The islands of Zanzibar have been a crossroads of African, Persian, Arab, Indian, and European cultures for two millennia, making them a unique setting in which to explore issues of religion, ethnicity, race, gender, class, and politics in East Africa. From about 1000 A.D., the first permanent settlers began to arrive from the African mainland, and they mixed with Arab, Persian, and Indian traders who had used Zanzibar as a port for centuries. Zanzibar was linked early into the Muslim world, with the first mosque in the southern hemisphere was built in there in 1107. Zanzibar’s two main islands of Unguja and Pemba ultimately developed a plantation economy, with slaves imported from the mainland growing cloves, cinnamon, cardamom, and other spices. Zanzibar’s strategic and economic importance made it a coveted prize, as it was alternately controlled by the Portuguese, Omani, and British empires. Zanzibar became the launching site for H.M. Stanley and other explorers, the center for many missionary groups, and an important base for European colonial expansion into East Africa.

This course explores the role of Zanzibar as a gateway between East Africa and the Middle East, South Asia, and Europe and the fascinating legacy of social diversity left by the many different cultures that have passed through the islands. We study the contrast between the historical development of mainland East Africa and the Swahili coastal communities that range from Mozambique to Somalia and the role of Zanzibar in the expansion of colonialism into East Africa. We look at Zanzibar’s development as a trade center and slave economy and the ways in which economic inequality interacted with identity politics ultimately to inspire the bloody 1963 revolution that led to Zanzibar’s incorporation into Tanzania.

Much of the course looks at current issues of religion, politics, and identity in East Africa, as countries in the region have struggled to become more democratic and to improve their position within the international economy. The course will explore in depth Zanzibar’s role in the efforts to expand democratization in Tanzania. Additional issues to be explored include the role of Zanzibar as a Muslim region in a majority Christian country, the ongoing significance of links to the Muslim and Arab worlds, religion and democratization, the changing status of women in East Africa, and ongoing dialogues over race and representation.

**Course Goals**

After taking this course, students should:

- Understand the basic history, geography, economy, and social composition of the states of East Africa;
• Understand the impact of international engagement in East Africa both historically and in the present;
• Have an in depth understanding of the most important social, political, and economic issues in Zanzibar;
• Understand how religion, race, ethnicity, gender, and other social identifiers become politically salient;
• Have a basic understanding of Islam and its social and political engagement;
• Have stronger written and verbal communication skills and critical thinking skills.

Requirements

The course will include a mixture of lectures, discussion, and relevant field trips, and students are expected to participate actively. Students are expected to complete readings in advance of their discussion in class and to participate actively in discussions. Participation counts for 10 percent of the grade.

There will be a midterm and final exam, both all essay, written in class. The essays will be graded based on the student’s demonstrated knowledge of the subject, understanding of key concepts, use of course readings, lectures, and discussions, ability to present and defend an argument, critical thinking skills, and originality. The midterm will count for 25 percent of the grade, while the final will count for 35 percent.

Each student will write a research paper of approximately 15 double-spaced pages on a topic relevant to the class, chosen in consultation with the professor. Students will present a summary of their findings to the class and turn in a draft paper in the fifth week of the course. Final papers will be due one week after the return to the US. The paper is worth 30 percent of the grade.

Students are expected to observe the Academic Code of Conduct as defined by Boston University (http://www.bu.edu/academics/resources/academic-conduct-code/). This includes avoiding plagiarism by conducting original, independent work and correctly citing all sources of information, not simply for direct quotes but for all information presented in your written work.

Course Schedule

The following books should be purchased in advance of departure:


Reading Packet
Readings marked with • are available in the reading packet.

Week 1 – Colonialism, Decolonization, and Revolution in East Africa

Ruete, entire book
Glassman, Introduction, Chapters 1 & 2
Glassman, Chapters 3-8, & Conclusion

Tour of Zanzibar historic sites.

Week 2 – Post-colonial East Africa: Nationalism and Democratization

• Julius Nyerere, Ujamaa, selections.

Trip to Pemba Island

Week 3 – Democratization in East Africa: People and Politics


Midterm Exam
Weeks 4 – Zanzibar and East Africa in the World Economy

- Caplan and Topan, Chapters 1, 2, 4, 7, and 9

Paper Presentations and First Drafts

Week 5 – Religion and Politics in East Africa


Trip to Dar es Salaam

Week 6 – Gender and Identity in Zanzibar and East Africa


Caplan and Topan, Chapters 3, 8, and 13


**Additional Recommended Readings:**


Lawrence Ezekiel Yona Mbogoni *The cross vs the crescent : religion and politics in Tanzania from the 1890s to the 1990s*, Mkuki na Nyota Publishers, 2004.


