

**ST. LAWRENCE UNIVERSITY KENYA SEMESTER PROGRAM
AFRICAN STUDIES 337/ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES 337/ANTHROPOLOGY 337 /
BIOLOGY 244 (1.5 UNITS, 5.4 CREDITS)
CULTURE, ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT IN EAST AFRICA
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SPRING 2008

INTRODUCTION

In this course we invite you to investigate three broad elements of the current East African situation, culture, environment and development. This is done through a combination of readings, lectures, group discussions and the three residential field components outlined below. The fourth component, an analysis of the complex issues encountered in the city of Nairobi, is based on your observations and experiences throughout your time in the city, whether resident at the Study Center or in your urban homestays. The fifth component is your Independent Study or Topical Field Course.

THE COURSE THEMES

CULTURE: As defined by the pioneer 19th century anthropologist E.B. Tylor as: “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (1958: 1, originally published 1871). Since Tylor wrote this, hundreds of anthropologists have written thousands of words on this topic; but as the following recent definition shows, the key elements of Tylor’s definition remain; “Behavior peculiar to Homo Sapiens, together with material objects used as an integral part of this behavior. Thus, culture includes language, ideas, beliefs, customs, codes, institutions, tools, techniques, works of art, rituals, and ceremonies, among other elements” (“Culture” Encyclopaedia Britannica. 2003. Encyclopaedia Britannica Premier Service, 07 Aug. 2003. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article?eu=118246>).

ENVIRONMENT: This may be defined as the totality of the surrounding external conditions--biological, chemical, and physical--within which an organism, community, or object exists. The term is not exclusive in that organisms can be and usually are part of another organism's environment. Thus one can speak of the environment as that within which humankind lives, i.e., separate and external; or, one can speak of humankind as a component of the environment: <http://www.cnie.org/nle/AgGlossary/letter-e.html>. The term `environment' cannot stand on its own and should always be used in combination with a given object, region or condition. Thus human environment can be defined as a set of natural, social, cultural values which exist in a given place and point in time that influences the material and psychological life of man. Thus, `environment' clearly means much more than nature and/or natural resources while the natural world is but one aspect of the total human environment. When using the term `natural environment' the point of reference should therefore always be made clear; i.e. humans require quite different (natural) environmental conditions than a bird, or a fish or a tree: www.jsdnp.org.jm/glossary.html

DEVELOPMENT: In its broadest context, to develop means to grow. However in a course of this kind, and in the discussions of life in Kenya and the contrasts with (for example) life in North America, we are essentially talking about economic development. A fairly ‘traditional’ definition of economic development is as follows: “The process whereby simple, low-income national economies are transformed into modern industrial economies. Although it is sometimes used as a synonym for economic growth, generally it is used to describe a change in a country’s

economy involving qualitative as well as quantitative improvement”. (“Economic development” Encyclopaedia Britannica. 2003. Encyclopaedia Britannica Premier Service, 07 Aug. 2003. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article?eu=1089965>>. In recent decades much attention has been paid to the qualitative aspects of economic development from, among others, the perspectives of both national and international equity, sustainability, quality of life and human rights. This is illustrated in the following quotation: “Development is a product of many things: good education, effective health and welfare services, good and open government, environmental sustainability, high rates of saving and investment, a dynamic private sector, a vibrant civil society and a healthy trading regime are all required”. (Ian Smillie in *The alms bazaar: non-profit organizations and international development* quoted on the website of New Zealand’s Volunteer Service Abroad (<http://www.vsa.nz.org>).

During your months in Kenya, you will have many opportunities to observe and experience elements of culture, environment and development, as well as the many relationships between them. You are required to record these in your journals, to raise questions about them in our discussions, and to discuss them in the written papers required for this course. We suggest that early in the semester, you identify some key elements that you individually will try to focus on throughout the semester, in the different components of this course. We are by no means suggesting that you should limit your observations to these elements, but you will have a more creative and structured intellectual experience if you attempt to create some focus for yourself amid the myriad of things you will see, hear and experience. **We would like to suggest that you chose at least FIVE elements, of which at least ONE should come from each of the three major course themes, culture, environment and development.** Note that we also expect you will identify and discuss linkages between your five selected elements. **Please let us know at an early stage if your departmental credit requirements are in conflict with this.** In the lists below, we provide some elements for you to choose from, though these are not intended to be exclusive and we welcome suggestions for other elements that you would like to focus on.

CULTURE	ENVIRONMENT	DEVELOPMENT
Child socialization, including initiation practices	Climate – rainfall, temperature, etc.	Government policies
Education (formal and informal)	Landforms	Role of aid agencies and NGOs
Status of women	Surface water – streams, rivers, lakes, swamps	Role of local organizations (civil society)
Courtship and marriage	Natural vegetation	Towns and cities
Position of the aged	Soils	Rural communities
Death and funerals	Natural resources – minerals, timber, fish, etc.	The transport system
Family structure	Wild animals	Telecommunications
Illness, health and healing	Domestic animals	Trade (external and local)
Mental illness	Birds	Energy sources (domestic and industrial)
Social status	Insect life	Industrial production
Music	Planted crops	Mining
Dance	Evidence of environmental degradation	Agriculture (crop farming)
Visual arts	Geology	Ranching (livestock rearing)
Subsistence systems –	Pollution	Forestry

hunting/gathering, livestock herding, crop farming		
Division of labor		Tourism
Food; preparation, food sharing, etc.		Land tenure
Property rights		Evidence of environmental degradation
Inheritance		Benefits of development – who gets them?
Crime and the legal system		Constraints to development
Manners/etiquette		Population increase, government policies and individual attitudes
Religion		Education – government policies, private initiatives
Clothing		Health – government policies, private initiatives
Housing styles and materials		
Other elements of material culture – imported and local		
Handicrafts		

MORE IDEAS OF YOUR OWN?

SOME EXAMPLES OF HOW THESE THEMES MAY PRESENT THEMSELVES DURING THE DIFFERENT COURSE COMPONENTS:

KABONDO:

Some women in Kabondo make pots; here we see the themes of handicrafts/local material *Culture*, as well as division of labor. Are they teaching their daughters to make pots? (child socialization and informal education) Where do they get the raw materials? (this takes us over to *Environment* – pot clay is a mineral resource) Where do they get the fuel for firing the pots – is this demand for fuel having a negative impact on the environment (evidence of environmental degradation)? And moving over to *Development* – as society changes and people begin to cook on gas or electric cookers, is there still a demand for these pots? Are the pots traded locally or over a long distance? Do the women make a reasonable livelihood from selling their pots? Are they changing style, materials, and techniques to take account of changes in the market?

AMBOSELI:

The Amboseli elephants are the most studied elephant population in Africa. They are also very team, individually named and are the main tourism attraction for Amboseli National Park. Because of the protection they have received their numbers has increased to more than threefold the park's carrying capacity with detrimental impacts on the park's environment and other wildlife species inhabiting the park. Over the last 20 years or so, the elephants have destroyed more than 90% of the trees in the park and have also caused widespread soil erosion. With elephants having destroyed their main habitats, many wildlife species, including the black rhino,

gerenuk and lesser kudu, are now locally extinct. The elephants also venture regularly outside the park and in doing so they can destroy a whole season's crops in just a few hours for a few farmers on daily basis. This scenario raises many questions: should the elephant population be reduced to levels that can be accommodated by the size of available land? Should elephants involved in regular raiding of crops be killed? Should people be compensated for the damage caused by elephants? If so, who should be? Are people justified in killing elephants that destroy their property?

THE CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN RIFT VALLEY:

We could begin here with *Geology* and *Landforms*: spectacular scenery in these areas has been formed by processes of faulting and volcanic activity over more than 20 million years. Landforms influence *climate* and the floor of the Rift Valley is a rain shadow area, with low rainfall and high evaporation rates, particularly in the Lake Magadi basin. The Lake Nakuru basin is at a rather higher elevation and more fertile, so we can contrast the *Environment* of these two lake basins. In pre-colonial times both basins were occupied by the Maasai people, whose *Culture* was based on nomadic pastoralism; this lifestyle survives in the Lake Magadi basin, where we will observe a lot about division of labor, housing, clothing, property rights. Traditionally their food was taken almost exclusively from their domestic livestock (milk, blood and meat) and they did not eat or kill most herbivores (food choices!), so they coexisted with wild animal populations. The Maasai were driven out of the Lake Nakuru basin at the beginning of the colonial era, and ranches and large scale commercial farms replaced the open grazing lands. Since then other forms of *Development* have occurred, including rapid population, the creation and expansion of Lake Nakuru National Park, and the growth of Nakuru town as a commercial and industrial center. What has the impact of these changes been on the physical environment and on people's lives? Members of the Shompole Group Ranch have recently embarked in an eco-tourism venture which they hope would generate extra income through tourism and selling of locally made handicrafts. Will such a venture have negative impacts of their *Culture*? Is tourism, combined with pastoralism a better option from a *Development* point of view or are they better off by sticking to pure pastoralism? Will the expected increase in wildlife numbers have some detrimental impacts of the *Environment*?

URBAN ISSUES, NAIROBI (AND OTHER TOWNS):

In Nairobi we will be able to observe how settlement has covered almost all available land, including quite steep slopes and swampy valley bottoms; what are the implications of this during seasons of very heavy rains? Evidence of *Environmental* degradation will not be hard to find; atmospheric, water and solid waste pollution. *Development* is an obvious element of urban life – government, business and commerce are all centered in Nairobi, and you will see plenty of examples of each of these, ranging from street vendors selling roast maize to glittering supermarkets. Think about policy – how does the government of Kenya and Nairobi City Council seem to be managing and directing urban development? Or mismanaging it? And as for urban *Culture* – keep your eyes and ears open – clothing, music, advertising, visual arts, education – it's all out there! Nairobi is one place to observe the indicators of social status and the gap between rich and poor.

INDEPENDENT FIELD STUDY:

By this stage, you should be able to make these links yourself, depending on where you will be located and the kind of organization you'll be working with.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSESSMENT:

Your grade for this course will be based on the following:

	ITEM	DUE DATE (by 10 pm unless otherwise stated)	TO BE HANDED TO	% OF TOTAL GRADE
1	Kabondo paper	5 February	Sinnary	10%
2	Amboseli	5 March	Sinnary	10%
3	Nakuru/Shompole paper	2 April	Sinnary	10%
4	Nairobi readings commentary/ analysis	26 March	Wairimu	15%
5	The Journal	During semester	Sinnary/Wairimu	15%
6	The IDS Journal	During semester	Sinnary/Wairimu	5%
7	Newspaper commentary – OPTIONAL – FOR EXTRA CREDIT	2 April	Wairimu	5%
8	IDS paper	13 May	Sinnary/Wairimu	15%
9	Class participation	During semester	Sinnary/Wairimu	10%
10	Group Presentations	During semester	Sinnary/Wairimu	10%
	Total			105%

GUIDELINES FOR THE DIFFERENT ASSIGNMENTS:

1, 2 and 3 The Field Component Papers:

In these papers we hope you will reflect upon and analyze what you read (including sources outside the reading package) as well as what you have now seen and experienced. The exact title of the paper is yours to choose, based on your own key themes/areas of interest (the minimum five elements of the course themes that are listed on page 2 of this handout). We will be available to discuss your paper titles and themes with you at any time during the semester – one time to do this is actually during the field component, when we can sit down together. Note that you do not need to feel that each paper should have an identical theme; you may be very interested in the position of women, or in treatment of the aged, or in attitudes to wildlife, or in environmental degradation, or in local markets, but you do not need to write about them in each of your papers. We would recommend that you vary your areas of interest a bit, though there may be underlying themes that you can compare between the three field sites. Some key points:

- At the beginning of your paper, make your theme/topic very clear to your reader; what are you discussing? Remember that a paper needs an introduction followed by the presentation of your data and argument, and ending with a conclusion.
- Your paper should be between 5 - 8 pages long, typed, double spaced, Times New Roman font, 12 point.
- Your arguments should be supported by specific references to published and unpublished sources; books, newspaper articles, your journals, conversations with your host family and other people. Follow standard bibliographic guidelines in citing your sources. An example of in-text citation for journals and conversations (pers. comm. which means ‘personal communication’) might be:

“Maasai from both Kenya and Tanzania meet regularly at the Shompole shopping centre, and are said to get on well together (Michael Lenaimado, pers. comm.). Market days are on Wednesdays and a wide range of food stuffs are for sale. I observed several kinds of beans, maize meal and dried maize kernels, as well as tomatoes, onions and green vegetables being sold, almost entirely by women (Nyamweru Journal 20th February 2004).”

Then in your ‘List of Works Cited’ at the end of the paper, cite as follows:

Lenaimado, Mike. Discussion at Oloika Camp site, 24th February 2004.
Nyamweru, Celia. Kenya Semester Journal.

- Due dates as listed on the table above; we will be happy to take in papers before the deadline. Late papers will NOT be graded.

4. The Nairobi Readings Commentary and Analysis:

You will be observing Nairobi during much of your time in Kenya; as soon as you arrived at the airport, this had already begun (we hope!). For your evaluation and analysis of your Nairobi experience, we would like you to do the following:

- Identify a theme/topic that you would like to have as the center of your commentary/analysis. Wairimu and Sinnary will be available to discuss the theme with you at any time before the paper is due. Remember the overall themes of this course – look for themes relating to Culture, Environment and Development, with a specifically urban focus.
- Locate at least six readings that address your chosen theme/topic. We have a wide selection of materials in the Study Center, including the Kenyan daily newspapers. TWO of your readings should be from daily newspapers; make photocopies of these articles and include them with your paper when you hand it in. In your paper, make **specific** references to these readings and relate them to your observations, interaction with your urban homestay family and other Nairobi experiences to comment on and analyze your theme/topic. You may want to comment critically on the points of view expressed in some/all of the readings – feel free to do so!
- Organization, length, citation style and due date – all the points above for the field component papers also apply.

5. The Journals:

We expect that many of you will be keeping your own personal journals, and we hope you will continue to do this. The journals that are required as part of the work for this course are **analytical and reflective** as outlined below. If you have personal or emotional issues that you would like to share with program administrators, please do this on an individual basis, either in writing or with a face to face conversation. For your program journals, we require the following:

- You are required to provide entries for **at least three days** of every seven day period, running from Monday through Sunday.
- Your journals should be seen partly as a record of important things or events that you saw, heard or experienced, and partly as a record of your thoughts, reflection and analysis of these points, and your identification of things that relate to the course themes (Culture, Environment and Development).
- Every entry should begin in a new page with the date on top of each page. First provide a summary of the events: what you did, saw or experienced. Then provide your comments/analysis/reflection, if possible relating it to the course themes. Following is an example on a journal entry:
 - **Observation:** When walking downtown this afternoon, I saw City Council security men arresting street hawkers and confiscating their property (You may provide more details of what happened).
 - **Statement of the problem and background information:** The Nairobi city council recently issued a decree to remove all hawkers from the city center and relocate them elsewhere (Provide details including citations of the sources of your information).
 - **Reflection/analysis:** The council argument is that hawkers make the streets

congested and dirty. My homestay father says they should all be deported back to their rural areas". I believe that at least they are earning an honest living (Provide details of arguments and counterargument and do not feel shy to state your own opinion. You can then discuss what policies should the government adopt to address the issue.

- Try and vary your reflections so that you cover a range of topics. Do not focus on one theme only; you may observe a car accident, the things on sale at the Maasai Market, a volcanic landscape, soil erosion on a deforested hill slope, a church service, popular music - the list is endless! But, as always, try and fit your observations and comments within the themes of the core course. Some of your observations may reinforce or contradict each other, and this can be very interesting. You may make a comment in Week 2 and later see a comparable thing that changes your perception or understanding of what you saw earlier. This kind of reflection will be extremely valuable - so read back in your journal and feel free to reflect on your own earlier reflections and observations.
- Avoid asking for clarifications in the journal. We expect you to do your research beforehand (newspapers, internet, academic literature, discussions, etc) and to submit complete entries that also include reflection and analysis.
- You may include personal experiences but such entries should always be accompanied by reflection and analysis.
- For your journals, use the binders and stationery provided by the program.
- Follow the schedule below for handing in your journal entries for grading. Detach the relevant pages, staple them together and place them in Wairimu or Sinnary's mailbox.

Due Date	Give journal to:
Fri. 2/11 - Before leaving for the Amboseli Trip	Wairimu
Fri. 2/25 - Immediately after the Amboseli Trip	Sinnary
Fri. 3/11 - Before leaving for the Nakuru/Shompole Trip	Wairimu
Fri. 3/25 - Immediately after the Nakuru/Shompole Trip	Sinnary
Sun. 4/10 - Before leaving for your IDS	Wairimu

6. The IDS/Topical Field Course Journal

The main purpose of this journal is to help you keep a concise and detailed record of your **official** activities during your IDS/topical field course together with a brief assessment of each day's activities, including suggestions on how to improve the IDS experience as well as advice to future students on how to make the best out of the experience.

- You are required to do daily entries. Each entry should include a summary of what you did that day including: a short description of all official activities (when, where, duration, who was involved, etc). You should then briefly evaluate each activity and include concerns, comments, analysis or any suggestions on how to improve the activity.
- You are not obliged to include entries for non-official activities. If it is your day off, your entry for the day could simply read "day off". However, feel free to document any fun activities that you want future students to know about.
- During the IDS the journals will not be collected but they should be handed in together with your IDS paper. If you would like to have your journals (the pages, probably not the binders) returned to you by mail after the semester ends, provide us with a self-addressed envelope and we will do this in June 2005).

7. Newspaper Commentary – OPTIONAL – FOR EXTRA CREDIT:

This is for those of you who would like to earn extra credit and also follow up a specific theme/topic in more detail. If you decide to do this, discuss your ideas with Sinnary and/or Wairimu as soon as possible. Sinnary's areas of expertise are on the side of Environment and Development; Wairimu's are on the side of culture and development, with special reference to family structure, issues of health and disease (including mental health), HIV/AIDS, problems of street children and the challenges of urban life. We would like you to:

- Identify a theme/topic and write a short introductory paragraph about it – this could be related to one of your themes/topics that you will be focusing on for one of your other papers, but this may also give you a chance to explore something else that you are interested in, that is not well covered in the existing field components (e.g. visual arts, Islam, Kenyan literature, to name just a few)
- During the semester, read the daily papers regularly and find at least five articles relating to your theme/topic; make copies of each of them.
- Write a critical commentary on these articles, showing how they deal with your theme/topic and what they tell about this issue and how it is perceived in the Kenyan media and by the Kenyan public.
- Length – 4 to 6 pages, Times New Roman, double spaced.
- Use standard citation style and provide a List of Works Cited (as well as the actual copies of the newspaper articles)
- **Due date: 6 pm on November 6th**, i.e. before you depart for your Independent Study. We will have this work graded and returned to you before you leave Kenya.
- For those of you who may be thinking of developing an Independent Study on a chosen topic when you return to the US, this might be a way of beginning to work out some ideas and collect information on a topic of interest to you.

8. Paper on your Independent Study:

The information shall be provided separately right before the IDS period.

9. Class Participation:

Attendance at all scheduled lectures, seminars and discussions (whether in Nairobi or in the field) is mandatory, unless you have a documented medical reason for absence. Your class participation grade will suffer significantly if you are absent without such a reason. The quantity and quality of your oral participation and responses to each other's participation will also contribute to your class participation grade, as will your responses to the 'Route Notes Question/Discussion' sessions following each of the field components (information on these will be handed out to you separately before each field component).

10. Group Presentations

The group presentations provide a venue for in depth discussions and exchange of ideas on some of the most prominent issues associated with the field components.

- Each student will choose two topics from two different components from the following list:
- Students who chose the same topic will work as a team to prepare a 20 minutes presentation to the rest of the class followed by a 20 minutes discussion by the class.
- The presentations are expected to be analytical and you are encouraged to present your own views as long as they are supported by solid facts. If the team is divided on the issue, the presentations could be in a form of a debate.

- Team members are encouraged to prepare for their presentations well in advance to discuss presentations and share responsibilities. The entire team will receive the same grade for each presentation. Grading is based on the level of preparedness, the facts, quality of the presented material, strength of the arguments and ability to answer student and staff questions.
- Your Literature sources should not be limited to the reading package but should also be supported by outside sources including published and unpublished sources; books, newspaper articles, your journals, conversations with other people.
 - **Kabondo:**
 - HIV and AIDS in Western Kenya and its impact on family households and structures.
 - The changing roles of Luo women in the face of urban migration by men.
 - The education system in Western Kenya: problems and challenges.
 - Positive and negative impacts of development in Luo land.
 - **Amboseli:**
 - The elephant problem in Amboseli and the way forward.
 - Pastoralism in the crossroads: Is pastoralism still a sustainable way of living?
 - Cultural Manyatta's or cultural suicide?
 - Should the group ranches be sub-divided into individually owned parcels?
 - **Nakuru/Shompole:**
 - Lake Nakuru: a National Park or a large zoo?
 - How Lake Nakuru is affected by the Nakuru town and human activities on its watershed?
 - Is the Maasai culture dying or evolving in the face of globalization?
 - Community conservation or community exploitation: who are the winners and losers in the so called "community based conservation and tourism" ventures?

A warning about academic honesty

During your time in Kenya you will be writing papers for several different courses (the core course and your two electives), and you will often be given considerable freedom to write on a topic of your choice. Also, several of the same issues are likely to come up in your discussions and readings for different courses, whether related to specific examples of Kenyan culture, development or environment. We would like to remind you that the St. Lawrence University Student Handbook provides a definition of academic dishonesty that includes "submission of work (papers, journal abstracts, etc.) which has received credit in a previous course to satisfy the requirement(s) without the knowledge and permission of the instructor of the second course". Please note that the course instructors for the core course and the various electives will NOT give credit for written work that shows a substantial degree of similarity with that submitted for another course. If there is a topic of great interest to you that you would like to cover in two different ways for different courses, please discuss this with BOTH the instructors in advance.