

An Ethnographic Vista on Tanzanian Life and Culture

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Millsaps College

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East Africa is an important region on the African continent, but it is a part of the world with which students and others in the United States are often almost entirely unfamiliar. This course will offer the students the opportunity to gain a deep and rich firsthand understanding of life, history, economics, and culture in East Africa. This course will begin on the Millsaps College campus with a three-day introduction to Tanzanian history and culture as well as the Swahili language. However, the main component of the course will be comprised of a four-week study trip to Tanzania that will allow students to engage the contemporary realities of Tanzanian culture and economics. These experiences will be accented by various trips and activities designed to further students' understanding of the rich and complex history of East Africa.

Course Materials:

Students will need the following materials:

1) A sturdy, bound journal

2) A reader containing course readings (This reader will include selections from *A History of Tanzania*, *Changing the Rules*, *The Rise and Fall of Swahili States*, *The World of the Swahili*, *Performing the Nation*, *A Plague of Paradoxes*, and *Matengo Folktales*)

Course Objectives:

1) Historical Consciousness: This course is designed to develop students' historical consciousness, both by requiring them to delve deeply into an often understudied area of the world and by asking them to engage different forms and competing versions of history (e.g., local vs. national vs. international)

2) Global and Multi-cultural Awareness: The nature of this course means that it will necessarily raise issues of global and multi-cultural awareness for students. However, the students will also engage in certain activities that will introduce them to specific ideas, issues, and problems that will prompt reflection upon cultural differences and global inequalities, particularly as these relate to their own positions within the world.

3) Reasoning: Immersion in a different culture, language, and environment can be an incredibly stimulating and bewildering experience. Through journaling, reflection, and conversations, students will seek to make sense of a range of experiences and ideas. This may lead them to question some "facts," reasons, and explanations that they previously

accepted. It may also lead them to ask what, if any, limits there are in applying reason and logic to the real, lived world.

4) Ethnographic Sensibility: An ethnographic viewpoint implies a particularly engaged approach to the study of lived culture and history. This program will cultivate that viewpoint in students and encourage them to explore the deep understanding as well as the uncertainties that come with the paradoxical position of participant-observation.

Course Requirements:

1) Journal: Daily reflection in a journal is a crucial component in the overall success of the program. Journaling will allow students to reflect on their experiences and to organize their thoughts for conversations with group members and Tanzanians. Journal entries will account for 50% of students' grades in the course.

2) Active participation: Students must be prepared to participate actively and fully in all parts of the program, from the on-campus orientation to market exercises to group discussions at the end of each day. Active participation will account for 30% of students' grades for the course.

3) Reflective paper: Students will be required to submit a reflective paper on an aspect of Tanzanian culture of their choosing toward the end of the study trip. This paper will account for 20% of students' grades for the course.

Course Schedule:

May 10-12 On Campus Introduction to Tanzanian History and Culture, Swahili, Ethnographic Sensibility, and the Practical Side of living and traveling in Tanzania

June 2-29 Study Trip in Tanzania (see attached sheet for tentative schedule)