

# **Culture, Conflict and Transformation in Southern Africa**

## **32.110/6 credits**

### **Outtatown Discipleship School, a program of CMU**

#### **Course Syllabus 2007/2008**

**Director: Paul Kroeker (B.Sc., M.A., Th.M. Regent College) in consultation with academic country partners in South Africa**

#### **Course description:**

Beginning with lectures in Pretoria and Cape Town, followed by the stories of individuals who have lived through the recent transitions in South Africa, students will be introduced to the issues of conflict and social transformation in South Africa. They will experience first hand the varied perspectives that come from the diverse cultures, while they live and work with the four main people groups in South Africa; those identified as the Whites, the Blacks, the Coloreds, and the Indian population. They will be introduced to the history of Apartheid, the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the current outcomes that can be seen in people's lives.

#### **Educational objectives:**

- To explore the transformation taking place in South Africa in terms of religious, cultural, economic and social change.
- To understand the complexity of what is taking place in SA by listening to the stories of four main people groups, in order to gain varied perspectives on "truth and reconciliation" and the ways in which a unified story or history of South Africa must be sensitive to the perspectives of many.
- To contrast and interpret what they experience through readings, guided discussions, lectures by eminent historians and theologians who know the story intimately, and the people that have experienced this story first hand.
- To gain an understanding of the similarities and differences in the treatment of indigenous people groups in both South Africa and in Canada.
- To examine the role religion has played in South Africa, both in terms of oppression, but also in terms of healing and reconciliation.
- To analyze one's own religious understandings in the context of such diversity and to consider Christian views of peace, justice, grace, mercy and forgiveness.
- To compare the nature of interpersonal conflict and conflict resolution with issues of social, political conflict on a larger scale and to make connections with conflict and conflict resolution that occurs between racial or cultural groups and between nations.

#### **Consultation and Lectures by Country Partners in South Africa:**

Prof. P G J (Pietre) Meiring Ph.D. - U of Pretoria, member of TRC

Rodney Dreyer M.A. – U of Cape Town, Inter-personal, Inter-racial Conflict Resolution

Johan Horn Ph.D. – UCSA, Trainer for student youth movement across Africa

Pastor Mpho Putu M.A. - IDASA Citizen Project for the Government of South Africa

## **Assignments and Evaluation:**

### **First Semester Introduction to issues in South Africa**

- One day session with lectures, assignments and discussion on HIV/AIDS in Africa
- Lectures on the history of Africa in general and the more recent history of South Africa in greater detail
- One week of research, presentations and discussion on the history of South Africa, the nature of apartheid, the cultural diversity in South Africa, and a context for stories and experiences that will be part of second semester.
- During the first semester the students will spend one week with an aboriginal people group in Canada. During this time, lectures, discussions, various ceremonies, guided museum visits, and personal stories will form the instructional portion of the program. This study of exclusion, discrimination and marginalization in Canada is designed to prepare students to compare and contrast these processes in an international context. Students will live and serve within these communities providing a context for the stories they hear.
- Assigned questions, group discussion, journaling, and some research will allow for the articulation and evaluation of what they have learned.

### **Second Semester Weekly Journal Assignments**

Journal assignments and integrated discussions will take place throughout the semester with a final one week debriefing session in South Africa prior to departure.

At the end of each week (or 2 weeks in some cases) assigned questions will be given to the students in order to encourage deeper processing of what they saw, what they learned about the people/culture/environment/economic situation/emotional situation and what the student learned about their own character and passions. Assigned questions are specific to the experience of that portion of the program.

### **Example of an assignment following the experiences in Soweto and Pretoria:**

1. Using your five senses, compare and contrast the communities of Soweto and Pretoria
2. After reading Kaffir Boy and spending time in South Africa, how has your view of this nation been confirmed or contradicted?
3. In what ways (either subtle or obvious) do you see God working in both the black and Afrikaaner communities?
4. How do we truly love and extend grace to Afrikaaners instead of judging their past/present attitudes?
5. As a Black South African, or as an Afrikaaner South African, what steps could you take to bridge the gap between the two cultures?
6. What similarity do you see between South Africa and the Canadian context?
7. Upon your return to Canada, how can you continue responding to the diversity of needs in our own country? Be specific.

## **Book Study**

Required reading of a novel that tells the story of apartheid followed by discussion and a written response to the material in the text.

*Mathabane, Mark. Kaffir Boy: The True Story of a Black Youth's Coming of Age in Apartheid South Africa. Toronto: Free Press, 1986.*

Students will engage in discussion and will be given questions that lead to a written response comparing and contrasting the time in the Soweto with a Black community with their time in Pretoria with a White, Afrikaans community.

In addition to the Book Study Assignment, the students engage in small group discussions according to the chapter they felt was most meaningful. Each small group discusses what they found significant about the chapter with one person recording what the group says. Then, the small group presents their findings to the larger group in creative instructional ways (song, skit, interpretive dance, etc).

### **Example of assignment questions for Kaffir Boy:**

1. Give a short summary of the story
2. What elements of Johannes' character helped him rise above the situation faced by blacks in South Africa? What other factors helped him?
3. How can his story inspire other people in similar situations?
4. What about his story inspires you (spiritually, vocationally, personally)?
5. In preparing for South Africa, what surprised you about the brutality and racism that existed just 10 years ago?

### **Evaluation and grading (pass/fail)**

First semester research and presentation on SA	10%
First semester week with aboriginal peoples group	10%
Written journal responses to lectures and book reading	20%
Journal responses to four cultural groups	20%
Evidence of cultural engagement	20%
Self evaluation in consultation with your mentor	20%

### **Background to culture, conflict and transformation in Southern Africa:**

South Africa can be described as an emerging democracy, following the end of apartheid in 1994 and the establishment of a democratic system in 1996 that has extended democratic rights and privileges to the non-white majority. This provides a unique opportunity for students to experience the transformations taking place and to examine the implications of these changes in terms of religious, racial, political, social/cultural and economic aspects of South Africa.

### **Educational Methodology:**

An initial introduction to the history of South Africa takes place in the first semester through reading, research, discussion and selected guest lecturers. A visit with a Canadian indigenous group will assist in the study of similar issues in South Africa. Then in South Africa, the students are immersed in four main cultural groups that represent the major story of change taking place in this country:

- **The South African Black Indigenous Community** - The students will live in the indigenous black community represented by the Soweto district in Johannesburg. This district was formed as a massive labor pool for white South Africa during apartheid, and became the centre of violence prior to 1994 as blacks engaged in what they call “the struggle” for South Africa. Living within this urban black community and helping to serve in some of the nearby rural communities, the students will hear first hand the effects of apartheid on the family, on communities, and on the economic well being of these people. The students will see evidence of government strategies to rectify the current situation but their dominant impressions will undoubtedly indicate that meaningful transformation is slow in coming. Of greater importance may be the hope that can be seen in the black religious community that has dealt with issues of grace and forgiveness from the past and is working in practical effective ways to provide healing, education, housing and employment that will lead to the transformation of homes and neighborhoods.
- **The White Afrikaans Community** – The second chapter to this story will take the students from the labor pool in Johannesburg to the centre of the Afrikaans white community in Pretoria. As part of their education they will actually ride the “gospel train” that takes them from one world to another. Established in the 1600’s by Dutch settlers, this community traces its story in terms of victory over the Zulu’s, and the work of God to establish a Christian community in South Africa. Living with families that are part of the conservative religious community they will visit the Voortreker monument, and listen to some of those in this community that feel that privilege and opportunities are being lost in this exchange. During this time in Pretoria, the students will attend lectures at the University of Pretoria and that will cover some of the efforts of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to deal with the atrocities of the past and to move South Africa toward a meaningful peace for the future.
- **The Colored Communities of South Africa** - A third chapter will be the stories they hear from the colored community in the area of Strandfontein, near Cape Town. Traveling there through the heart of South Africa the students will experience the terrain of this remarkable country. Living with families that were identified as “colored” during apartheid due to mixed parentage, the students will hear the stories of those who had connections to two other communities in South Africa, but were refused membership in either one. Despite a rather complicated story that often differs from one house-hold to another, a rough pattern emerges that allows students to see some of the social and economic dimensions of life before and after the

changes taking place in 1994, and the issues of grace and forgiveness that will be unique to this group of people.

- **The Indian Community of South Africa** – Traveling up the Garden Route, along the Indian Ocean and the East Coast of South Africa, the students will make their way to the city of Durban. Here they will meet the largest Indian community outside of India. Many are the offspring of slaves brought to South Africa by the British. Others are part of a wider immigration taking place from India and Pakistan to join this community due to cultural affinities and greater opportunity in an industrious group of people. Again, they will encounter stories of the past and the present that provide further interpretation and a new perspective on the transformation taking place in South Africa.

The issues that students face in this program will be intense and provocative. They will encounter contrasts in living situations that are disturbing and hard to deal with. It is only through the effective guidance of their own mentor and the interpretive assistance of those who know the story well, that students will be able to make some sense of what they experience. The educational experience will be dramatic and long lasting, but we hope that through careful interpretation of the information, that students will gain perspectives that will lead to significant personal growth and long term decisions in terms of career and lifestyle that will lead to greater social justice and provide hope for the future.