
Course I: Introduction to South Africa's Political History
Course Co-ordinator: Dr Schalk van der Merwe
26 – 30 June 2023



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Dr Schalk van der Merwe is a social historian and interdisciplinary scholar currently affiliated with the department of General Linguistics at Stellenbosch University (SU). He has lectured in African history at various departments, centres and institutions since 2005. His doctoral thesis focussed on the social history of recorded popular Afrikaans music. This served as the basis for his book, *On Record: Popular Afrikaans Music and Society, 1900-2017*. The book explored a wide range of themes; from emerging linguistic identities among Afrikaans speakers, apartheid's influence on the broadcasting industry, censorship, protest music and class tension, to politics in post-apartheid and postcolonial popular culture. He is also active in the popular media sphere and has worked on a number of historical documentaries, including a recent award winning series on the early life of Nelson Mandela. He is currently researching and writing on a wide range of themes, including postcoloniality in African popular culture and urban youth identities and music streaming platforms on the continent.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

During this course, you will be introduced to South Africa's unique 20th century history, and the interplay between the country's political, social and economic issues. Almost 50 years of social engineering cannot be dismissed easily, and continues to influence the future of our democracy. Understanding how the past impacts on the present allows us to better understand the issues and challenges currently facing the country. The course commences with a brief overview of South Africa prior to 1948, and continues with an overview of the apartheid era, including the National Party government's increasingly harsh discriminatory measures, as well as the struggle against oppression. We then explore the negotiated transition to democracy, which has often been described as a 'miracle'. The second part of the week includes an exploration and assessment of

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the process of reconciliation that followed the 1994 election, and some reflection on the challenges of nation-building facing the post-apartheid state. The course will be conducted through interactive lectures, discussions, video material, and a field trip to Robben Island prison, where Nelson Mandela and other liberation fighters were sentenced to serve a life sentence.

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COURSE STRUCTURE

Monday, 26 June	<p><i>Themes of the day:</i> Introduction to the Course Pre-Apartheid History Apartheid and the Struggle (part 1)</p> <p>08:15 – 11:00 Student Cards and Computer Registration 11:00 – 13:00 First Session 13:00 – 14:00 Lunch 14:00 – 16:30 Second Session 17:30 Walk from Dorm to Cinema 18:00 – 21:00 Film Screening & Discussion</p>
Tuesday, 27 June	<p><i>Theme of the Day:</i> Apartheid and the Struggle (part 2) The Negotiated Transition</p> <p>09:00 – 11:00 First Session 11:00 – 11:30 Tea / Coffee 11:30 – 13:00 Second Session 13:00 – 14:00 Lunch 14:00 – 16:30 Third Session</p>
Wednesday 28 June	<p><i>Theme of the day:</i> Truth and Reconciliation</p> <p>09:00 – 11:00 First Session 11:00 – 11:30 Tea / Coffee 11:30 – 13:00 Second Session 13:00 – 14:00 Lunch 14:00 – 16:30 Third Session</p>
Thursday, 29 June	Field trip to Robben Island (weather permitting)
Friday 30 June	<p><i>Theme of the day:</i> The Challenges of Nation-Building Test</p> <p>10:00 – 11:00 Test 11:00 – 11:30 Tea / Coffee 11:30 – 13:00 First Session 13:00 – 14:00 Lunch 14:00 – 16:30 Second Session</p> <p><i>Course evaluation will be done at the end of the second session.</i></p>

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COURSE CONTENT and READINGS

Readings will be made available on SUNLearn: <http://learn.sun.ac.za/>

PRE-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

Prescribed reading:

- ☐ Nigel Worden (2007) *The Making of Modern South Africa: Conquest, Apartheid, Democracy*. Malden, MA & Oxford: Blackwell (pp. 73-104)

THE APARTHEID STATE AND THE STRUGGLE – AN OVERVIEW

Prescribed reading:

- ☐ Leonard Thompson (2001) *A History of South Africa*. Johannesburg & Cape Town: Jonathan Ball (pp.182-233)
- ☐ Holland, H. (1990) *The Struggle: A History of the ANC*. New York: George Braziller (pp.120-127)

THE TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY: NEGOTIATING A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT

Prescribed reading:

- ☐ David Welsh and J.E. Spence (2011) *Ending Apartheid*. Harrow: Longman (pp.117-144)

THE TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY: THE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION

Prescribed reading:

- Piers Pigou (2002) “False Promises and Wasted Opportunities? Inside South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission” in D. Posel and G. Simpson (eds) *Commissioning the Past: Understanding South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission*. (pp37-65)
- Lynn Graybill (2002) “Amnesty: A Controversial Compromise” in *Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa: Miracle or Model?* Boulder, Co: Lynne Rienner (pp.57-75)

THE POLITICS OF IDENTITY, RACE AND NATION-BUILDING

Prescribed reading:

- Alexander, N. (2003) “Nation Building and the Politics of Identity” in Alexander, N. *An Ordinary Country – Issues in the Transition from Apartheid to Democracy in South Africa*. New York: Berghahn Books (pp.81-110)
- ☐ Links to recent debates will be posted on SUNLearn.

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EVALUATION

Your final grade for the course will be based on the following components:

Class Participation (5%)

Test (45%) – the test will be written on Friday, 30 June 2023.

Written Assignment (50%) – the written assignment must be submitted by Friday, 7 July 2023.

Written Assignment

You are required to submit a **1500 word** paper on one of the following topics:

TOPIC 1: Compare the role of the youth during the struggle against apartheid to the current wave of youth activism around campaigns such as “Black Lives Matter” and “Rhodes Must Fall”. Try to move beyond mere description and reflect on, for example, what this tells us about youth activism in general, and/or the continued discrimination against people on the basis of race.

TOPIC 2: Write an analysis of the film “Skin”, relating it to the class discussions and readings on race classification under apartheid, and the impact this had on the lives of ordinary people.

What should the format look like? Your essays must be typed using 1.5 line spacing. Remember to spell check and proofread your paper before handing it in.

How many and what types of sources should I use? Try to use a variety of sources, including books, online, journal and newspaper articles. Do not rely only on Internet sources, and use obvious websites like South African History Online selectively.

Do I need to reference my sources? Yes, you must use in-line referencing (use whatever system you are used to, as long as you are consistent). Make sure that you include the date of publication and page numbering for in-text referencing.

Submission process: **Please submit your paper by 17:00 on Friday, 7 July 2023 via SUNLearn.** Please note that **the file name should be your first and last names, e.g. Karen Smith.docx**

How will the papers be graded?

The following criteria will be used in grading your papers:

- ☐ Relevance to topic
- ☐ Strong introduction and conclusion
- ☐ Clarity, logic, coherence
- ☐ Arguments supported by evidence
- ☐ Free of errors in grammar, punctuation, word choice, spelling, and format
- ☐ Evidence of critical thinking and engagement with the topic

Plagiarism:

Please note that plagiarism in any form is regarded as a serious offence and will result in penalties. All written assignments must be uploaded onto Turnitin via SUNLearn. Students are also required to sign a plagiarism declaration.