

## **AFS 389 - Africa & the 'Natural Resource Curse'**

**Kristin D. Phillips**

Department of Anthropology

Emory University

AFS 389, "Africa & 'the Natural Resource Curse'" (cross-listed with Anthropology, Environmental Studies, and African-American Studies) explores the idea of a "natural resource curse" or "the paradox of plenty" in Africa. This concept refers to the seeming paradox that countries and regions with an abundance of natural resources (specifically non-renewable resources like minerals and fuels) tend to have *less* economic growth and worse development outcomes than countries with fewer natural resources. My aim as Piedmont Project participant was to re-orient the conceptual structure of my existing course around the concept of sustainability. Applying this conceptual frame to the three cases that are explored in the class (rubber in the nineteenth Century Belgian Congo, oil in the Niger Delta, and diamonds in Sierra Leone) will allow the class to deal more consistently with all three pillars of sustainable development: people, planet, and profit.

To accomplish this I have re-worked two key aspects of the syllabus. First, very early in the course, we will examine the concept of sustainability (derived from the Brundtland Commission's Report) and the history of sustainable development in order to set the stage for the social and environmental justice frame of the course. As a way of grappling with the complexity of this concept, we will discuss it in the context of a film on the politics of oil production in Nigeria (a topic we will return to later in the course), titled *Sweet Crude*. Second, in relation to each case we explore (rubber, diamonds, and oil), we will examine the impacts of different strategies of exploitation for: diverse groups of people and their social relationships; for a sound environmental future, and for economic sustainability and social justice. Students will be expected to approach each case having read the material and prepared thoughts on the tensions and complementarities between these three prongs of sustainability.

During the course of the workshop I was also able to articulate an additional challenge I have faced with the course that I wanted to address during my revision of the syllabus. In this course, students often are confronted with frustrations and disillusionment when they are faced with the facts about how natural resource exploitation has been carried out on the African continent, and about their own role as consumers in this history. I decided I wanted to incorporate more opportunities for them to explore the question of "What can I do?"

The oil unit has already proven especially fruitful for discussing the global implications of corporate activity on the African continent and for asking students to consider their own responsibility as consumers at home. Following the Piedmont Project workshop, I have realized how much more I could do in this unit to concretize students' understanding of their own responsibility and own sense of efficacy in making change and creating awareness. Toward this end, I have added readings to this unit and a "Carbon Footprint Assignment" to the semester's workload.

I am grateful for the opportunity to have been a part of these conversations, for the time it granted me to mindfully incorporate these issues in my course, and for the sustainability resources that were shared by other faculty and by community leaders. I look forward to incorporating other reading and ideas from the workshop into my other courses here at Emory. Thank you!

**AFS 389 / AAS 385 / ANT 385 / ENVS 385**  
**Africa & the 'Natural Resource Curse'**

**Dr. Kristin Phillips**

Mondays 11:30-2

107 Anthropology

Instructor: Kristin D. Phillips, Ph.D.

Office Location: 305 Anthropology

Email: kdPhill@emory.edu

Office Hours: 2:30-3:30 on Mondays

*Firstly, I strongly oppose the idea that Africa's key characteristic is her poverty. She is the victim of her riches. I would rather we talk about pauperization than poverty. In talking of pauperization you pinpoint the mechanisms...*

- Character in Abderrahmane Sissako's *Bamako* (2006)

*Note that my argument...is emphatically not that mineral resources 'cause' war and corruption – the reductionist and ahistorical 'resource curse' argument lately promoted by authors such as Jeffrey Sachs and Andrew Warner (1995) and Paul Collier (2000). My argument, rather, is that high levels of violence and disorder (always with their own complex historical causes) are more compatible with certain sorts of capital investment than is usually acknowledged...*

- James Ferguson, *Global Shadows*

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

In this seminar we will draw on anthropological, historical, geographical and postcolonial literatures to consider the idea of a “natural resource curse” or “the paradox of plenty” in Africa. Focusing on historically “bloody” resources in central, western, and eastern Africa (rubber, oil, and diamonds) we will explore the history of natural resource exploitation in colonial and postcolonial African contexts and the political, social, and economic landscapes this exploitation has produced. Through anchoring our exploration in the concept of sustainability, we will consider the impacts and implications of natural resource exploitation in Africa for (1) *People* (diverse individuals and groups and the social health of their relationships); (2) *Planet* (a sound environmental future); and (3) *Profit* (economic sustainability and social justice). Readings will include perspectives from scholars, journalists, international organizations, governments, and grassroots organizations. Concepts and phenomena to be explored critically include sustainability, commoditization and the production of value; neoliberal economics, violence (physical and structural); gendered and age-related experiences of suffering; health and environmental impacts of resource extraction; wealth distribution; economic governance, and human rights.

### **TEXTS (Required):**

- Adunbi, Omolade (2015). *Oil Wealth and Insurgency in Nigeria*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Hochschild, Adam (1999). *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Frost, Diane (2012). *From the Pit to the Market: Politics and the Diamond Economy in Sierra Leone*. New York: James Currey Press.

- Speth, James (2008). *A Bridge at the End of the World: Capitalism, the Environment, and Crossing from Crisis to Sustainability*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

**TEXTS (Optional):**

- Ferguson, James (2006). *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order*. Durham: Duke University Press.

**FILMS (Excerpts to be viewed in class)**

- *Africa: Voyage of Discovery – Episode 6 (This Magnificent African Cake)* (1984, Great Britain)
- *Diamonds of War: Africa’s Blood Diamonds* (2007, USA)
- *Energy War* (2007, USA)
- *Sweet Crude* (2007, USA)
- *When China Met Africa* (2010, USA)
- *White King, Red Rubber, Black Death* (2004, Belgium/UK)

**ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING**

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| Map Quiz  | 10%       |
| Class Participation (graded twice in the semester): | 10% + 10% |
| Class Facilitation:                                 | 10%       |
| Midterm Examination:                                | 30%       |
| Final Paper & Presentation:                         | 30%       |

**Class Participation:**

This class will be taught as a seminar, and its success depends on your coming to class prepared, ready to participate constructively and thoughtfully in discussion. You are expected to attend all class sessions and to have done the reading in advance of class. For the semester, participation counts for 20% of your total grade. I will grade participation twice during the semester (at midterm and at the end). Giving you your grade for the first half of the semester allows you to receive feedback on the extent to which you are meeting expectations for participation, and gives you the chance to turn around that participation grade in the second half of the semester. Your class participation will be graded based on the *quality* of your oral contributions in class. Part of the way I will assess quality is in the way you constructively engage your fellow students to promote learning in the classroom.

In assessing quality, I look at (1) active participation, (2) demonstration in your comments and questions that you have done the reading for each class, and (3) a good faith effort to engage with your peers and class material in a way that promotes everyone’s learning, both in small group work and the larger class. If you exceed expectations or are exceptional in this regard, you will earn a 10 or a 9. If you are meeting or barely meeting these expectations, you will earn an 8 or a 7, respectively. Not meeting expectations will result in an even lower grade. Sleeping, texting, and using social media in class are unacceptable and count against your grade.

## Map Quiz

This quiz will test your knowledge of country locations, geographic features, and colonial powers. For the quiz, you will be expected to be able to:

- Fill in a blank map of Africa with:
  - 1) the names of all African countries (Sub-Saharan , North African, and Island\*\*)
  - 2) Niger, Zambezi, Congo, and Nile Rivers;
  - 3) Lakes Victoria and Tanganyika;
  - 4) Great Rift Valley, Kalahari Desert, and Sahara Desert;
  - 5) and the Atlantic Ocean, Indian Ocean, Gulf of Guinea, Red Sea, and Mediterranean Sea.
- Name the colonizing country that held control over the territories that comprise the now independent nations named above (chart uploaded on Blackboard in Course Documents).

Notes to above:

- \* The former name of the Democratic Republic of Congo is Zaire.
- \*\* Western Sahara is not an independent country, but claimed by Morocco.
- \*\*\* There are five small independent island nations offshore Africa: Sao Tome & Principe and Cape Verde in the Atlantic Ocean and the Comoros, Seychelles, and Mauritius in the Indian Ocean.
- \*\*\*\*Ethiopia and Liberia are the two countries generally considered to have not been colonized.

**Class Facilitation:** On Monday February 9, you will sign up for one of 6 class facilitation groups who will lead the class discussion for one session later in the semester. Your group should meet in advance of the class session to plan a way to teach/highlight the major points of the readings/topics assigned. This should include both a set of discussion questions and topics as well as a format for the class (the format could be structured by small group discussion, a debate, video clips, and/or the presentation of helpful context for the discussion). You will be graded on the thoughtfulness and creativity of your preparation and presentation and ability to stimulate discussion among your peers.

**Examination:** A midterm examination will test your comprehension of major course concepts and understanding of historical, political and geographic contexts, based on readings, lectures, and class discussions.

## Carbon Footprint Assignment

The objective of this assignment is to help link your own role as a consumer to the politics and violence of oil extraction on the African continent. It is also to help you identify concrete steps you and others can take to reduce the demand for oil. The assignment has two parts.

- Take online quiz: How Big is your Ecological Footprint?  
<http://myfootprint.org/subscription.php> (costs \$1) - You should plan to allow an hour to take the quiz, to reflect on your answer, and to set 3 goals for how you might reduce your carbon footprint in the future. We will discuss the results of your quiz in class. Note – you will need to be able to estimate the approximate distances you drive and fly for this calculation.
- You will take the next 3 weeks to put these goals into action, and then reflect on your experience/success/challenges for the assignment due in Week 12.

**Final Paper:** Finally, the class paper (10-12 double-spaced pages--12 point font) should explore a particular case relevant to natural resource wealth and exploitation in Africa. Students will have a session with the African Studies librarian to familiarize themselves with sources that will become useful in writing this paper. Sources for this paper must include books, research reports, journal articles, or other scholarly publications, in addition to internet citations. In the final 2 weeks of the class, the students will present summaries of their class papers.

**GRADE SCALE:**

|    |        |    |       |
|----|--------|----|-------|
| A  | 95-100 | C  | 74-76 |
| A- | 90-94  | C- | 70-73 |
| B+ | 87-89  | D+ | 67-69 |
| B  | 84-86  | D  | 60-66 |
| B- | 80-83  | F  | 0-59  |
| C+ | 77-79  |    |       |

**WRITING GUIDELINES:**

Please edit your work carefully and check for spelling/typographical errors before turning it in. My assumption is that as an Emory student, you are a strong writer, but that all of us – undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty can benefit from support with our writing. With this in mind, I encourage you to familiarize yourself with and make use of the Emory Writing Center’s services whenever you feel you need outside support with writing. It is located at 537 Kilgo Circle (tel: 727-6451; website: <http://writingcenter.emory.edu/> can be of assistance) and there is a satellite office on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of Woodruff Library (behind the circulation desk).

**ACADEMIC HONESTY:**

Article 4 of the Emory Honor Code details Emory’s definition of academic misconduct which includes plagiarism and “seeking, using, giving, or obtaining unauthorized assistance or information in any academic assignment or examination”. As a faculty member it is my responsibility to report any suspected breach of the Honor Code to the Honor Council or Dean of the College. If you have questions about the Honor Code, you will find more information at: [http://college.emory.edu/home/academic/policy/honor\\_code.html](http://college.emory.edu/home/academic/policy/honor_code.html).

**ATTENDANCE POLICY:** Attendance at every class meeting is required. Please notify me of any absence due to illness or emergency in advance whenever possible. While missing class may sometimes be beyond your control, repeated absences (and repeatedly arriving late to class) will impact on your final grade. Late work without prior agreement will be lowered ½ letter grade for each day beyond the deadline. If and when you must miss class, it is your responsibility to find out from a classmate what you have missed and to get notes. Should you have additional questions after you have checked with a classmate, feel free to follow up with me.

**SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS:**

Students with disabilities should contact me to discuss any accommodations needed to fulfill the course requirements and achieve learning objectives. In order to receive reasonable accommodations, students should certify their eligibility through the Office of Disability

Services (ODS) located at 110 Administration Building (tel: 727-9877; TTY: 355-1293; web: <http://www.ods.emory.edu>).

### **CLASS SCHEDULE\*\***

\*\*subject to change – please check Blackboard frequently for updates

#### **Week 1 - Natural Resources and the Idea of Africa**

- The Syllabus (come to class with any questions)
- Ferguson, J. (2006). *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order*. Durham: Duke University Press.
  - “Introduction - Global Shadows: Africa and the World”. Pp. 1-24.
  - Chapter 1: “Globalizing Africa? Observations from an Inconvenient Continent”. Pp. 25-49.
- Wainaina, Binyavanga (2005). “How to Write about Africa.” *Granta* 92.

#### **In Class**

- Oil Drilling in Africa Could Lead to ‘the Resource Curse’ - [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S\\_WG-qEygo0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S_WG-qEygo0)

#### **Week 2 – The Pillars of Sustainable Development: People, Planet, Profit**

- Brundtland Commission’s Report - Chapter 2: Towards Sustainable Development . (From A/42/427. Our Common Future: Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development) <http://habitat.igc.org/open-gates/ocf-02.htm#I>
- Speth, James (2008). *A Bridge at the End of the World: Capitalism, the Environment, and Crossing from Crisis to Sustainability*. New Haven: Yale University Press. Excerpts
- Rogers, Peter, Kazi Jalal, and John Boyd (2006) “From Malthus to Sustainable Development” in *An Introduction to Sustainable Development*. Harvard University Press: 20-41.

#### **In Class**

- Film excerpts from *Sweet Crude*

#### **Week 3 - The Idea of the Natural Resource Curse / African Environments**

- Humphreys, Macartan, Jeffrey Sachs, & Joseph Stiglitz (2007). *Escaping the Resource Curse*. New York: Columbia University Press.
  - “Introduction: What is the Problem with Natural Resource Wealth?” 1-20.
- Tim DiMuzio, “The Real Resource Curse and the Imperialism of Development,” *Suomen Antropologi* 35 (1) (2010): 94–97.
- Maddox, Gregory (Ed.) (2006). In *Sub-Saharan Africa: An Environmental History*. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO.
  - Pp. 1-14. “African Environments and the Origins of Humanity”.

#### **In Class**

- Map Quiz

#### **CASE ONE: RUBBER**

#### **Week 4 - Colonialism and the Foundations of Extraction / Rubber and the Belgian Congo**

- Iliffe, John. *Africans: The History of a Continent*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. Chapter 9: “Colonial Invasion.” pp. 193-218.
- Hochschild, Adam. *King Leopold’s Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa*. New York: Houghton Mifflin. Chapters 1-6: 1-100

#### In-Class

- Film: *Africa: Voyage of Discovery Episode 6: This Magnificent African Cake* (1984)
- Sign up for one reading facilitation group (in class)

#### **Week 5 - Rubber and the Belgian Congo**

- Hochschild, Adam. *King Leopold’s Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa*. New York: Houghton Mifflin. Chapters 7-15: 101-234.
- Harms, Robert. “The End of Red Rubber: A Reassessment.” *The Journal of African History* 16, no. 1 (1975): 73-88.

#### In-Class

- Film – *Congo: White King, Red Rubber, Black Death*.
- Guiding question for today’s class (please come to class ready to respond): How did political and economic structures and interests shape the way that natural resources were exploited in this case? What were the implications for the diverse groups of people involved and their social relationships? What were the effects on the environment? What types of mobilization or social action might have changed the outcomes of this history (or at least shifted its trajectory)? What would sustainability have looked like in relation to rubber production in the nineteenth century and/or in the present?

#### **Week 6 - Postcolonial Extractions / Commodities, Value, and the Social Life of Things**

- Cooper, Frederick (2002). *Africa Since 1940: The Past of The Present*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. Ch. 5: Development and disappointment: social and economic change in an unequal world, 1945-2000, pp. 99-118.
- Appadurai, Arjun (1986). Ed. *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
  - “Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value”. Excerpt.
- Frost, Diane (2012). *From the Pit to the Market: Politics and the Diamond Economy in Sierra Leone*. New York: James Currey Press.
  - Pp. 1-7 (on diamonds)

#### In Class

### **CASE TWO: DIAMONDS**

#### **Week 7 - Politics and the Diamond Economy in Sierra Leone**

- Frost, Diane (2012). *From the Pit to the Market: Politics and the Diamond Economy in Sierra Leone*. New York: James Currey Press.
  - Introduction
  - Chapter 1: Colonialism, Post-Colonialism & Resource Predation

#### In-Class:

- **MIDTERM EXAM**
- Film – *Diamonds of War: Africa’s Blood Diamonds* (2007).

## **Week 8 - Politics and the Diamond Economy in Sierra Leone**

- Frost, Diane (2012). *From the Pit to the Market: Politics and the Diamond Economy in Sierra Leone*. New York: James Currey Press.
  - Reading Facilitation Group Presentation #1
    - Chapter 2: The Political Economy of Diamonds, Governance & Civil War
    - Chapter 3: Digging for Diamonds
  - Reading Facilitation Group Presentation #2
    - Chapter 4: The Grass Roots and Social Organisation
    - Chapter 5: Diamond Wheeling & Dealing

### In-Class:

## **Week 9 - Corruption, Politics, and the Diamond Economy in Sierra Leone / The Democratization of Mining? African Artisanal Miners**

- Frost, Diane (2012). *From the Pit to the Market: Politics and the Diamond Economy in Sierra Leone*. New York: James Currey Press.
  - Reading Facilitation Group Presentation #3
    - Chapter 6: Parallel Economies, Global Criminal Networks & Sierra Leone Diamonds
    - Chapter 7: Conclusion: The New ‘Scramble for Africa
  - Bryceson, Deborah Fahy, Eleanor Fisher, Jesper Bosse Jonsson & Rosemarie Mwaipopo (2014). *Mining and Social Transformation in Africa: Mineralizing and Democratizing Trends in Artisanal Production*. London: Routledge.

### In Class

- Guiding question for today’s class (please come to class ready to respond): How do contemporary political and economic structures and interests shape the way that diamonds are exploited? What are the implications for the diverse groups of people involved and their social relationships? What are the effects on the environment? What types of mobilization or social action might change the outcomes of this history (or shift its trajectory)? What would sustainability look like in relation to contemporary diamond production?
- Film – *How to Rob Africa*

## **Week 10 - – Oil, Climate, & Sustainability**

### Read:

- Mitchell, Timothy (2011). *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil*. London: Verso. Excerpts.
- Mackay, David (2009). *Sustainable Energy without the Hot Air*. Cambridge: UIT Cambridge. Excerpts.

### Carbon Footprint Assignment

- Take online quiz: How Big is your Ecological Footprint?  
<http://myfootprint.org/subscription.php> (costs \$1) - You should plan to allow an hour to take the quiz, to reflect on your answer, and to set 3 goals for how you might reduce your carbon footprint in the future. Will discuss your quiz in class. Note – you will need to be able to estimate the approximate distances you drive and fly for this

calculation. You will take the next 3 weeks to put these goals into action, and then reflect on your experience/success/challenges for the assignment due in Week 12.

### **Case Three: Oil**

#### **Week 11 – Oil, Politics, and Insurgency in Nigeria**

- Adunbi, Omolade (forthcoming). “Chapter 1: Sweet Crude: Neoliberalism and the Paradox of Oil Politics”, in *Oil Wealth and Insurgency in Nigeria*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

#### **In Class:**

- *Sweet Crude*
- Guest Lecture (skype) with Prof. Omolade Adunbi (University of Michigan)

#### **Week 12 - Oil, Politics, and Insurgency in Nigeria**

- **Reading Facilitation Group Presentation #5**
  - Adunbi, Omolade (2015). *Oil Wealth and Insurgency in Nigeria*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. Excerpts
  - Apter, Andrew (2005). *The Pan-African Nation: Oil and the Spectacle of Culture in Nigeria*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Excerpts
    - Chapter 8: "Death and the King's Henchmen"

#### **In Class:**

- *Sweet Crude*
- Guiding question for today's class (please come to class ready to respond): How do contemporary political and economic structures and interests shape the way that oil is exploited and consumed? What are the implications for the diverse groups of people involved and their social relationships? What are the effects (long-term and short-term; local and global) on the environment? What types of mobilization or social action might change the outcomes of this history (or shift its trajectory)? What would sustainability look like in relation to contemporary energy production?

#### **Week 13 – Re-Considering the Resource Curse /What Can I Do?**

- Watts, Michael (2004). “Resource Curse? Governmentality, Oil and Power in the Niger Delta, Nigeria”. *Geopolitics*, 9 (1): pp. 50-80.
- Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate (2008). *Resource Curse or Blessing? Africa's Management of its Extractive Industries: Hearing before the Subcommittee on African Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Relations*. United States Senate. One Hundred Tenth Congress. Second Session.
- Re-Read Tim DiMuzio, “The Real *Resource Curse* and the Imperialism of Development,” *Suomen Antropologi* 35 (1) (2010): 94–97.

#### **\*\*Carbon Footprint Assignment Due**

#### **Week 14 – Student Presentations**

#### **\*\*Final Papers Due**