

THE EDUCATION UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG
Course Outline

Part I

Programme Title	: Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Language Studies
Programme QF Level	: 5
Course Title	: Creativity, Culture, and Experiential Learning in East Africa
Course Code	: CUS2038
Department	: Department of Literature and Cultural Studies (LCS) and Department of Cultural and Creative Arts (CCA)
Credit Points	: 3
Contact Hours	: 39
Pre-requisite(s)	: Nil
Medium of Instruction	: English
Course Level	: 2

Part II

The University's Graduate Attributes and seven Generic Intended Learning Outcomes (GILOs) represent the attributes of ideal EdUHK graduates and their expected qualities respectively. Learning outcomes work coherently at the University (GILOs), programme (Programme Intended Learning Outcomes) and course (Course Intended Learning Outcomes) levels to achieve the goal of nurturing students with important graduate attributes.

In gist, the Graduate Attributes for Sub-degree, Undergraduate, Taught Postgraduate, Professional Doctorate and Research Postgraduate students consist of the following three domains (i.e. in short "PEER & I"):

- Professional Excellence;
- Ethical Responsibility; &
- Innovation.

The descriptors under these three domains are different for the three groups of students in order to reflect the respective level of Graduate Attributes.

The seven GILOs are:

1. Problem Solving Skills
2. Critical Thinking Skills
3. Creative Thinking Skills
- 4a. Oral Communication Skills
- 4b. Written Communication Skills
5. Social Interaction Skills
6. Ethical Decision Making
7. Global Perspectives

1. Course Synopsis

This course has a 7-nights/8-days study trip to the East African island of Zanzibar at its core. Focusing on the art and culture of Zanzibar, the course is structured around five main cross-cultural themes: the slave trade and Taarab music; the tensions of multiculturalism; tourism and tourist art; Chinese-African cultural interactions; and cultural conflicts related to gender, sexuality and identity. The course introduces students to the role played by the Zanzibar International Film Festival and its films, to the musical traditions of the island, to the Tingatinga paintings that abound in the streets of Stone Town, to the distinctive sounds and practices of Taarab music, and to the postcolonial writings of the Nobel prize winning Zanzibari author, Abdulrazak Gurnah. Life writing by a Zanzibari princess offers students further insight into Zanzibar's historical role in the slave trade. Students will acquire the ability to situate the selected artistic works and cultural practices in relation to broader issues of colonialism, postcolonialism, gender, race, and migration. With China increasingly involved in Africa, and African communities increasingly visible in China, students will explore reasons for engaging with the culture of East Africa, documentary films serving as prompts for discussion. During the study trip to Zanzibar, students will work with the EdUHK course leaders and with local Zanzibari trainers and students to produce creative work, in groups, in response to one of the five selected themes. The creative work will be publicly shared on the final evening of the trip to Zanzibar, on the rooftop of the Maru Maru hotel, overlooking the Indian Ocean. By the end of the trip, students will have acquired a conceptual framework for implementing ethical cross-cultural collaboration and for sustaining respectful transcultural communication in the China/Hong Kong/East African context. They will have acquired a global awareness for engaging with issues such as colonialism, postcolonialism, gender, race, and migration in the context of East Africa, and with global challenges and complexities. The course encourages critical thinking about power dynamics, historical legacies, and social justice issues on a global scale.

Five cross-cultural or intercultural themes structure the students' preparation for the study tour to Zanzibar, and their work while on the island of Zanzibar (in groups, with local experts and local students, and under the supervision of their EdUHK course teachers). Each theme identifies a specific form of cross-cultural or inter-cultural connection and is linked to a form of artistic expression that is unique to or especially salient in East African, Swahili, or Zanzibari culture.

To establish the context for Hong Kong students' engagement with Africa, students will initially be introduced to postcolonial and neocolonial theory and to a variety of materials that reflect on Africa's role in Hong Kong and China, and on China's role in Africa.

I. The Slave Trade: Taarab Music

The Dhow Countries Music Academy in Stone Town, Zanzibar, is dedicated to preserving Taarab music as the traditional music of Zanzibar. Brought to Zanzibar by spice and slave traders, Taarab evolved to become a fusion of different cultures—African, Arab, Persian, and Indian—and is anchored today in poetic lyrics in the Swahili language. An important form of heritage culture, Taarab music is currently challenged by the musical tastes of younger generations, tastes shaped by global influences. Under this theme, students will learn about the role of the Omani sultans in the slave trade, the role of the British in emancipating slaves on Zanzibar, and the decisive contribution of Siti Binti Saad (1880-1950, the African daughter of freed slaves) to the evolution of Taarab music. Working

with the Dhow Countries Music Academy, students will learn about the history of Taarab and the musical instruments on which it relies. The continued impact of the slave trade, including on artistic expression on Zanzibar, will be explored. Students will visit the monument to slaves by Scandinavian artist Clara Sörnäs, will read the “Manifesto” produced by the Zanzibar International Film Festival, inviting filmmakers to engage with the legacy of the slave trade, and will watch the recent Omani-produced film, “House of Wonders”, which seeks to redeem the reputation of the slave traders. They will also hear the recorded discussion, at the 2024 Zanzibar International Film Festival, of the controversial “House of Wonders” film. For the sake of context, students will watch the debate-oriented documentary, “Why Slavery?” produced by Emmy Award-winner Mette Hoffman Meyer as part of her “Why?” series. Often regarded as a phenomenon of the past, slavery, Hoffman Meyer reminds us, is a pressing current problem of global significance.

II. Zanzibar: The Heart of the Multicultural Silk Road

Throughout history, Zanzibar has been a melting pot of cultures, including African, Arab, Indian and European influences. This diversity is reflected in its architecture, cuisine, and traditions. The island’s strategic location made it an important stop for traders traveling along the maritime Silk Road facilitating the exchange of goods, ideas and cultural practices. Known as a tolerant society where, for example, Muslims, Christians, Hindus, Bahia’s, and practitioners of other minority faiths live together in peace, there are nonetheless tensions in Zanzibari culture. In many ways successful, this fusion of peoples is nonetheless the source of cultural friction that in turn has inspired significant cultural expressions. Under this theme students will explore the ways in which racial differences, especially those that identify individuals as descended from the slave traders and Arab rulers, or from those who were enslaved, shape the realities of life on Zanzibar. Students will read classics of postcolonial literature by the Nobel prize winning Zanzibari author, Abdulrazak Gurnah, who repeatedly returns to the still ongoing ramifications of slavery. They will watch *Bhiriri* by Tanzanian filmmaker Martin Mhando, which deals, in highly symbolic ways, with the place of Zanzibar within Tanzania and will also have an opportunity to discuss the film with Mhando, one of the local trainers of the study tour. Students will also discuss *Bhiriri, the novella* by Mhando. Scriptwriter Farida Nyamachumbe will offer a lecture on the role of race on Zanzibar, based on her personal experiences as a black African. A creative documentary on the subject of shared heritage, *The Visit* (12 minutes, 2023) will introduce students to the challenges of forging a shared heritage from previously separate or only partially connected cultures.

III. Tourism: Authentic Artistic Expressions and Curio Art

Billed in tourist brochures as an idyllic tropical island in the Indian Ocean, Zanzibar is a popular destination for tourists from all over the world. The mobility of people through tourism has a decisive impact on the host society, including in the area of culture. The expectations of tourists may, for example, encourage locals to highlight aspects of their indigenous culture in acts of self-exoticization. Artistic practices that were once firmly anchored in indigenous traditions may become embedded in more industrial frameworks as locals seek to meet the tourists’ demand for souvenirs or collectables. The warren of meandering alleyways that make up Stone Town are full of curio shops selling Zanzibari and African souvenirs. In these same alleyways, artists with large canvases produce the so-called “Tingatinga” paintings for which Tanzania became well known in the 1960s and which Zanzibari artists have transformed through the addition of new themes. The reach

of “Tingatinga” is extensive, having even been adopted by the BBC as the visual style for one of its animation series, “Tinga Tinga Tales.” Students will learn about the phenomenon of tourist and curio art and the many questions raised by the impact of cross-cultural interaction that is underpinned by a receiving host society and uni-directional mobility. During the study tour on Zanzibar, students will visit a Tingatinga studio, where they will have an opportunity to explore these questions with the artists directly.

IV. Transnational Filmmaking

While China’s “Belt and Road” policy initially found expression in infrastructural projects, it is increasingly becoming an important factor in the sphere of culture. Big-budget Chinese films are being shot on location in East African settings, China/Africa film festivals are being established, and China is now recruiting African filmmakers for study at the prestigious Beijing Film Academy, thereby cementing ties between China and the African continent for the future. Researchers are now considering Chinese films as a significant source of soft power in Africa, just as they are seeking to determine whether Chinese movies influence Chinese-African cultural interactions and even motivate the learning of Mandarin in East African communities. Under this theme students will learn about the place of Chinese movies in everyday life in East Africa. They will also learn about fascinating inter-cultural practices such as the “trans-narration” of Chinese Kung Fu films by Swahili language DJs in Tanzania. During the study tour on Zanzibar, students will work with filmmaker and emeritus professor Martin Mhando to produce a documentary about two Chinese families who have called Zanzibar home for 5 and 6 generations. With the exception of one marriage, all marriages in these families have involved a return to China to find a spouse, which raises fascinating questions about ancestral and adopted homelands. Those questions provide the starting point for the documentary film.

V. Cultural Conflicts: Gender, Sexuality and Identity

Freddie Mercury, the global rock star who formed Queen in 1970, was born in Stone Town, Zanzibar, to Parsi-Indian parents who fled to England in the wake of the Zanzibar Revolution of 1964. Zanzibar honours Mercury as a world famous son of the island and a thriving tourist industry exists around landmarks such as Mercury’s former home. At the same time, Mercury’s sexual orientation as a gay/bisexual man and death from AIDS in 1987 are deeply at odds with the conservative Muslim culture that predominates on the island. Themes of cultural conflict are recurring elements in East African art and culture, where conflicts between generations are often explored (the older generation is typically depicted as firmly rooted in tradition, whereas the younger generation is decisively influenced by global representations of freedom and choice). Prior to the study tour students will be introduced to East African films that explore the element of globally mediated cultural conflicts. During the study tour students will expand their horizon to include the “Freddie Mercury” phenomenon, visiting the museum devoted to the global rock star’s memory, among other activities.

The proposed course contributes to EdUHK’s strategic engagement with the continent of Africa, is research based, and prepares the ground for an Africa-focused minor.

2. Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- CILO₁ Explain patterns of migration linking Africa to Hong Kong and the Chinese Mainland
- CILO₂ Situate examples of East African literature, film, music, and visual art in broader contexts, including those of migration, race, and gender
- CILO₃ Engage in cross-cultural collaboration with Zanzibaris to produce creative work in response to some of the artistic practices and traditions that define Swahili culture
- CILO₄ Create partnerships of equals across the divides of cultural and economic difference
- CILO₅ Offer a considered view on the benefits of cultural knowledge and awareness in contexts of interaction between China and Africa

3. Content, CILOs and Teaching & Learning Activities

Course Content	CILOs	Suggested Teaching & Learning Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-trip learning (up to week 4) will initially (weeks 1, 2) focus on the presence of African culture in Hong Kong and Guangzhou and the role of China in Africa. 	CILO ₁	Lectures; watching and discussing a short film about the African community of Guangzhou (<i>Guangzhou Dream Factory</i>); group work focusing on entrenched beliefs related to Chungking Mansions; and engagement with the Africa Centre of Hong Kong.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-trip learning (up to week 4) will explore selected examples of East African literature, film, music, and visual art through the lenses of migration, race, gender, social change, and creativity under constraint. 	CILO ₂	Lectures; group-based engagement with key concepts and questions relevant to selected texts, films etc.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During the 7-nights/8-days stay on Zanzibar, students collaborate in teams to produce creative work in response to Zanzibari topics related to the five themes of the course. 	CILO _{2, 3, 4}	<p>The study tour activities include daily contact hours with the facilitators and EdUHK tutors, site visits selected specifically for the individual groups, and tours designed for the group as a whole. Please see below for a fuller outline of the Study Tour activities.</p> <p>Team-based production of a creative work. The creative</p>

		work of the student teams is shared with the local community during the last evening in Stone Town, Zanzibar. The work is performed/delivered/shown on the rooftop of the Maru Maru hotel (guests staying at the Maru Maru are part of the audience).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post-trip reflection on the benefits of cross-cultural learning and understanding; exploration of processes of unlearning (related to prejudices and stereotypes) and relearning. 	<i>CILO</i> ₅	Guided discussion; group work, with deliberations reported to the class as a whole.

4. Assessment

Assessment Tasks	Weighting	CILOs
(a) Research paper (1,200 words) Students will write a 1,200 word individual midterm research paper showing their understanding of issues facing Africans in Hong Kong and China and/or Chinese communities in Africa. Students will make reference, where relevant, to anthropological research devoted to African communities in Hong Kong and China, and to texts on postcolonialism and neocolonialism. This assignment will offer students questions or prompts, as a starting point for their paper.	40 %	<i>CILO</i> _{1, 2, 5}
(b) Creative group project, produced on Zanzibar During the 7-nights/8-days stay on Zanzibar, students collaborate in teams to produce creative work in response to Zanzibari topics related to one of the five course themes . The angle to be pursued once in Stone Town is agreed with the local facilitators prior to departure.	25%	<i>CILO</i> _{3,4}
(c) Reflective essay (1,000 words) At the end of term, students will write an essay reflecting on their learning throughout the semester, particularly their experiential learning during their 7-nights/8-days stay on Zanzibar.	35%	<i>CILO</i> ₅

5. Use of Generative AI in Course Assessments

Please select one option only that applies to this course:

☐ **Not Permitted:** In this course, the use of generative AI tools is not allowed for any assessment tasks.

☒ **Permitted:** In this course, generative AI tools may be used in some or all assessment tasks. Instructors will provide specific instructions, including any restrictions or additional requirements (e.g., proper acknowledgment, reflective reports), during the first lesson and in relevant assessment briefs.

6. Required Text(s) and Films

- Asian Ethnicity*. 2020. "Africans in China and Chinese in Africa: Identities, Inequalities and Well-being." Special Issue (selected readings, and for reference).
- Bhiriri - The Red Cow*. 2017., directed by Martin Mhando.
- Bobby's Factory*. 2021., directed by Yong Zhang;
<https://v.qq.com/x/cover/mzc00200zurg1bq/u00446xbck4.html>
- Gandhi, Leela. 2019. "Introduction: After Colonialism." In *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Guangzhou Dream Factory: Immigration, Globalization, Chinese Factories and African Dreams*. 2017., directed by Christiane Badgley and Erica Marcus.
- Made in Africa – Tingatinga Art in Tanzania* (CGTN Africa);
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7dgRPjlop4U>.
- Subira*. 2018., directed by Ravneet Sippy Chadha.
- Fargion, Janet Topp. 1993. "The Role of Women in taarab in Zanzibar: an Historical Examination of a Process of 'Africanisation.'" *The World of Music – the Politics and Aesthetics of 'World Music'* 35.2: 109-125; <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43615569>.
- Gurnah, Abdulrazak. 1987. *Memory of Departure*. London: Jonathan Cape.
- Hsu, Elisabeth. 2007. "Zanzibar and its Chinese Communities." *Population Space and Place* 13.2: 113-124.
- Krings, Matthias, and Onookome Okome, eds. 2013. *Global Nollywood*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.
- Jules-Rosette, Bennetta. 2013. *The Messages of Tourist Art: An African Semiotic System in Comparative Perspective*. New York: Springer.
- Mathews, Gordon. 2024. *Ghetto at the Center of the World: Chungking Mansions, Hong Kong*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Mhando, Martin. 2019. "The Zanzibar International Film Festival and Its Children Panorama: Using Films to Socialize Human Rights into the Educational Sector and a Wider Public Sphere." In *African Cinema and Human Rights*, edited by Mette Hjort and Eva Jørholt. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Mhando, Martin. 2024. "The Trans-narration of Chinese Kung Fu Films by Swahili Language DJs, in Tanzania." In *Chinese Films Abroad*, 67-82. London: Routledge. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003466932-5>
- Mhando, Martin. 2025. *Bhiriri – the novella* (a community reading project, based on the film of 2017).
- Ngozie, Chimananda Adichie. (N.D.). TED talk on feminism;
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hg3umXU_qWc&ab_channel=TEDxTalks
- When China Met Africa* (2010), documentary directed by Nick Francis and Mark James Francis.

- Williams, Stephen. 2005. "Tingatinga – The Art of East Africa." *New African* (February): 60-61.
- Young, Robert J. C. (2020). "Gender, queering, and feminism in a postcolonial context." In *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Young, Robert J. C. (2020). "Slavery, race, caste." In *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Zhang Yong, in conversation with Xiaoning Lu. (N.D). "Against All Odds: Bringing Multi-faceted China-Africa Stories to the Screen." *Screenworlds*. <https://screenworlds.org/publications/against-all-odds-bringing-multi-faceted-china-africa-stories-to-the-screen/>

7. Recommended Readings and Screenings

- A Story of Bones, directed by Joseph Curran and Dominic Aubrey de Vere (winner of best documentary, Zanzibar International Film Festival 2023, about the slave trade)
- Bodomo, Adams. 2012. *Africans in China. A Sociocultural Study and Its Implications on Africa-China Relations*. Amherst, NY: Cambria Press.
- Fargion, Janet Topp. 2016. *Taarab Music in Zanzibar in the Twentieth Century*. London: Routledge.
- Jasinski, Artur. 2021. "Colors of Stone Town in Zanzibar: From white to black and back again." *Cities* 117, 103309; <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0264275121002092?via%3Dihub>.
- Ruete, Emily (Salamah bint Saïd; Sayyida Salme, Princess of Zanzibar and Oman). 1907. *Memoirs of an Arabian Princess from Zanzibar*. Translated by Lionel Strachey. New York: Doubleday.
- Wembah-Rashid, J.A.R. 1974. "Edward Saidi Tingatinga: In Memoriam." *African Arts* 7.2: 56-57.
- Why Slavery? Six documentaries about modern-day slavery produced by the Why Foundation; <https://www.thewhy.dk/docuseries/why-slavery>

8. Related Web Resources

- Tinga Tinga Tales*,
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWQLkOZV1aHXB0ihn2EwSbw>
- Tinga Tinga Tales*,
https://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2010/01_january/14/tinga.shtml

9. Related Journals

- Journal of African Cinemas*
Journal of Postcolonial Writing
Journal of Contemporary China

10. Academic Honesty

The University upholds the principles of honesty in all areas of academic work. We expect our students to carry out all academic activities honestly and in good faith. Please refer to the *Policy on Academic Honesty, Responsibility and Integrity* (<https://www.eduhk.hk/re/uploads/docs/0000000000016336798924548BbN5>). Students should familiarize themselves with the Policy.

11. Others

Nil

14 August 2025