UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

# COURSE SYLLABUS

# Cultures and Societies of Africa

**2425-2-F0101R025**

## Course title

Cultures and Societies of Africa

## Topics and course structure

**Energy and Africa: the anthropological perspective**

More than one third of the African population has no access to electricity, yet the continent is a major provider of fossils and of raw materials that are essential to the green transition. Through the lens of anthropology, we will consider energy in its various forms, and its relationships with the enviroment and with the human in contemporary Africa. After an introduction that deals with the challenges and the political factors that shape anthropological research in Africa, the course will use the theme of energy to uncover ideas of development, modernity and socio-cultural change as much as extractive and exploitative dynamics. Through case-studies (dams constructions, fossils extraction, cobalt mining, e-waste, etc.), students will appreciate the cultural, religious, social, economic and political relevance of energy in contemporary African dynamics. Some of our questions will be: How does energy relate to African processes of nation-building? and with enduring conflict and political destabilization? Which changes does electrification usher in households and livelihoods? And how do contemporary African societies handle their citizens' growing demand of energy access? Energy will help us to consider what happens in Africa in relation to the rest of the world. The course is also the context in which we share our research experiences with the students, and open up new avenues of investigation together with them.

## Objectives

The course will enhance the knowledge and understanding of key topics and authors in the field of African Studies,

with a focus on interdisciplinary dynamics.

Through the active partecipation in classes, students will learn to built up a historical and anthropological perspective on contemporary Africa; they will learn to use the African experience as a general tool in the analysis of similar phenomena in other parts of the world, and improve their ethnographic abilities.

Communication skills will be increased through problem solving strategies, and collective discussions about theoretical and practical issues, which demand the positioning of students. Learning skills are increased through active participation and discussion in the classroom.

## Methodologies

The course consists of 19 lectures (18 of 3 hours, 1 of 2 hours), which may begin in lecture mode and then develop in interactive mode (and vice versa).

We will use a variety of methodologies: lectures, class discussions on materials such as texts (including those scheduled for the examination), slides, audio-visual documents provided by the lecturer or autonomously proposed by the students, participation of researchers presenting work in progress, ethnographic exercises in selected contexts. English or Italian will be used variably according to the language skills of the class.

Of the 56 hours of the course, 50 will be in presence (and streaming), 6 will be completely remote. Only the narrative parts of the lessons will be recorded and made available on the moodle platform.

## Online and offline teaching materials

Attending classes is a dynamic experience. The course will develop thanks to the collaboration between professor and students in the reading and analysis of the texts selected for discussion as much as through proposals of integration. The course moodle platform is a point of reference for both attending and not-attending students.

## Programme and references

Students will prepare the exam on:

1. S. F. Moore, **Antropology and Africa** (1994)
2. A **selection of articles**, among those that will be discussed in the course, to be negotiated with the professors
3. An **ethnographic exercise** to be negotiated with the professors

**NOTE:** students that do not attend classes will have to contact the professors for support

## Assessment methods

**Oral interview**: through open questions that verifies the knowledge and understanding of the materials assigned;

discussion of the materials used during classes and of the ethnographic exercise.
Alternatively (only for those attending classes): preparation of a written essay on a topic agreed with the professors
The following competencies will be assessed: soundness and accuracy of preparation, argumentation skills, autonomy of in-depth study of the issues addressed

**Italian students carry out the exam in Italian, expect those who ask to do it in English.**

## Office hours

Contact us at our e-mail adresses and we will answer rapidly

## Programme validity

Two years

## Course tutors and assistants

Gabriele Masi

## Sustainable Development Goals

QUALITY EDUCATION