

Each student will prepare a paper of approximately 10 pages (typed, double-spaced; grad students, 12-15 pp), based on a portion of the Williams book, due April 20. Detailed paper instructions will be issued shortly.

We are fortunate to have a relatively small class, and will operate in seminar fashion frequently. On many occasions I will ask you to bring to class a short summary and response to a reading. You will be informed as to whether each of these will be graded or evaluated pass/fail.

Graduate students: You need to write a 3 pp book review on a book of your choice, graded pass-fail. Assignments are weighted as follows in determining the final grade:

Quiz: 5%

Tests I: 20%

Test II: 30% each

Paper: 25%

Attendance, participation, discussion, short papers: 20%

Plus-minus grading will be utilized.

PLEASE READ CAREFULLY: The course requires a commitment of time, attention, and mutual respect from both students and the instructor. If you are not in a position to provide this commitment, please consider another course. **ATTENDANCE, ON TIME, IS ABSOLUTELY CRUCIAL.** Attendance will be taken at the beginning of class. Latecomers are marked absent. IF you inform me after class, the “absent” will be changed to “late.” Short assignments will be accepted late only if absence was excused on the date due. Never do work for other courses or attend to non-course business while in class. **ALL ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT INCLUDING CELL PHONES AND LAPTOPS MUST BE OUT OF SIGHT AND TURNED OFF DURING CLASS.** If you must sleep, please do so outside of class. Please do not eat in class. Soft drinks are fine.

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