An Academic Course on Gender, Conflict, And Peace In Africa

Course Rationale
This course should explore key issues of gender, conflict and peacebuilding in the African context. Overall, the course should also aim to investigate how gender, violence and war have a variety of impacts upon development in Africa, and how development concerns are intrinsically linked to peacebuilding. The course would hence seek to analyse how each aspect of conflict, from domestic violence in peacetime to violence in wartime, is influenced by the real and perceived needs and responsibilities of men and women. Why conflict is gendered at critical moments is a key question, as is how men and women develop different strategies of survival. The course ideally invites an exploration of the role gender plays in political development and achieving sustainable peace. Women’s roles as actors as well as victims of conflict should hence be evaluated as will gender specific peace initiatives.

Aims and Objectives
A key objective is to encourage discussion on the idea that peace and gender equality are inextricably connected. Specific issues addressed include: theories of gender and conflict and peace; rape and sexual violence as war crimes; peace processes and post conflict reconstruction. A practical component of the course would aim to equip students with practical strategies and skills for adopting a gendered approach to negotiation and mediation.

Course Methodology
The course should utilise a range of textual, web and film resources, but those attending it will be expected to bring, share and engage with their experiences and expertise, and are invited to suggest additional resources. The course can be conducted over a series of 5-10 two hour seminars. It is up to the course convenor to decide how many seminars would be suitable. This course should emphasise critical reading, independent research in areas of particular interest, and classroom discussion as well as written submissions.

Core Study questions
How are militarism, war, conflict and peace processes gendered?
What is a feminist approach to conflict and peacebuilding?
How do societies heal from mass trauma and how is this gendered?
What is transitional justice and what is its significance in relation to gendered peace?

THEMES

1. Understanding the theories of Gender, Conflict and Peacebuilding
This theme introduces a conceptual framework to help understand theories of gender, conflict and peace. Students discuss gender and peacebuilding with particular attention to frameworks and practical methods of mainstreaming gender in peacebuilding. There is some debate on African gender relations, constructions of masculinity and femininity, and the opportunities for structural peace that feminism offers. The links between these debates and theories of development are drawn.

Required Readings


Recommended Additional Reading


2. Gender dimensions of recent African conflicts
This theme discusses the gendered impact of conflicts. It highlights women’s and men’s experiences of violence during armed conflict. The use of rape as a war strategy, and the role the state has played within this, is discussed in relation to the role of armies and non-state actors as perpetrators of gender based violence. There is emphasis on the need to address violence against women on the continent.

Required Readings


Recommended Additional Readings
Isis-WICCE, “Medical international study of war affected Kitgum District”, 2006
Human Rights Watch (2003), “We will Kill you if you Cry: Sexual Violence in the Sierra Leone Conflict”

3. Gender and Peace Processes in the African context
This theme introduces students to elements of peace processes with a focus on peace agreements and how these can be engendered. Women’s peacebuilding initiatives in recent African contexts are debated with discussion experiences of women’s involvement in formal and informal peace processes. A case study on involving women in a peace process will expose students to the challenges and opportunities for gender equality and sustainable peace.

Documentary Films
Pray the Devil Back to Hell, 2009

Required Reading
Chinkin, Christine. 2003. “Peace Agreements as a Means for Promoting Gender Equality and Ensuring Participation of Women”, Conference paper,
Gender and Post Conflict Reconstruction

Drawing examples on some recent case studies this theme examines post conflict reconstruction processes and the extent to which gender issues have been incorporated. Students will discuss the challenges of involving local communities, particularly women’s groups, in rebuilding society. The challenges of involving women in demobilisation, demilitarization, and re-integration will be debated focusing on trauma healing and women’s survival strategies. The case of reconstruction efforts in Northern Uganda and South Sudan will be discussed.

Film: Isis-WICCE, “Ray of Hope” 2004

Required Readings


Isis-WICCE, “Consultative meeting on peace, recovery and development plan for Northern Uganda(PRDP)”. Workshop report, 2008
5. Gender and Transitional Justice

The development of peace-building initiatives in Africa has been mirrored by the expansion of various models of transitional justice. These encompass a range of judicial and non-judicial approaches adopted by post conflict societies to address human rights abuses of the past, such as war crime tribunals and truth and reconciliation commissions. Within these, numerous gender concerns are at play ranging from addressing the high levels of gender-based violence frequent in conflicts, as well as recognising the numerous roles women play beyond that of victim. This theme looks at the evolution of transitional justice mechanisms and their success in addressing gender based human rights violations.

**Required Reading**


**Recommended Reading**


Women’s Initiatives for Gender Studies. Amicus briefs of Prosecutor v. Thomas Lubanga of September and November 2006, Available at: http://www.iccwomen.org/publications/briefs/index.ph [23]


**Links:**