

Boundless Horizons: African & Global Development Field Studies (Ghana)
Afst 400: African Field Studies: Ethnographic Narratives Across Ghana
GFC Hours 6-0
Spring 2026

Instructor (s): Dr. R. Apentiik and Dr. Motilola Akinfemisoye-Adejare
Phone no. Calgary: 403-473-4473 & 403-220-6688
Phone no. in Ghana:
Email (s): rapentii@ucalgary.ca & motilola.akinfemisoy@ucalgary.ca
Lecture Location: Calgary and Ghana

Prerequisite(s): None

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Through ethnographic narratives, this course introduces students to the diverse socio-cultural, economic, and political landscapes of Ghana. Students will investigate the customs, traditions, and daily lives of various ethnic groups, analyzing how these elements are influenced by and influence historical, social, and economic contexts. Combining theoretical frameworks with practical fieldwork, the course encourages students to engage with communities and produce their own ethnographic studies. This transformative travel study tour is designed to immerse students in the rich history and vibrant cultures of Ghana. The comprehensive journey offers an intensive exploration of both traditional rural and urban life

The course begins with an in-depth preparatory or pre-session phase in Calgary, offering students a robust introduction to Ghana's geography, history, and socio-cultural landscape. Topics span from colonial legacies to post-colonial trajectories, examining the intricate tapestry of politics, linguistics, and ethnic diversity. Key inquiries revolve around Ghana's developmental trajectory, navigating the echoes of its colonial past, and envisioning its post-colonial future.

The latter part of the course unfolds in rural settings near Bolgatanga and Tamale, facilitating intimate interactions with local communities. Here, students delve into the intricacies of village life, engaging with informants and immersing themselves in Ghanaian culture. Encouraged to

conduct independent research projects, students get the opportunity to document their experiences through ethnographic reports, visual documentation, or sound recordings.

The primary objectives of the course are twofold: to expose students to the diverse landscapes of traditional rural villages and urban centers in a developing country context, and to introduce them to the complexities of ethnographic and ethnohistoric field research. Through daily interactions with local villagers and immersive stays in these settings, students gain invaluable insights and practical experience in navigating cross-cultural dynamics.

In essence, African Studies 400 offers students a transformative journey of discovery, fostering a deeper understanding of Ghana's past, present, and future while honing their skills in ethnographic inquiry.

We would like to note that the students will be engaging in reflexive autoethnographic research and will not be directly interviewing participants or primary research. The assignment will involve reflecting on their experiences and engagements with community members. Consequently, ethical approval will not be required to complete the assignments in the course.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- understand the principles and methods of ethnographic research, develop critical thinking skills in conducting ethnographic research.
- critically analyze the socio-cultural, economic, and political dynamics shaping contemporary Ghanaian society.
- enhance their cross-cultural competency and intercultural communication skills through immersive field experiences.
- Reflect on personal values and biases and develop a greater awareness of one's positionality in relation to Ghanaian cultures and societies.
- Cultivate a sense of social responsibility and ethical engagement with global issues, particularly those related to Africa's development trajectory.
- Apply theoretical concepts and analytical frameworks learned in the classroom to real-world contexts, fostering a deeper understanding of African development processes and challenges.

READINGS AND TEXTBOOKS:

No textbook required for the course. Required readings accessible via D2L or electronically.

Other recommended useful journal resources: These journals listed below cover a wide range of topics within African Studies, including history, politics, economics, culture, development, and international relations

- African Affairs
- Journal of African History

- African Studies Review
- African Economic History
- Journal of Modern African Studies
- African Development Review
- African Studies Quarterly
- African Studies
- African Studies Bulletin
- African Studies Association Newsletter
- African Journal of Political Science and International Relations
- African Journal of International Affairs

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSESSMENT

1. Pre-departure Class Exercises/Assignments: 30%

The pre-departure exercises in African Studies 400 are designed to prepare students for the immersive field experience in Ghana. These exercises are crucial for laying a foundational understanding of the course content and ensuring that students are well-prepared for the cultural, social, and academic challenges they will face. Each student will review 2 academic articles on Ghana's geography, history, socio-cultural landscape, and the colonial and post-colonial trajectories. Articles for these assignments will be posted on d2l prior to the beginning of the pre-departure session. This thorough preparation ensures that students have a solid contextual understanding before they enter the field.

- **1st Assignment: 15%: Due on May 7, via D2L**
- **2nd Assignment: 15%: Due on May 8, via D2L**
 - **Length: Each summary should not be more 600 words**
 - **Assessment Criteria:** Comprehension of Ghana's geography, history, socio-cultural landscape, and the colonial and post-colonial trajectories; critical thinking; clarity of writing, and relevance to the course themes.

2. Research Proposal: 15%

- Students must prepare and submit an outline proposal to guide the development of their final research paper.
- Within the first week of the program, each student must schedule a meeting with one of the course instructors to discuss their research proposal. The proposal must be submitted physically or via **D2L by May 11, 2026**.

3. Participation: 15%: On-going

Participation and engagement are essential components of this course and are mandatory. To ensure that participation is fairly assessed we will use semi-structured and multi-faceted approaches outlined below:

Guidelines on what constitutes meaningful participation:

- Active and meaningful participation includes attending all program sessions, contributing to discussions, engaging in field activities, and collaborating with team members. Active participation also includes participating in seminars, guest lectures, site visits, and weekly debrief sessions. On a weekly basis, we will hold 1-2 hours debriefing sessions to reflect and exchange experiences, ask questions, share observations, express concerns, and offer insights on a wide range of issues including the socio-cultural, economic and political aspects of Ghanaian society. These sessions are designed to enhance students' collective understanding of course-related issues.
- We will use design participation sheets or digital tools to record individual contributions
- **Rubric:** active involvement, quality of contributions, teamwork, and professional behavior will be considered when assigning participation grades.

4. Final Research Paper: 40%: June 3, 2026 via D2L

- **Format and Structure:**
 - Title page with title, course code, instructor's name, student ID, and date of submission.
 - Maximum of 10 pages, double-spaced, in 12 pt Times New Roman font, excluding references, bibliographies, and appendices.
 - 1-inch (2.5 cm) page margins.
 - APA citation format for both in-text citations and the final list of references.
- **Guidelines:**
 - Robust introduction and conclusion with clear and appropriate recommendations.
 - Clarity and coherence of arguments, logical organization, high-quality grammar, and minimal typos.
 - Critical analysis appropriate for a 400-level course.
 - Well-informed review or discussion demonstrating understanding and application of relevant academic literature.
 - Use at least 5-8 different academic sources (peer-reviewed journals, articles, textbooks, technical papers).
 - Include additional information such as tables, maps, figures, or lists of interview questions as appendices.
 - Properly reference tables and figures within the text.
 - Cite direct quotes with page numbers.
 - Format in-text citations and references in APA style.
 - **Examples:**
 - **Book:** Desai, V., & Potter, R.B. (Eds.) (2002). *The Companion to Development*. 3rd Edition. New York: Routledge.
 - **Journal Article:** Cleaver, F. (1999). Paradoxes of participation: questioning participatory approaches to development. *Journal of International Development*, 11(4), 597-612.

- **Chapter in a Book:** Escobar, A. (1997). The Making and Unmaking of the Third World through Development. In M. Rahnema & V. Bawtree (Eds.), The Post-Development Reader (pp. xxx-xxx). London: Zed Books.
- **Online Newspaper Article:** Brody, J. E. (2007, December 11). Mental reserves keep brain agile. The New York Times. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com>.

Note:

- Substantial marks (3-4 points) will be deducted for improper citation and bibliographical formatting. The paper cannot be written solely from non-academic internet sources.
- The two instructors will be available in the field to provide ongoing guidance.

Points to Note:

- Completion of all assignments/components is required to pass the course. However, passing each component individually is not necessary to achieve a passing grade overall.
- Written assignments will be evaluated based on writing skills (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure), overall clarity, and organization.
- No extra credit or makeup work is available for this course.
- Retain an electronic copy of each assignment submitted. If requested, you must be prepared to provide a second copy of your assignment. Failure to provide a second copy may result in a zero grade for that portion of the course

POLICY ON MISSED EXAMS/ASSIGNMENTS & LATE SUBMISSIONS:

Late submissions may incur penalties, such as a downgrade in grade (e.g., from A- to B+) or a deduction of 5% of the total points for each day the item is overdue. Extensions will only be granted under extraordinary circumstances, such as serious illness or medical emergencies, religious observances, or domestic afflictions, excluding simply having too much other work to do. To request an extension, you must fill out the extension request form posted on D2L and submit it to me at least two weeks before the assignment's due date. If you miss a deadline for assignment submission, it is your responsibility to contact the instructor via email within a 24-hour period with legitimate reasons or excuses. If your reasons are accepted, you must be prepared to submit the assignment within a week, and it is at the instructor's discretion whether to allow the submission. While specific supporting documentation is not required, you may choose to provide documentation for an exemption or special request to support your situation. This may include, but is not limited to, evidence of a prolonged absence from a course requiring participation or a missed course assessment due to an activity. Students are encouraged to submit documentation that supports their situation. The decision to provide supporting documentation that best suits the situation is at your discretion. Falsifying any supporting documentation will be treated seriously and may result in disciplinary action in accordance with Academic Discipline regulations or the Student Non-Academic Misconduct policy.

Deferral of the registrar-scheduled final exam requires Registrar approval <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/exams/deferred-final-exams>

Reappraisal of Graded Term Work: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/i-2.html>

Reappraisal of Final Grade: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/i-3.html>

Department of Anthropology and Archaeology Grading Scheme:

A+	95 – 100%	B+	80 – 84.9%	C+	67 – 70.9%	D+	55 – 58.9%
A	90 – 94.9%	B	75 – 79.9%	C	63 – 66.9%	D	50 – 54.9%
A-	85 – 89.9%	B-	71 – 74.9%	C-	59 – 62.9%	F	< 50%

Land Acknowledgement

The Department of Anthropology and Archaeology acknowledges the traditional territories of the people of the Treaty 7 region in Southern Alberta, which includes the Blackfoot Confederacy (comprising the Siksika, Piikani, and Kainai First Nations), as well as the Tsuut’ina First Nation, and the Stoney Nakoda (including the Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Wesley First Nations). The City of Calgary is also home to Métis Nation of Alberta, Region 3.

Respect for Diversity and Territorial Acknowledgment

Our classrooms view diversity of identity as a strength and resource. Your experiences and different perspectives are encouraged and add to a rich learning environment that fosters critical thought through respectful discussion and inclusion.

COURSE POLICIES

Course sharing websites and copyright:

Classroom teaching and learning activities, such as lectures, discussions, presentations, etc., conducted by both instructors and students, are protected by copyright and are the intellectual property of their respective authors. All course materials, including PowerPoint presentations, outlines, and other resources, are also subject to copyright protection and remain the intellectual property of their respective authors.

Students enrolled in the course are permitted to take notes and make copies of course materials solely for their own educational purposes. However, students are prohibited from reproducing or distributing lecture notes and course materials publicly, whether for commercial or non-commercial purposes, without obtaining express written consent from the copyright holder(s).

Please feel welcome to discuss with me any aspect of the course requirements or package you think is unclear to you.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services; SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For additional information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit <https://live-ucalgary.ucalgary.ca/student-services/access>. Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor or the Department Head. The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at <https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/university-policies-procedures/accommodation-students-disabilities-procedure>.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY

Academic integrity is the foundation of the development and acquisition of knowledge and is based on values of honesty, trust, responsibility, and respect. We expect members of our community to act with integrity. The University Calendar includes a statement on the principles of conduct expected of all members of the university community (including students, faculty, administrators, any category of staff, practicum supervisors, and volunteers), whether on or off university property. This statement applies in all situations where members of the university community are acting in their university capacities. All members of the university community have a responsibility to familiarize themselves with the principles of conduct statement, which is available at: www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html.

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

The University of Calgary is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect.

Academic dishonesty is not an acceptable activity at the University of Calgary, and students are **strongly advised** to read the Student Misconduct section in the University Calendar at: www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k-3.html. Often, students are unaware of what constitutes academic dishonesty or plagiarism. The most common are (1) presenting another student's work as your own, (2) presenting an author's work or ideas as your own without adequate citation, and (3) using work completed for another course. Such activities will not be tolerated in this course, and students suspected of academic misconduct will be dealt with according to the procedures outlined in the calendar at: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/university-policies-procedures/student-academic-misconduct-procedure>

For students wishing to know more about what constitutes plagiarism and how to properly cite the work of others, the Department of Geography recommends that they attend Academic Integrity workshops offered through the Student Success Centre: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/learning/academic-integrity>

INSTRUCTOR INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Course materials created by professor(s) (including course outlines, presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the professor(s). These materials may NOT be reproduced, redistributed or copied without the explicit

consent of the professor. The posting of course materials to third party websites such as note-sharing sites without permission is prohibited. Sharing of extracts of these course materials with other students enrolled in the course at the same time may be allowed under fair dealing. Information on Instructor Intellectual Property can be found at <https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/university-policies-procedures/intellectual-property-policy>

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND PROTECTION OF PRIVACY ACT

Student information will be collected in accordance with typical (or usual) classroom practice. Students' assignments will be accessible only by the authorized course faculty. Private information related to the individual student is treated with the utmost regard by the faculty at the University of Calgary.

COPYRIGHT LEGISLATION

All students are required to read the University of Calgary policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright (<https://ucalgary.ca/legal-services/university-policies-procedures/acceptable-use-material-protected-copyright-policy>) and requirements of the copyright act (<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html>) to ensure they are aware of the consequences of unauthorized sharing of course materials (including instructor notes, electronic versions of textbooks, etc.). Students who use material protected by copyright in violation of this policy may be disciplined under the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy.

SUPPORTS FOR STUDENT LEARNING, SUCCESS, AND SAFETY

Please visit the Registrar's website at: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/course-outlines> for additional important information on the following:

- Wellness and Mental Health Resources
- Student Success Centre
- Student Ombuds Office
- Student Union (SU) Information
- Emergency Evacuation/Assembly Points
- Safewalk

TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE (see Itinerary)

It should be noted the schedule is subject to minor changes and revisions

Schedule/Dates	Topic, Activity/Issues, Readings and other important dates
<p>Pre-session Week 1:</p>	<p>Overview of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • instructors’ expectations for student behaviour and responsibilities, course structure, grading requirements reading materials, and safety protocols. <p>Overview of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ethnographic research methods including the key concepts in ethnography: participant observation, field notes, and interviews, and ethical considerations in ethnographic research • Ghana’s geography, history, and cultural in continental context. • Discussion of individual Project Proposal <p><u>Required Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be posted
<p>Wk2:</p>	<p>Topics to be covered: See Program Itinerary</p> <p><u>Required Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be posted
<p>Wk3:</p>	<p>Topics to be covered: See Program Itinerary</p> <p><u>Required Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be posted
<p>Wk4:</p>	<p>Topics to be covered: See Program Itinerary</p> <p><u>Required Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be posted