

Kenya

Islam and Swahili Cultural Identity

Learn or advance your skills in Swahili while exploring the diverse cultures of the East African coast brought together by the Swahili language and the prevalence of Islam.

Coursework

Islam and Swahili Cultural Identity Seminar

AFRS 3000 / 3 credits / 45 class hours

An interdisciplinary course conducted in English with required readings and relevant educational excursions. Students examine the profound impact of the Swahili language and Islam in the region and in interactions with other areas of the Indian Ocean basin. Lecturers are drawn from the University of Nairobi, the Swahili Cultural Centre, the National Museums of Kenya, the Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute, and the Zanzibar Indian Ocean Research Institute.

Seminar topics typically include:

Understanding Identity/ Imagining the Swahili

Ethnicity in East Africa; Swahili culture and its relations with communities of the interior; archaeological evidence of continuity and change in the region; origins of political and social harmony and conflicts in Kenya and Tanzania; precolonial, colonial, and post-independence history and politics; the role of external forces in the development of East African precolonial, colonial, and post-independence countries.

Islam and the Indian Ocean

East African Islam in relation to the broader Islamic world; globalization and the Indian Ocean; the sea and the Swahili; Indian Ocean slave trade; Omani sultanate; revolutionary Zanzibar; Islamic trading networks.

Coastal Identities

Coastal communities of Kenya: Mijikenda, Taita, Ormo, Somali; Islam and Islamization of the East African Coast; Swahili identity politics; development and revival of Swahili art, architecture, and aesthetic expression; Swahili gender dynamics; Swahili popular culture.

Islam and Contemporary Swahili Culture

Swahili civil society; Islam and education; faith-based development organizations; Muslim women and health; Muslim youth; informal

economies; urban issues in Kenya; Swahili media; constitutional reform and coastal communities; community-based environmental conservation; tourism and development; current affairs and future prognoses.

Educational Excursions

The program generally includes a three-week excursion to the Lamu archipelago, travel by dhow, and a visit to the twelfth-century site of Gede in Malindi, as well as an extended field visit to Tanzania, including coastal communities of the mainland and the islands of Zanzibar (Unguja and Pemba). Through hands-on explorations of Swahili history and culture, excursions offer students unique perspectives on everyday life of communities in coastal Kenya and beyond.

Intensive Language Study: Swahili

SWAH 1000–2000 / 6 credits / 90 class hours
Emphasis is on speaking and comprehension skills through classroom and field instruction. Following an in-country evaluation that includes oral proficiency testing, students are placed in intensive beginning and intermediate classes, with additional language practice taking place through homestays, lectures, and field visits, including a one-week homestay on Pemba, in the Zanzibar archipelago of Tanzania. Classes begin in Mombasa and continue during the village stay in Taita. On the three-week excursion to Lamu, language classes meet daily for five hours with an additional six hours of instruction each week provided through one-on-one tutorials with native Swahili speakers.

Research Design and Ethics

ANTH 3500 / 3 credits / 45 class hours
This is a course in the concepts of learning across cultures and from field experience. Introduction to the Independent Study Project, research design, and research ethics. Material includes cross-cultural adaptation and skills building; project selection and refinement; appropriate methodologies; field study ethics

AFRICA, SOUTH OF THE SAHARA



Credits 16

Duration Fall/Spring 15 weeks

Program Base Mombasa

Language Study Swahili

Homestays Mombasa, 2 weeks;
Pemba, 1 week

Rural Visit/Homestay Taita Hills, 10 days

Other Accommodations Hostels, guest houses, private homes, or small hotels

Independent Study Project 4 weeks

Prerequisites None

and the World Learning/SIT Human Subjects Review Policy; developing contacts and finding resources; honing skills in observation and interviewing; gathering, organizing, and communicating data; maintaining a field journal.

Independent Study Project

ISPR 3000 / 4 credits / 120 class hours

Conducted in coastal Kenya or in another approved location in Kenya appropriate to the project. **Sample topic areas:** women's employment in the informal sector; traditional boat building; Swahili marriage traditions; coastal archaeology; Islamic education; rural development on a community level; primary healthcare; Swahili wood carving; traditional healing; midwifery among the Swahili; new and traditional fishing practices of the Bajuni; Swahili oral history; effects of tourism on coastal cultures; drug abuse; HIV/AIDS on the Kenyan coast; an inquiry of Muslim opposites; Swahili poetry.