SAVING AFRICA?
CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON HUMANITARIANISM

Fall 2016
FRSEM-UA 607-001
Tuesday, 3:45-6:15 PM
Room 569, Waverly Building (WAVE)

Instructor: Robyn d’Avignon
robdavig@umich.edu
Office Hours: Wednesday, 1-3pm & by appointment
Room 423, Department of History
53 Washington Square South, Floor 4 (East)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Celebrities from Bono to Angelina Jolie place humanitarianism in sub-Saharan Africa on the front page of the global media. But efforts to help are more complex than they appear. In this seminar, students will examine 150 years of efforts to “save” Africa, ranging from the abolition of the slave trade to recent responses to the Ebola epidemic. As the largest recipient of global aid, Africa offers a unique introduction to how humanitarianism shapes foreign policy, non-governmental organizations, and the moral injunction to help others. What is humanitarianism? Who gives and receives aid? How does humanitarianism inform understandings of poverty, race, and violence? Students will learn to analyze and debate these questions by drawing on films, letters, photography, and oral testimonies from Uganda, Guinea, Congo, and Lesotho. Through fieldtrips and guest lectures, we will also meet policy makers and members of the African diaspora in New York City who shape humanitarianism in Africa. This seminar will appeal to students interested in history, anthropology, sociology, politics, human rights, and global health.

This course fulfills the freshman seminar requirement of the College of Arts & Sciences. It offers students a rigorous and engaging introduction to university-level writing, analytical debate, and how to orally present ideas to peers and instructors. Through diverse and frequent assignments, you will build writing and presentation skills. You will learn how to recognize and make historical arguments from a range of sources. There are no prerequisites for this course.
REQUIRED TEXTS


***These books are available for purchase at NYU bookstores and are also on reserve at the Bobst Library. All additional assignments are uploaded to the course website on NYU Classes.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & GRADING

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance and Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Source Paper</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Response Papers (6 total)</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Critical Analysis Essay</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Research Paper</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Group Presentation</td>
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Writing Assignments: Basic information about writing assignments is found at the end of the syllabus. As deadlines approach, we will discuss these assignments in class and I will upload the assignments and a grading rubric to the “Writing Assignments” folder on our course website. Assignments will be evaluated on the strength of the argument, evidence, and prose.

Please save assignments uploaded to the course website as word documents (the humanitarian photography exhibit can be saved as PDF). Label assignments according to the following formula:

- d’Avignon.Robyn.Primary Source.FINAL.doc

Course assignments will be written according to the stylistic guidelines of the Chicago Manual of Style (http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html). Mary Lynn Rampolla’s, *A Pocket Guide* provides examples of the Chicago style for a range of sources.

Learning how to write clear, argumentative prose is one of the most important skills you will acquire as an undergraduate. Good writing is usually the result of considerable practice, learning, and revision. To help students improve their writing and argumentative skills, the NYU Writing Center provides a range of services, including one-on-one consultations with Expository Writing Program faculty trained in writing pedagogy: http://www.nyu.edu/cas/ewp/html/writing_center.html.

Attendance and Participation is mandatory. This is a seminar course, which means it is based around discussion of assigned texts, films, and other media. Active participation and lively discussion are vital to the success of this course and your weekly contributions to discussion will be judged on quality, preparedness, and thoughtfulness rather than sheer quantity. Students are expected
to be on time and prepared for class, which will include discussion of assigned readings, preparing questions for class discussion once in the semester, in-class writing assignments, and peer review.

More than one unexcused absence will negatively impact your participation grade. Students who are unable to attend a section because of official university business, emergencies, medical reasons, or religious holidays should notify me in advance. Circumstances depending, official paperwork will be required and submitted to me for an absence to be excused. Please talk to me early in the semester if you have any questions about course policies, and inform me of emergencies as they arise.

Meetings with Instructor: You are required to meet with me at least once during the semester to discuss your progress, no later than the week before Thanksgiving break. If you cannot attend my scheduled office hours, you can email to arrange an alternative meeting time. You are welcome and encouraged to meet with me throughout the term to discuss course material or your freshman year!

Deadlines & Formatting: Unless otherwise noted, assignments are due when you arrive in class. Deadlines are firm, and late work will be accepted only at my discretion and only in extenuating circumstances. All assignments, including required drafts, should be uploaded to your folder on the course website and printed and submitted in hard copy (some assignments only require electronic submission, please refer to the syllabus). Assignments should be typed, double-spaced, in 12-point Times New Roman Font with 1-inch margins, with your full name and page numbers on each page.

Technology: Please silence your phone and put it away. We will start the semester with computers allowed in class to view documents, take notes, and complete in-class writing assignments. I will revise this policy if I find that computers are being used for other purposes (e.g., facebook, email).

Accommodating Special Needs: If you need accommodations for any reason please contact me as soon as possible so we can discuss how to best fit your needs within our classroom setting. Per NYU policy, any student who needs a reasonable accommodation based on a qualified disability is required to register with the Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) for assistance. For more information, please refer to: https://www.nyu.edu/life/safety-health-wellness/students-with-disabilities.html

Counseling and Wellness: NYU provides a diverse range of services for students in need of short or long-term counseling, including individual and group counseling. For additional information, refer to Counseling and Wellness Services (CWS): https://www.nyu.edu/life/safety-health-wellness/student-health-center/services/mental-health/counseling.html.

Resources for ESL Students: The University Learning Center (ULC) provides support and a variety of English-language support, including assistance with basic writing and editing skills, workshops on study skills, and special programming for international students: www.nyu.edu/ulc.

Communication: Please allow me up to 48 hours to respond to emails, although I will do my best to respond within 24. Over weekends I will not respond until Monday. If a question requires a lengthy response, I will ask you to come to office hours or to speak to me before or after class.

Academic integrity: Academic integrity and honesty are our most fundamental commitment and responsibility as members of the NYU community. Academic dishonesty of any kind will be penalized according to university policy. The guidelines on academic integrity are outlined at http://cas.nyu.edu/page/ug.academicintegrity. It is your responsibility to read and understand the guidelines before submitting your assignments. Make sure that you provide a full and accurate citation whenever you include the words or ideas of others in your written work.
PART I: WHAT IS HUMANITARIANISM

Week 1: Welcome! Introducing Africa

Tues 9/06 Discussion: Introduction to the class, review of syllabus

In-class: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, “The Danger of A Single Story” (2009)


Week 2: Introducing Humanitarianism

Tues 9/13 Discussion: What is humanitarianism? Who are humanitarians?


Due: Response Paper #1 (paper copy and upload to course website)

Start preparing for the Africa map quiz, http://online.seterra.net/en/ex/14

PART II. COLONIAL HUMANITARIANISM

Week 3: The Abolition of Slavery & Humanitarian Thought in Europe

Tues 9/20 Mini Lecture & Discussion: What motivated the abolition of slavery?


Due: Response Paper #2 (paper copy and upload to course website)
**Week 4: Christianity, Commerce, and Civilization**

**Tues 9/27**

Discussion: How did Europeans justify the colonization of Africa?

Reading:

Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold’s Ghost*, 1-139.


In-Class:

Film Screening, *Stanley and Livingstone* (1939)


(We will skim/ read this article together in class)

Due:

**In-Class Africa map quiz (countries of Africa)**

**Week 5: The ‘Red Rubber’ Scandal and International Humanitarian Action**

**Tues 10/4**

Discussion: Colonial humanitarians and villains

Reading:

Adam Hochschild, 140-306 (if you must, you can skim after page 253).

Read one of the following primary sources:

(1) Roger Casement, *The Congo Report* (1904), p 96-102, 140-69

(2) Edmund Morel, *King Leopold’s Rule* (1905), p 127-34, 375-382

In-Class:

Film, *Stanley and Livingstone* (1939) [clip]

Due:

**DRAFT: Primary Source Paper** (paper copy and upload to course website)

**By Saturday, October 8, I will send feedback on your primary source paper drafts by email**

**UNIT III: FROM EMPIRES TO NGOS**

**Week 6: From Biafra to Live Aid: Humanitarian Photography**

**Tues 10/11**

Discussion: How do journalists and humanitarians represent suffering?

Reading:


Aubrey Graham, “100 Years of Suffering in the Congo,” *Social Identities*

TBA: Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (short excerpt)

**Viewing:** “Band-Aid” Videos (links available on the course website)

**In-Class:** Workshop on photographs as historical evidence & viewing of Aubrey Graham’s “Portraits in Disneyland: Stories from Mugungu III” [traveling photo exhibit]

**Due:** Response Paper #3

**Friday, October 14, 4pm = FINAL Primary Source Paper Due** (paper copy & upload to website)

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**Week 7: Decolonization and Development**

**Tues 10/18** Discussion: What is development? How does it differ from humanitarianism?

**Reading:** Walter Rodney, “Chapter 6: Colonialism as a System for Under-developing Africa,” In *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, 1972 (40 pages)


**Due:** Response Paper #4

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**Week 8: Fieldtrip to Humanitarian Organization**

**Tues 10/25** Location: TBA (Fieldtrip will take place during class time)

**Reading:** TBA

**Friday, 10/28 ** **Due at 9pm, Response Paper # 5** *(No paper copy, upload to website)*

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**UNIT IV. Medical Humanitarian**

**Week 9: Colonial and Post-Colonial Medicine**

**Tues 11/1** Discussion: What makes medical intervention in Africa so controversial?


Peter Redfield, *Life in Crisis: The Ethical Journey of Doctors Without Borders*, (Pages TBA)
### Week 10: Doctors without Borders

**Tues 11/8**
Discussion: What is a medical “crisis”? Who deserves medical assistance?

**Reading:** Peter Redfield, *Life in Crisis: The Ethical Journey of Doctors Without Borders* (Pages TBA)

**Due:** Response Paper #6 (paper copy and upload to website)

### Week 11: Universal Rights and Cultural Relativism: The FGM Debate

**Tues 11/15**
Discussion: Is it “mutilation” vs. “circumcision”? According to whom? Why?

**Reading:**
- “Universality Versus Cultural Relativism” (2 page overview of these terms)

**Viewing:** Film, *The ‘Cut’ Documentary - Female Genital Mutilation*, 2009 (13 minutes)

**In-class:** FGM Debate & Discussion of FGM Paper Assignment

**Fri, 11/18**
**Due at 9pm, Draft of FGM Paper**
(No paper copy, upload to website and email a draft to your assigned peer reviewer)

### Week 12: Meetings with Instructor

**Tues 11/22**
NO CLASS—but schedule an individual meeting with instructor (11/22)
**Due at our meeting is a paper copy of your thesis statement for the final paper**
**By 9pm, upload your peer review to the course website and email to your peer**

### UNIT V. HUMANITARIAN HISTORIES & FUTURES

### Week 13: Immigrants, Refugees, and Historical Considerations

**Tues 11/29**
Discussion: Do former empires have a special responsibility to provide humanitarian assistance or asylum to the citizens of former colonies?

**Readings:**

**TBA:** Recent news coverage on the “refugee crisis”
Due: Final, FGM Paper (paper copy and upload to website)

Week 14: Practicum: Malaria in West Africa

Tues 12/6 Lecture & Discussion: Fighting Malaria in West Africa

Due: Draft, Final Essay
(No paper copy, upload to website and email a draft to your assigned peer reviewer)

Week 15: Practicum: Malaria in West Africa

Tues 12/13 Putting History into Practice: What to do about malaria in West Africa?

Due: Group Presentations

***Tuesday, Dec 20: Revised version of Final Essay due***

Upload to the course website and submit paper copies to my faculty mailbox:

Floor 4 East, Department of History
53 Washington Square South

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Due Dates

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tues 9/13</td>
<td>Response Paper #1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tues 9/20</td>
<td>Response Paper #2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tues 9/27</td>
<td>In-Class Africa Map Quiz</td>
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<td>Tues 10/4</td>
<td>Draft, Primary Source Paper Due</td>
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<td>Tues 10/11</td>
<td>Response Paper #3</td>
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<td>FRI 10/14</td>
<td>Final, Primary Source Paper Due (Due at 9pm to course website)</td>
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<td>Tues 10/18</td>
<td>Response Paper #4</td>
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<td>FRI 10/28</td>
<td>Response Paper # 5 (Due at 9pm to course website)</td>
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<td>Tues 11/8</td>
<td>Response Paper #6</td>
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<td>Final, FGM Paper Due</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tues 12/6</td>
<td>Draft, Final Essay Due</td>
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<tr>
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<td>In-Class Group Presentations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tues 12/20</td>
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NOTE: The instructor reserves the right to alter the schedule of reading and assignments. She promises to inform you of any changes promptly and well in advance of any assignment deadlines.
WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

As deadlines approach, assignment details and grading rubrics will be uploaded to the course website and distributed in class. The prompt for response papers will be uploaded one week in advance.

**Primary Source Analysis (3-4 pages):** You will write a three to four page primary source analysis of an excerpt from either Edmund Morel’s *King Leopold’s Rule in Africa* or Roger Casement’s *Congo Report*. Your source analysis should be organized around an argument that answers the following question: What does this source tell us about humanitarianism in Africa at the time in which it was created? In developing your paper, you should consider the author’s goals and motivations, their intended audience, and the social and political context in which this piece was written. To contextualize your chosen source, you can draw selectively on *King Leopold’s Ghost*. Your analysis should not simply summarize the text. Instead, your task is to generate original ideas about what the source tells us about the historical moment in which it was created.

**Both Sides Now: Critical Analysis Essay (4-5 pages):** In this paper, you will explore the larger questions the female circumcision debate raises about universal rights versus cultural relativism. Drawing on materials covered in class, and one additional article (provided in the assignment folder on the course website), you will summarize the major sides of this debate. Why did female circumcision take on such importance among so-called “first-world” feminists? What kinds of evidence did each side use to support their arguments? Which arguments do you find most compelling and why? What larger lessons can we draw from this debate about the ethics of humanitarian intervention in Africa and humanitarianism among/in/by the African diaspora?

**Final Paper Assignment (6-8 pages):** For the final writing assignment, you will combine skills practiced throughout the semester to write a 6-8 page analytical essay on a topic of your choice that involves minimal (or possibly no) external research. I will provide you with several possible topics, but you are welcome and encouraged to propose your own topic. You must identify a central thesis statement and develop a well-structured paper that uses ample evidence to clearly support your argument. You are required to draw on a minimum of two (2) academic articles or units covered in the course in addition to two (2) academic or reputable journalistic sources that we did not cover in class. Be creative: consider documentaries and photographs as well as textual sources.