

IR 357

Zanzibar: Politics, Culture, and Community Engagement

The islands of the Zanzibar archipelago 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. This course allows students to explore 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 lent by the many different cultures that have passed through the islands.

This course is held over a 7-week period in Zanzibar. The class combines seminar-style meetings and an community engagement experience at a local non-governmental organization (NGO), business, government office, or cultural center as well as tours of important cultural, historical, and environmental sites throughout the island. Through the course's readings and lectures, we aim to understand and appreciate the historical processes and cultural forms that allowed Zanzibar's diverse population to produce new forms of art, popular music, religious ritual, and fashion, new individual and collective identities, and new forms of social and political engagement. We study historical processes as models to help us appreciate and understand contemporary Zanzibar and it's relations to mainland Tanzania and the Indian Ocean world today. Through working with local groups, students learn about how these social, cultural, political, and economic issues continue to resonate in the ongoing struggles over identity, self and group expression, and power.

Course Goals

After taking this course, students should:

- Understand the basic history, geography, economy, social, and political 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 historical social, political, and economic issues in Zanzibar;
- Understand how religion, race, ethnicity, gender, and other social identifiers become politically salient;
- Understand how art, architecture, music, and other forms of visual and performing arts express identity in East Africa;
- Have a basic understanding of Islam and its social and political engagement;
- Have a greater understanding of how community organizations work and have developed an ability to reflect on community engagement.
- Improved written and verbal communication skills and critical thinking skills.

Hub Learning Outcomes

This course meets two of the Hub Learning Outcomes:

Individual in Community

*Students will analyze at least one of the dimensions of experience—historical, racial, socio-economic, political, gender, linguistic, religious, **or** cultural—that inform their own worldviews and beliefs as well as those of other individuals and societies.*

*Students will participate respectfully in different communities **such as** campus, citywide, national and international groups, and recognize and reflect on the issues relevant to those communities.*

- The course readings and class discussions provide students background on the historical development of Zanzibar's interconnected racial, religious, and national identities as well as ongoing cultural, religious, and political expressions of identity. In their journals, students are expected to reflect on both their homestay experience and their experience living with a Zanzibari family about the ways in which Zanzibaris understand themselves and express their identities.
- All students will participate in a community engagement opportunity in a local NGO, business, government office, or cultural center. Students are expected to approach both the community engagement project and homestay from an ethnographic standpoint, using these opportunities to reflect on issues of Zanzibari cultural and political identity.

Global Citizenship and Intercultural Literacy:

Students will demonstrate detailed understanding of at least two cultural contexts through foreign language or culture study at BU, participation in a language or culture living-learning community at BU, or study abroad. This will involve reflection on the challenges and pleasures students discover in orienting themselves in new and unfamiliar cultures.

- Students will gain an understanding of the cultural divide that exists in Zanzibar between those who consider themselves Swahili and part of the Indian Ocean world and those who think of themselves as African and part of the African continent. While both groups are overwhelmingly Muslim, each employs its religious practice and uses cultural symbols such as fashion to express its identity. These identities are also expressed in competing political parties and differential voting patterns. Students will also explore the degree to which this cultural/political identity maps onto a rural-urban divide. The readings expose students to the history, religion, culture, politics, and environment of Zanzibar in particular and Tanzania and East Africa more generally. Through the journals and final presentations, students are encouraged to reflect both on competing cultural identities within Zanzibar and to compare them to their own backgrounds and identities.

Course Requirements:

The course will include a mixture of lectures, discussion, experiential learning community engagement experience, and relevant field trips. Students are expected to participate actively.

Participation (20 percent) During each class, we use the assigned readings to address why an article is important, what is the author's perspective, and what are my goals in getting you to read it. Students are expected to read in advance and participate actively in class discussions. Students are also expected to attend and actively participate in all field trips.

Book Report (10 percent). Each student is required to choose one book from the supplemental list, read it, and write a 2-3 page report reflecting on what we learn about Zanzibar or Tanzania from the book and how it relates to the topics being explored in the class.

Journal (50 percent). Student should keep a detailed journal that concentrates on a particular community organization in Zanzibar as well as their homestay experience. The goal is to think deeply about your experiences in Zanzibar and how they relate to this particular topic. You will write down your experiences with the topic in your journal at least three or four times a week and expect your ideas to change overtime. Your journal should demonstrate your knowledge of the subject and your understanding of key concepts. You should refer to relevant course readings, lectures, and discussion. Talk to people, use your Swahili, and engage with Swahili culture. Write down key questions and things you find contradictory and confusing. Think originally and critically about issues. Talk to your host family, discuss ideas with members of the community, and visit historic sites. In other words, do your own on-the-ground research and be engaged with people in Zanzibar. The text *The Cultural Experience* is a great guide for how to use your community engagement experience (as well as your homestay and other experiences in Zanzibar) as a source of study and learning.

Final Presentation on Experiential Learning Project (20 percent). You will give a final 20-minute presentation on the organization or office you volunteered with and reflect on your experience with them.

Academic Code of Conduct Applies

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. You need to refer to the specific readings that inform your thoughts and project in your journals.

Course Schedule

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- Emily Ruete, *Memoirs of an Arabian Princess in Zanzibar*, Dover Publications, 2009.
- David McCurdy, James Spradley, and Dianna Shandy. *The Cultural Experience: Ethnography in a Complex Society*, Waveland Press, 2005.

RECOMMENDED SUPPLEMENTAL READING

- Laura Fair, *Pastimes and Politics: Culture, Community, and Identity in Post-Abolition Urban Zanzibar, 1890-1941*, Ohio University Press, 2001.
- Jonathon Glassman, *War of Words, War of Stones: Racial Thought and Violence in Colonial Zanzibar*, Indiana University Press, 2011.
- Melissa Graboyes. "Good Food, Ridiculous Diets, and a Well Fed Swahili: British Approaches to Food in Colonial Zanzibari Institutions." Boston: African Studies Center, Boston University, 2009.
- Andrew Ivaska, *Cultured States: Youth, Gender, and Modern Style in 1960s Dar es Salaam*, Duke University Press, 2011.
- Kjersti Larsen, *Where Humans and Spirits Meet: The Politics of Rituals and Identified Spirits in Zanzibar*, Berghahn Books, 2008.
- John Middleton. *African Merchants of the Indian Ocean: Swahili of the East African Coast*. Waveland Press, Long Grove, IL, 2004.
- Sarah Mizra and Margaret Strobel, eds. *Three Swahili Women: Life Histories from Mombasa, Kenya*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1989.
- Jeremy Prestholdt. *Mirroring Modernity: On Consumerism in Nineteenth-Century Zanzibar*. Boston, MA: African Studies Center, Boston University, 2006.
- Abdul Sheriff. *Slaves, Spices & Slavery in Zanzibar*. Ohio UP, Athens, 1990.
- Aili Mari Tripp, *Changing the Rules: The Politics of Liberalization in the Urban Informal Economy in Tanzania*, University of California Press, 1997.

Week 1: Historical Background of Zanzibar

Tuesday

- Emily Ruete, *Memoirs of an Arabian Princess in Zanzibar*, Dover Publications, 2009. Entire Book.

Thursday

- Randall Pouwels, "The East African Coast, c. 780 to 1900 CE" in Nehemia Levtzion and Randall L. Pouwels, eds. *A History of Islam in Africa*, Ohio UP, 2000. [Chapter 12]
- Jonathan Glassman, "The Creation of a Racial State," *War of Words, War of Stones*, Indiana University Press, 2011, pp. 23-49.

- Michael Lofchie, "The Party Conflict in Zanzibar," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 1963, v. 1 (2), pp. 185-207.

Saturday

Princess Salme Spice Tour of Zanzibar (9am to 2pm). Please meet in front of the Hiliki House.

Week 2: Community Placement

Tuesday

- Learning ethnographic observation and participant observation: Discussion of *The Cultural Experience*, Chapter 1-9.

Thursday

- Placement in Community Institution as a Volunteer. Beginning this week, students will spend Thursdays in community placement. The class will meet as a seminar on Tuesdays to continue to learn about Zanzibar and to discuss and process their community placements.

Possible Organizations for Placement Include:

Zanzibar Stone Town Heritage Society
 Dhow Countries Music Academy
 Practical Permaculture Institute East Africa
 Princess Salme Museum
 Cultural Arts Center, Zanzibar
 Sustainable East Africa
 Zanzibar International Development Organization
 Milele Zanzibar Foundation
 Zanzibar Investment Promotion Agency
 Zanzibar House of Representatives

Week 3: The Politics of Place: Understanding Stone Town

Tuesday

- Abdul Sheriff, "The spatial dichotomy of Swahili town: The case of Zanzibar in the nineteenth century," *Azania*, 2001, v. 36-37 (1), pp. 63-81.
- Prita Meier, "Architecture Out of Place: The Politics of Style in Zanzibar," *Swahili Port Cities*, Indiana UP, 2016, pp. 102-138.

Wednesday

Tour of Stone Town

Saturday

Zanzibari cultural performance – music and dance

Week 4: Culture and Belonging

Tuesday

- Laura Fair, “Dressing up: Clothing, Class and Gender in Post-Abolition Zanzibar,” *Pastimes & Politics: Culture Community, and Identity in Post-Abolition Urban Zanzibar, 1890-1945*, Ohio UP, 2001. [Chapter 2]
- Katrina Daly Thompson, “Discreet Talk About Supernatural Sodomy: Transgressive Gender Performance and Male Same-Sex Desire in Zanzibar Town,” *GLQ*, 2015.

Saturday

Jozani Forest Reserve Tour

Week 5: Contemporary East African Cultural Politics

Tuesday

- Julius Nyerere, “From Uhuru to Ujamaa,” *Africa Today*, Summer 1997, pp. 3-8.
- John S. Saul, “Tanzania 50 Years On (1961-2011): Rethinking Ujamaa, Nyerere, and Socialism in Africa,” *Review of African Political Economy*, 2012, Vol. 39 (131), pp. 3-27.
- Archie Matheson, “Maridhiano: Zanzibar’s Remarkable Reconciliation and Government of National Unity,” *Journal of East African Studies*, November 2012, pp. 591-612.
- Dan Paget, “Shrinking Space and Opposition Protest,” *Journal of Democracy*, 2017.

Saturday

Boat tour to Changu Island

Week 6: Culture and Development in Zanzibar

Tuesday

- Claire Mercer, “Reconceptualizing State-Society Relations in Tanzania: Are NGOs Making a Difference?” *Area*, September 1999, Vol. 31 (3), pp. 247-258.
- Brian Hoyle, “Urban Waterfront Revitalization in Developing Countries: The Example of Zanzibar’s Stone Town,” *The Geographic Journal* 2002 Vol. 168 (2), pp. 141-162.
- Fred Saunders, et al., “The changing social relations of a community-based mangrove forest project in Zanzibar,” *Ocean and Coastal Management*, 2010 vol. 53, pp. 150-160.
- Koen Stroeken, “Immunizing Strategies: Hip-Hop and Critique in Zanzibar,” *Africa*, 2005, vol. 74 (4), pp. 488-509.

Saturday

Jambiana Village Tour – environmental and development projects

Week 7: Final Presentations

- McCurdy, Spradley, and Shandy, *The Cultural Experience*, Part II: Student Ethnographies

Each student gives a 20-minute presentation on their community engagement experience. Students should introduce the organization, office, or business where they interned and reflect both on their own experience and on the organization itself. In their reflections, students are expected to explain how what they have learned through their interning experience relates to the course readings on Zanzibari history, culture, society, and politics.