

SOCL 295/ANTH 203
Exploring South African Society and Culture
Summer 2025

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Course Description:

Through visits to cultural and historically relevant sites in and around Cape Town, interactive presentations from local experts, and discussions with Stellenbosch University and CNU faculty, this course provides students with the opportunity to explore and analyze the social realities of 21st Century South African society. Students will examine the social dynamics that contribute to formation of individual identities and communities that are unique to South Africa utilizing fundamental concepts of sociology and anthropology. The course will examine the history of the region, the impact of colonialism in South Africa and across the African continent, culture change as a result of globalization, and specific aspects of South African culture.

Theories and hypotheses of human behavior are context-specific, and this course is designed to highlight this reality by providing students with the opportunity to learn and apply some of the common methods used in social science research. While learning about the cultural and socioeconomic dynamics that have shaped South African society, students will also develop their own testable research questions about contemporary life. Most importantly, students will be encouraged to assess the remarkable similarities and distinctions between their understandings of American and South African experiences.

Learning Outcomes:

A successful student will be able to:

- Recognize the dynamic interaction of society, culture, and individuals.
- Understand how historical context shapes contemporary realities.
- Identify the major themes shaping social realities in South Africa.
- Use appropriate research methods to critically assess social dynamics.

To meet these objectives, during this study abroad experience students will have the opportunity to explore multiple sites along the Western Cape of South Africa including Stellenbosch University and Cape Town. Students will learn about the country's unique history from CNU faculty and academic experts from the region as well as from the residents of South Africa themselves.

Physical Requirements:

This is a study abroad course conducted outside of the U.S., which means this course will be in a location where the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) does not apply. Faculty will make every effort to accommodate students with physical requirements. However, all students should be aware this program includes excursions requiring significant amounts of walking. Students desiring accommodations for these physical components should discuss the program with faculty prior to departure to ensure accommodations are possible. Also, note some buildings/locations may not be handicap accessible. Therefore, you will be expected to get in and out of public transportation (which usually involves navigating stairs) and carrying your own luggage.

Course Materials:

Noah, Trevor. Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood.

Other supplemental materials will be made available online

Course Assessment

Attendance and Participation (40%)

For the purposes of this class attendance refers to attending the pre-travel meetings as well as participating in all group activities. Absence in these group activities is only permissible in the case of severe illness or injury. This is a quick, intense experience and you need to present for all of it. In addition, we expect you to be engaged and inquisitive. Your participation grade will be based on your involvement in group discussions, your engagement with the cultural activities, and your interactions with our hosts.

Reflection Papers (20%)

You will be asked to reflect upon what you have learned in class discussion and intercultural experiences. You will be given four prompts throughout the abroad experience that you will need to answer critically and thoughtfully, drawing upon all of your experiences. Your reflection papers can be used to inform your final paper and presentation.

Research Analysis and Presentation (40%)

You will be developing your own research question to be addressed while we are abroad. We will learn basic methods of inquiry early in the course, and you will address a topic of your own interest with the guidance of the course instructors and as well as local experts. Before departing, you will present your findings to the group for discussion. An analytical paper in which you discuss your research question, methodologies, and findings will be due within two weeks of returning to the United States.

University Statement on Diversity and Inclusion:

The Christopher Newport University community engages and respects different viewpoints, understands the cultural and structural context in which those viewpoints emerge, and questions the development of our own perspectives and values, as these are among the fundamental tenets of a liberal arts education.

Accordingly, we affirm our commitment to a campus culture that embraces the full spectrum of human attributes, perspectives, and disciplines, and offers every member of the University the opportunity to become their best self.

Understanding and respecting differences can best develop in a community where members learn, live, work, and serve among individuals with diverse worldviews, identities, and values. We are dedicated to upholding the dignity and worth of all members of this academic community such that all may engage effectively and compassionately in a pluralistic society. If you have specific questions, suggestions or concerns regarding diversity on campus please contact Diversity.Inclusion@CNU.edu

Disabilities/Accessibility:

In order for a student to receive an accommodation due to a disability, that disability must be on record in the Office of Student Affairs, 3 rd Floor, David Student Union (DSU). If you have a diagnosed disability, please contact Jacquelyn Barnes, Director of Accessibility & Care Team Support in Student Affairs (594-7160) to discuss your needs.

Students with documented disabilities are to notify the instructor at least seven days prior to the point at which they require an accommodation (the first day of class is recommended), in private, if accommodation is needed. The instructor will provide students with disabilities with the reasonable accommodations approved and directed by the Office of Student Affairs. Work completed before the student notifies the instructor of his/her disability may be counted toward the final grade at the sole discretion of the instructor.

Success:

I want you to succeed in this course and at Christopher Newport. I encourage you to contact me during office hours or to schedule an appointment to discuss course content or to answer questions. If I become concerned about your course performance, attendance, engagement, or well-being, I will contact you first. I also may submit a referral through our Captains Care Program. The referral will be received by the Center for Student Success as well as other departments when appropriate. If you are an athlete, the Assistant Director of Student-Athlete Success Services will be notified. Someone from the Center for Student Success will contact you to set up a plan for success and connect you with the appropriate resources. Please remember that this is a means for me to support you and help foster your success at Christopher Newport.

Academic Support:

The Center for Student Success (CSS) provides numerous free resources to help students succeed in their courses. These resources include individual peer tutoring and group/test review sessions. The Center also houses the Alice F. Randall Writing Center. Writing consultants can help you at any stage of the writing process, from invention to development of ideas, to polishing a final draft.

You may contact the Center for Student Success to request a tutor, meet with a writing consultant, or make an appointment to talk with a staff member about study skills and strategies. The Center is located in Christopher Newport Hall, first floor, room 124. You may email studentsuccess@cnu.edu, call (757) 594-7684, or visit <https://my.cnu.edu/academicsuccess/>.

Public Health

The university will provide guidance on public health issues and students will be expected to comply with university protocols.

Course Materials:

All content created and assembled by the faculty member and used in this course is to be considered intellectual property owned by the faculty member and Christopher Newport University. It is provided solely for the private use of the students currently enrolled in this course. To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not make available any of the original course content, including but not limited to lectures, discussions, videos, handouts, and/or activities, to anyone not currently enrolled in the course without the advance written permission of the instructor. This means that students may not record, download, screenshot, or in any way copy original course material for the purpose of distribution beyond this course. A violation may be considered theft. It is the student's responsibility to protect course material when accessing it outside of the physical classroom space.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Date	Topic/Activity	Assignment/Readings	Contact Minutes
TBA	Syllabus and Introductions Key Concepts in Anthropology and Sociology	*CW Mills “The Promise” *Body Rituals of the Nacerima	120 minutes
TBA	Travel information and trip preparation		120 minutes
May 17	Group meets at Dulles Airport Fly to Cape Town, South Africa		
May 18 (Friday)	Arrive in Cape Town, Transfer to Stellenbosch Introductory meeting		60 minutes
May 19	Overnight safari (<i>with LDSP group</i>)	Reading on Environmentalism in SA	480 minutes
May 20	Overnight safari (<i>with LDSP group</i>)		480 minutes
May 21	AM: Walking tour of Stellenbosch and campus of University of Stellenbosch	Reflection #1 due by the end of the day	120 minutes
	PM: Methods and Research Question		180 minutes
May 22	AM: Social Construction of Race and Ethnicity: American and South African Construction	* Racial Identities in the New South Africa *BAC: CH 2 “Born a Crime” and “Chameleon”	180 minutes
	PM: Visit Robben Island and Cape Town Waterfront		60 minutes
May 23	AM: South African constitution (<i>Local faculty</i>)	*South African Constitution	180 minutes
	PM: Village Museum		120 minutes
May 24	AM: Relevance of critical race perspectives in understanding transformation and social justice in South Africa (<i>with LDSP group</i>)	*BAC: Ch 5-7	180 minutes
	PM: Table Mountain, Kirstenbosch Gardens (<i>with LDSP group</i>)		300 minutes
May 25 (Friday)	AM: Religion as Catalyst and Impediment to Social Change (<i>local faculty</i>)	* Racializing the Good Muslim: Muslim White Adjacency and Black Muslim Activism in South Africa * Race and Religion *BAC: CH 3 “Trevor, Pray” Reflection #2 due by end of the day	180 minutes
	PM: Visit local congregations		
May 26	Cape Point		480 minutes
May 27	Wine and bike tour: Stellenbosch history and culture		240 minutes
May 28 (Monday)	AM: Ethnicity and Culture in South Africa (<i>local faculty</i>)	Reading TBD	180 minutes
	Meetings with professors		60 minutes
May 29	AM: Gender and Sexuality in South Africa (<i>local faculty</i>)	*BAC: A Young Man’s Long, Awkward Part 1, 2, and 3 Reflection #3 due by the end of the day	180 minutes
	PM: Food & Music in South Africa		120 minutes

May 30	AM: Individual meetings with faculty to discuss research questions		60 minutes
	PM: Free Time		
May 31	Waterfront, Robben Island, and Iziko South Africa Museum		300 minutes
June 1 (Friday)	Work Day	Work on final presentations and meet with your professors	180 minutes
June 2	Work Day	Work on final presentations and meet with your professors	180 minutes
June 3 (Andria's birthday)	Final presentations		240 minutes
June 4	Free Day	Reflection #4 due by the end of the day	
June 5	Depart for US		
		Total Minutes	4,980 minutes