Modern Africa Unit

Ms. Rachel Otty
Cambridge Public Schools

Abstract:
Modern World History is a semester long high school senior elective course on how nations around the world have functioned and interacted politically, economically, and culturally from 1945 to today. In the first unit of the course students examine the role the Soviet Union played in the world and how post-Soviet Russia operates in the international community today. In the second unit students analyze the extent that modern Africa has been impacted by its colonial past, with a focus on three case studies – Apartheid and post-Apartheid South Africa, the Rwandan Genocide and its aftermath, and issues surrounding economic aid and development on the continent today. In the final unit students explore modern conflict in the Middle East, with a focus on how U.S. policy has impacted the region and the world over the last 70 years. Not surprisingly, given the content of the summer institute, I have chosen to place the following lessons in the second unit, Modern Africa, which will total 4-5 weeks. For the purpose of this unit plan assignment, I have chosen three lesson plans I intend to teach, each falling at a different point in the unit. The first two lessons focus on introductory materials, which will fall at the beginning of the unit to frame students’ understanding of the essential questions and how I would like them to consider our study of Africa going forward. The third lesson comes toward the end of the unit, during which students will spend a week studying economic issues, specifically the debate surrounding economic aid, on the continent in our quest to understand why Africa continues to struggle economically, but also where we see signs of hope on the continent.

Essential Questions:

1. How can we unsettle and complicate common narratives about Africa?
2. How do we move beyond stories of victimhood when studying about Africa?
3. To what extent do current issues in Africa reflect past colonial policies?
4. Is it possible for a nation to achieve justice for victims of past political oppression and violence?
5. Why do many African nations struggle economically today? What signs of hope do we see on the continent?

Learning Objectives:

1. Students will examine and analyze multiple perspectives when studying Africa’s political and economic past and present, with a focus on African voices.
2. Students will study the role that European colonizers played in shaping Africa’s post-colonial history as well as the roles Africans have played in shaping current issues on the continent.
3. Students will study transitional and restorative justice in South Africa and Rwanda and
engage in questioning and dialogue around issues of justice and reconciliation.

4. Students will examine the legacies of colonial and neo-liberal economic policies on African economies and also learn about the impact that local, African-initiated economic projects have had on the continent.
Lesson One: Unsettling Common African Narratives

Time Required: 1-2 class periods

Essential Questions: How can we unsettle and complicate common narratives about Africa? How do we move beyond stories of victimhood when studying about Africa?

Instruction and Primary Sources:

1. Do Now.
   a. Project the words “Modern Africa” on the board for students to see when they come into the room. Students will engage in a Question Formulation Technique (QFT) exercise at this point. I will inform students of the rules for generating and discussing questions and then we will begin.
      i. In small groups, ask students to write down as many questions as they can in 5 minutes on chart paper provided in various spots in the room.
      ii. Explain to students about closed and open ended questions and ask students to identify them on their paper.
      iii. Ask students to name advantages and disadvantages of close-ended Qs. Do the same for open-ended Qs.
      iv. Ask students to practice changing questions from one type to another.
      v. Ask students to review their questions and choose three total questions that most interest them. Ask them to consider why they chose these three.
      vi. Each group will share out revised questions, their three priority questions, and their reasons for choosing the priority questions.
      vii. Wrap Up:
           1. What do these questions reveal about Modern Africa?
           2. About your interests?
           3. How do they relate to the Essential Questions for this unit (review them now)?
           4. How would you like to use these questions?
           5. What is the value of generating your own questions?

   a. Students will work individually on Chromebooks to explore Harvard’s Africa Map. The online mapping tool provides students with a wealth of data and graphics to better understand some of the geographic, ethno-linguistic, political, and economic realities of Africa past and present. While working with the map, students will explore the various layers on the map and note down:
      i. Three observations they have about their map findings.
      ii. Two questions they have about the map/data information.
      iii. One connection they can make back to the QFT exercise/EQs.
   b. Next, show students a series of photos from a slide show put together by teachers who participated in a 2010 Fulbright Hays exchange to Egypt and Tanzania. Don’t tell students where the photos were taken and instead ask them to guess which images were taken in Africa. Number the slides and ask students to number a lined piece of paper 1-30...
(or fewer if you don’t want to use all of the images). Pause on each image for 30 seconds and ask students to note down which continent is reflected in the photo. At the end reveal that all the photos are from Africa and explain the sourcing information for the slide show.

i. Debrief (Questions from BU African Studies Center): What made some photos easy to identify and others a challenge? Another pattern typically surfaces: rural village scenes are generally correctly identified as Africa, whereas urban settings and images of wealth are attributed to Europe or North America. What does this tell us about our current images of Africa? Where do our images come from? Are these sources reliable? What questions arise from this activity for further inquiry?

3. TED Talk.
   a. Chimamanda Adichie’s “Danger of a Single Story”
      i. Students will watch the TED talk, which many will have already seen in earlier grades. While watching the film, students will note down various points of Adichie’s that help to make her argument.
      ii. Upon viewing, students will share out what her major arguments were so that everyone is clear on the message of her talk.
      iii. Students will then write in response to the following questions: Think about the communities to which you belong. Is there a “single story” of your community? Your hometown? Your country? How did that “single story” come about? What is true about that story? What isn't? Has the “single story” changed over time? What makes it easier for certain groups to shed “single stories” and not others?
      iv. Share out and emphasize that in order to “unsettle” common narratives of Africa we will need to dig into multiple perspectives, namely African perspectives, about issues facing Africa, past and present, in order to gain a more nuanced and fair understanding of the continent’s varied and dynamic history. Today was intended to be an introduction to these ideas and tomorrow we will further problematize common perceptions about how Africa is presented in the media.
Supporting Materials for Lesson One: Unsettling Common African Narratives:

**Harvard University’s World Map, Africa Map:**
http://worldmap.harvard.edu/africamap/

**Boston University’s African Studies Center**
“Geography: Which Continent?”
http://www.bu.edu/africa/outreach/resources/which-continent/

“Danger of a Single Story” TED Talk by Chimamanda Adichie
Included in the link are a few learning activity suggestions.
http://ed.ted.com/on/oQQimtYK#watch
Lesson Two: Media Perceptions of Africa

Time Required: 1-2 class periods

Essential Questions: How can we unsettle and complicate common narratives about Africa? How do we move beyond stories of victimhood when studying about Africa?

Instruction and Primary Sources:

1. Do Now.
   a. Students will find a copy of Binyavanga Wainaina’s “How to Write about Africa” on their desks as they come into the room. I will give them some background information about Wainaina as well as project his picture on the board. Students will read his satirical 2005 piece to themselves at their desks. After they finish reading, they will engage in a Visible Thinking Routine called “Connect-Extend-Challenge” where they will address the following questions in writing:
      i. How are the ideas and information presented CONNECTED to what you already knew?
      ii. What new ideas did you get that EXTENDED or pushed your thinking in new directions?
      iii. What is still CHALLENGING or confusing for you to get your mind around? What questions, wonderings or puzzles do you now have?
   b. Students will share out their writing with a partner and then each pair will choose to share one aspect of Connect-Extend-Challenge with the class. Explain to students that this reading was intended to satirize in a rather biting way how Africa is written about, talked about, filmed, and reported on by the West. Today, our lesson is all about exposing common stereotypes or tropes about Africa and its common portrayal as a continent of suffering and victimhood, and exploring alternative stories.

2. Media and NGO Portrayals of Africa.
   a. Using Ben Berman’s materials from his workshop for Primary Source’s Summer Institute on Modern Africa, I will introduce students to media literacy and how we must be mindful of the underlying (and sometimes more overt) messages about Africa that we see in various media.
   b. As a class, we will review the nuts and bolts of media literacy, as found on the handout he provided to Primary Source course participants.
      i. We will start by watching two advertisements, one from UNICEF and one from Oxfam International. Both of the ads have a similar purpose – to encourage viewers to donate money to help their causes – but use different and varying degrees of pathos to direct their audiences to act. Ask students to fill in the questions on the handout (in Berman’s materials) while they watch.
      ii. Discuss their reactions.
      iii. Next, we will examine short ads from a Namibian non-profit called NAWAL, which aims to educate men in Namibia about HIV/AIDS. Ask students to fill out the handout while watching and then discuss the differences they notice between the Western ads and the Namibian ones.
      iv. Discuss how any one advertisement is limited in its ability to provide a holistic view of a certain issue, as ads are often hampered by their length and specific
message. Perhaps use an American PSA or ad campaign to make this point. Old 1980s Anti-Drug PSAs might be useful. Connect this back to Adichie’s “Danger of a Single Story” from the day before to help emphasize this point.

v. Next, show students some counter-narratives to those we so often see in the West. Tell students that these are satirical and intended to poke fun at Western perceptions of Africans and of Westerners’ actions in Africa. Ask students:

1. What did you find effective about these spoofs?
2. What did you take issue with, if anything, in these spoofs?
3. Is satire an effective way to bring attention to issues around stereotyping? Why or why not?


a. In the final activity around media portrayals of Africa, students will be encouraged to examine Western media sources’ coverage of Africa versus African median outlets’ coverage. To begin, students will listen to parts of an interview between Tom Ashbrook of OnPoint and Anjan Sundaram who wrote the book Stringer: A Reporter’s Journey in Congo, 2014. You may want to play the entire interview, though it is 60 minutes, or just the first 6 minutes where Sundaram talks about the gross under-coverage of the continent and how stories with maximum deaths and horror are the only ones that get picked up in foreign media. The whole interview goes into more depth about how news from Africa is reported by foreign media outlets and how this serves to perpetuate narratives of Africa that center on victimhood and violence.

b. On their Chromebooks, students will next use learning materials and activities from Primary Source’s Media Literacy workshop, this part facilitated by Susan Zeiger, to explore differences between The New York Times’ and the BBC’s coverage of Africa and All Africa’s coverage.

i. Students will compare headlines from The New York Times and the BBC and All Africa. They will answer the question: Is there a difference in the character of the news and the reporting of stories in African newspapers as contrasted with western, non-African news organizations?

ii. Next, students will read one full All Africa news outlet article and answer the following questions:

1. What are the themes/topics of the story?
2. Who is the intended audience? What makes you think that?
3. How does this article present Africa and/or Africans?
4. To what extent does the story present Africa as non-monolithic—i.e. as a place of multiple perspectives and diverse experiences?

iii. Wrap Up with students: What are your major takeaways from this activity? How can we unsettle and complicate common narratives about Africa? About anywhere, really? How do you think knowing this will benefit you going into this unit?
Supporting Materials for Lesson Two: Media Perceptions of Africa

Binyavanga Wainaina’s “How to Write About Africa”
http://granta.com/how-to-write-about-africa/

Visible Thinking Routines
http://www.visiblethinkingpz.org/VisibleThinking_html_files/VisibleThinking1.html

OnPoint Radio Interview with Anjan Sundaram
http://onpoint.wbur.org/2014/03/12/congo-stringer-foreign-affairs-media
Media Literacy Workshop with Ben Berman and Susan Zeiger

Overview:
Today, we are going to think about the role of media literacy and its impact on our students’ understanding of contemporary Africa. In particular, we will:
1) Examine how media has shaped our students’ impressions of contemporary Africa;
2) Explore how Media Literacy can improve students’ critical thinking skills and understanding of Africa.

Agenda:
1) Overview and Hook
2) Media Literacy and NGO Videos
3) Media Literacy and the News
4) Debriefing

What is Media Literacy?
The medium is the message, wrote Marshall McLuhan back in the early sixties, and Media Literacy allows us to better able to understand the complexity behind the seemingly simple messages that we receive from newspapers, television, radio, internet and other forms of media. According to the Media Literacy Project, by paying as much attention to the medium as to the content, students are able to:

• Develop critical thinking skills
• Understand how media messages shape our culture and society
• Recognize what the media maker wants us to believe or do and name the techniques of
Rachel Otty, Cambridge Public Schools

persuasion used

• Discover the parts of the story that are not being told

• Evaluate media messages based on our own experiences, skills, beliefs, and values

Deconstructing the Message

One way to teach media literacy is to teach students to deconstruct a message is by comparing two different approaches towards the same goal. Watch how both of these videos present us with very different images of Africa even though they both have similar purposes.

Unicef
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XozrqJHA-yI

1) Make a list of images that you see in these videos. What impressions do these images give you of the people that they are portraying?

2) What emotions does the video make you feel? How do the images help contribute to those emotions?

3) Who is the intended audience? Why do you think the organization wants this audience to feel these emotions? What actions are they hoping these emotions will lead to?

Oxfam
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rs5eDzPRlek#t=11

1) Make a list of images that you see in these videos. What impressions do these images give you of the people that they are portraying?

2) What emotions does the video make you feel? How do the images help contribute to those emotions?

3) Who is the intended audience? Why do you think the organization wants this audience to feel these emotions? What actions are they hoping these emotions will lead to?
Considering the Audience

Another way to teach media literacy is to get students to think about how the audience influences the message. Watch these videos and think about why this organization chose these particular images for this set of commercials.

NAWAL: Strong Men
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OejBro4_mjk
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lZncJWZny5o
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=egVQn32-I8A

1) Make a list of images that you see in these videos. What impressions do these images give you of the people that they are portraying?

2) What emotions does the video make you feel? How do the images help contribute to those emotions?

3) Who is the intended audience? Why do you think the organization wants this audience to feel these emotions? What actions are they hoping these emotions will lead to?

4) How are these images of Africa different than the ones that we saw in the Western commercials? What accounts for the differences?
Exploring Limitations of the Medium

Another way to teach media literacy is to get students to think about how limited a single advertisement it is in terms of portraying a culture. Imagine that you are a student living in a different country and have never been to America – think about how this video would influence your understanding of America.

Stand up to Stand Your Ground
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kUKzDANF6QU

1) Make a list of images that you see in these videos. What impressions do these images give you of the people that they are portraying?

2) Imagine that you were a student in another country and had never been to America. What impressions would you have of America after watching this video?

3) In what ways would you say that this offers an accurate portrayal of America? Of your town or city? Of your personal experiences?

4) In what ways does this present an inaccurate or incomplete portrayal of America, your town/city or personal experience?

5) What is one example from media that you think offers an inaccurate or incomplete understanding of another culture?
Some Extra Resources:

Examining Responses and Counter-narratives

Another way to teach media literacy is to offer counter-narratives and African NGOs’ responses to how Africa is portrayed to western audiences. Explore the following websites and videos and examine what they take issue with and how they respond.

Websites that address the stereotypes and create alternative videos or media:
http://www.mamahope.org/unlock-potential/
http://afritorial.com/

Websites that address the stereotypes and create Spoofs:
Band Aid: Do they even know it’s Christmas?
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-w7jyVHocTk

Africa for Norway Commercial – Africa for Christmas
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pkOUcvzqb9o

Music Video: Africa for Norway
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OJlyuxm96k&index=2&list=RDpkOUcvzqb9o

Who Wants to be a Volunteer?
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ymcfIrj_rRc

Kenyan Sitcom
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZTFhFvo3gQI
Media Literacy and the News: Teaching with Global RSS Feeds

Newspapermap.com
http://newspapermap.com/

Using the format of a Google Earth map, newspapermap.com connects you with hundreds of news sources from around the globe. Each pin represents the website of a news outlet in its geographic location—its homepage and daily stories. Use this when students are studying multiple countries in a region or if you want to see how a top story is being reported in multiple countries simultaneously (such as the nuclear deal with Iran). You can also filter by language, so it is ideal for World Language classrooms: students can read French, Spanish or Mandarin news reports instantly!

AllAfrica.com
http://AllAfrica.com/

This RSS feed allows you to access news from over 130 African news outlets, updated daily; both French and English versions. It is linked to the Primary Source “Africa in the News” page.

“Africa in the News” tab from Primary Source’s Africa Resource Guide
http://resources.primarysource.org/africa

DIRECT LINK: http://resources.primarysource.org/content.php?pid=55754&sid=408072

Task #1: Is there a difference in the character of the news and the reporting of stories in African newspapers as contrasted with western, non-African news organizations?

Compare top Africa stories being reported today by NYTimes, BBC, and AllAfrica. What are the top stories of the day? What contrasts, similarities do you notice? Differences of emphasis, story choice?

Task#2: Choose & read a full text story from All Africa. 
Question prompts:
What are the themes/topics of the story?

Who is the intended audience? What makes you think that?

How does this article present Africa and/or Africans?

To what extent does the story present Africa as non-monolithic—i.e. as a place of multiple perspectives and diverse experiences?
Lesson Three: Aid and Development in Africa

Time Required: 3 Class Periods

Essential Questions: To what extent do current issues in Africa reflect past colonial policies? Why do many African nations struggle economically today? What signs of hope do we see on the continent?

Instruction and Primary Sources:
1. Do Now. To what extent is it the obligation of wealthy Western nations to address issues of poverty in Africa?
   a. Students will respond to this question in their notebooks. This question is posed assuming that students have already learned about European colonialism in Africa, African independence movements, and post-colonial economic history from the 1960s forward, including information about the IMF and World Bank and discussions around poverty and development.
   b. Discuss student replies.
2. Aid Effectiveness Stations Activity.
   a. Students will begin their interaction with the so-called aid effectiveness debate through an activity that will require them to move around to different stations, each presenting an aid scenario, questions, consequences, and follow up questions. This activity from the Global Competency Certificate Program, presented at the Primary Source Summer Institute on Modern Africa, helps students gain a deeper understanding of some of the complexities of aid and charity.
      i. After students have visited four of the stations and filled out their graphic organizers, have students return to their seats.
      ii. Ask: How did these case studies complicate your understanding of aid? Is all aid bad? Is there a danger in becoming complacent or cynical in light of this information? What ideas do you have about how to address poverty in a helpful, sustainable way?
3. Aid Effectiveness Debate.
   a. In a follow up to the aid stations activity, students will be assigned a side in the aid effectiveness debate. Using NPR’s 2007 panel about aid in Africa as well as articles by and follow-up conversations between Dambisa Moyo, Jeffrey Sachs, and William Easterly, and a study that focuses on three Zambian recipients of aid, students will gain a deeper understanding of what economic experts and recipients think about the role of aid in Africa.
   b. Students will split into three groups. One group will argue that aid in Africa is doing more harm than good, the other will argue that aid is doing more good than harm. Within these two sides, students will be assigned individual perspectives who support the assigned position. Each perspective will be assigned to a pair of students, who will go through the materials together in preparation for a debate on the third day. The third group will serve as judges who will arbitrate and render a verdict at the end of the in-class debate. In order to prepare for the debate, they will listen to excerpts from the NPR panel (as opposed to the entire piece) and will read Dambisa Moyo’s article in the Wall Street Journal and Jeffrey Sachs’ piece in the Huffington Post.
c. Over the next couple of days, students will listen to, watch, and read their assigned perspectives in order to become “experts” in this debate. Those in positions groups will note down the following information while going through their materials:
   i. Arguments to support your side
   ii. Counterarguments to challenge the other side
   iii. Responses to anticipated counterarguments and questions posed by the other side and by judges. Judges will be in charge of noting the following in preparation:
   iv. What are different ways that one might interpret this resolution?
   v. Anticipate best possible arguments and biggest potential holes for each side. What do you need to hear to be convinced?
   vi. Write at least 3 probing questions you anticipate wishing to ask during the debate.

d. After preparing, students will reconvene with the other members of their position. Together, they will write up opening statements and assign roles to group members – opening statement giver(s), counter-arguer(s), closing statement giver(s), and question respondents.

e. Lastly, students will assemble for the in-class debate. Students will take their positions in the room with their preparation materials and notes. Students/teachers will use the debate protocol to guide them through the activity.

f. Follow up assignment: Each student will submit a 2-3 page essay addressing the question: Does Aid do More Harm than Good? using materials from the debate (all perspectives will be provided to students) and other classroom materials.

4. African NGOs.

   a. To wrap up our study of aid and development, students will learn more about African NGOs working for sustainable economic and environmental change on the continent. There are a number of examples to choose from, but for the sake of choosing among many, I will show students a clip about the Green Belt Movement and the work Wangari Maathai did (and the organization continues to do) to help Kenyan women restore environmental degradation in Kenya while earning reliable and sustainable incomes for themselves and their families.

   b. After the clip, ask: How does the Green Belt Movement stand in contrast to some of the aid pitfalls you learned about earlier in the week? How does their work differ in focus, tone, and effectiveness from Dominion Farms (a corporation working for agricultural change in Kenya, as examined in the documentary Good Fortune)? How does their work represent hope and economic potential for Kenya and Africa more broadly? What more needs to happen to promote these changes?
Supporting Materials for Lesson Three: Aid and Development in Africa

Global Competency Certificate Program
Stations activity is not accessible unless a participant in the Primary Source course.

Aid Effectiveness Debate Materials

NPR Aid Debate Panel
http://www.npr.org/2007/12/12/17095866/is-aid-to-africa-doing-more-harm-than-good

“Why Foreign Aid is Hurting Africa” by Dambisa Moyo

A Conversation between Dambisa Moyo and William Easterly
https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL09F0E715F9DBAC80

“Aid Ironies” by Jeffrey Sachs
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jeffrey-sachs/aid-ironies_b_207181.html

“Development Aid and Its Criticisms: The View from Zambia” by Lindsay Morgan
www.cgdev.org/content/publications/detail/1422445

Green Belt Movement Clip
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BQU7JOxkGvo
Debate Protocol

In-Class Debate Protocol

Resolved: ___________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

1. Initial Preparation Time variable
   Affirmative (Group A)/Negative (Group B):
   (a) Arguments to support your side
   (b) Counterarguments to challenge the other side
   (c) Responses to anticipated counterarguments and questions posed by the other side and by judges
   Judges:
   (a) What are different ways that one might interpret this resolution? Consider both disciplinary and pedagogical perspectives.
   (b) Anticipate best possible arguments and biggest potential holes for each side. What do you need to hear to be convinced?
   (c) Write at least 3 probing questions you anticipate wishing to ask during the debate.

2. Debate Round 1 (Prepared presentations):
   Affirmative Opening Statement (a) 5 min
   Negative Opening Statement (a) 5 min
   Affirmative Counterarguments (b) 2 min
   Negative Response (c) 2 min
   Negative Counterarguments (b) 2 min
   Affirmative Response (c) 2 min

3. BREAK FOR FURTHER PREP 5 min

4. Debate Round 2:
   Q&A from judges to Aff and Neg (c) 10 min

5. BREAK FOR FINAL PREP 5 min

6. Debate Round 3:
   Closing Affirmative Statement 2 min
   Closing Negative Statement 2 min

7. Judges deliberate (while we reset classroom) and then render verdict; explain their thinking.

Additional Notes:

Participation: Each team member must visibly participate in the debate in a significant way. It is up to you as a team to decide how to accomplish this.

Sources of Evidence: It is up to you to decide what sources of evidence will be the most compelling – quotations from experts, historical/disciplinary arguments, pedagogical arguments, anecdotes from personal experience, etc. Regardless, you will need to be mindful and inclusive of what you have read for our class over the past several days.
Annotated Bibliography

"Africa Map." World Map. Harvard University, 7 Mar. 2014. Web. 17 Aug. 2015. A digital GIS mapping resource from Harvard that allows students to examine and create (if enrolled) layered maps. Useful for showing students the ethno-linguistic and geographic diversity of the continent and familiarizing themselves with the geography.


"Is Aid to Africa Doing More Harm Than Good?" NPR. NPR, 12 Dec. 2007. Web. 17 Aug. 2015. National Public Radio featured a panel of economic experts weighing in on the role of aid in Africa. Useful for students to compare and contrast perspectives to give them a more holistic understanding of this debate.


17 Aug. 2015. A counter-point to Moyo’s piece. Sachs has been actively involved in developing economies for decades and heralds particular aid efforts on the continent.


"Wangari Maathai & The Green Belt Movement." *YouTube*. The Green Belt Movement, 9 July 2010. Web. 17 Aug. 2015. Brief clip that highlights the development and environmental work of the Green Belt Movement. Useful for students to see how development can work well when done effectively and with the active participation and decision-making of those who are most impacted by aid.