



College of Arts & Letters

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

IAH 211A: Area Studies and Multicultural Civilizations: Africa (I)

Africa-China relations through literature, film, art, and music, from the Cold War to the present (4 credits)

Summer Session II, 2024 (*Online, asynchronous*)

Instructor

Caitlin Barker

she/her

PhD Candidate, History

Contact Information

- Virtual Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 4-5pm *or by appointment*
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Course Description

Africa-China relations are all over the news, with much commentary on US-China competition in Africa and editorials speculating that China might be a “new colonial power” in Africa. And yet, these are not new relationships, nor are they carried out purely at the state or policy level. Many African countries have a long and nuanced history of people-to-people exchange with China that stretches back to the early Cold War. This course goes behind the news headlines to explore how African and Chinese people have made sense of Africa-China relations over the past seventy years, using literature, film, art, and music as our lens. Along the way, students will deepen their understanding of major themes that continue to shape our world, including decolonization, the history of development, and the history of international relations beyond the West.

The arts and humanities will serve as our guide on this journey through Africa-China relations. We begin in the 1950s, in the immediate aftermath of World War II and the dawn of the Cold War, and end in the present. This expansive period is divided into seven units, one for each week of our course. Every week we will explore the art, music, film, or literature that was produced by African and Chinese artists about Africa-China relations during that particular historical moment, with readings and lectures that place them in the context of broader world events. By engaging simultaneously with sources and methods from the arts, humanities, and international affairs, students of all majors

will hone their skills in analytical thinking and cultural understanding while building a knowledge base that will help them become effective global citizens.

Course Goals and Outcomes

After completing this course, students will be able to:

- Describe the major challenges posed by African decolonization in a Cold War context, and identify some key ways in which these challenges helped shape the postcolonial trajectory of African powers and their international relations
- Articulate how representations of Africa-China relations have (and have not) changed over time, from the 1950s to the present
- Critically evaluate contemporary media coverage of Africa-China relations by placing it in historical context
- Describe how studying the arts and humanities can deepen our understanding of international politics and world affairs

Mission and Goals of IAH

The mission of IAH is to empower students to more deeply reflect on, understand, inquire about, and transform the world around them, and to invite all students into lifelong engagement with the arts and humanities. More specifically, IAH enhances students' capabilities to:

- Reflect with intellectual curiosity on their own lives, knowledge, values, needs and desires, experiences, and/or professional or other communities
- Understand and engage with diverse cultures, communities, identities, experiences, and histories
- Explore challenging questions about culture, artistic expression, systems of power, the nature of information and knowledge, or other topics that are essential to understanding what it means to be a human being and a global citizen in the 21st century
- Interact with the wider world in creative, critical, and socially responsible ways

Use of Generative AI for Course Work

You are allowed (but not required) to incorporate content generated by AI tools into your assignments for this course. However, the use of generative AI in class assignments is intended to enhance the educational experience and provide students with exposure to innovative technologies. It is not intended to replace critical thinking, research, or the development of essential academic skills. As such, you are required to adhere to the following guidelines for effective and ethical use of AI, should you choose to use it:

- The use of AI should enhance the quality and depth of the assignments, and it should complement your own ideas and arguments. This course requires that in your written assignments you engage with a wide array of sources that are largely unknown to AI, and that you present your original, creative questions and arguments about them. It is therefore highly unlikely that a purely AI-generated response will meet the requirements of the assignments, and will likely receive a

very low grade as a result.

- You must use AI tools responsibly and ethically. Any use of AI that results in plagiarism or academic misconduct is strictly prohibited, and will be treated like any other form of academic misconduct. You must ensure that AI generated responses do not violate intellectual property laws or contain misinformation or unethical content.
- I encourage you to think of AI as one tool among many that you can use to produce your assignments, and to think about what stage of the process it can be most effective in: brainstorming, organizing your own ideas, and checking grammar and spelling are some possible examples. **If you choose to use AI on an assignment, I do ask that you specify what you used it for (you can do this in a footnote or citation, or at the end of the paper – the format is up to you, so long as you include it).**
- When incorporating AI-generated content into your assignments, **you are required to provide proper citations and attributions. This includes identifying the AI tool used, and the date you used it. For example, (ChatGPT, July 15th, 2024).** Proper citation ensures transparency and gives credit to the AI technology and its developers.

Course Grading

The table below describes the graded course activities including points and activity description. The first column includes the points possible, and the second column includes a description for each activity.

Points	Description
3 points	Discussion posts (3 total, 1 point each)
7 points	Final Project Proposal (due in week 4)
15 points	Final Project (due in week 7)
35 points	Weekly Quizzes on D2L (7 total, 10 questions each, each quiz is worth 5 points)
40 points	Reflection Papers (4 total, between 1 and 1.5 pages long, each reflection paper is worth 10 points)
100 points	Total Points Possible

Grading Scale:

The table below describes the relationships between your grade on a 4.0 scale (the scale I will use to report your final grade to the registrar) and your grade in percentage points (the scale I will use to grade your assignments). The first column describes the grade. The second column describes the percentage range associated with that letter grade.

Grade	Percentage
4.0	90 to 100%
3.5	85 to 89%
3.0	80 to 84%
2.5	75 to 79%
2.0	70 to 74%
1.5	65 to 69%
1.0	60 to 64%
0.0	0 to 59%

Descriptions of Graded Assignments

Below you will find a brief description of the graded components in our course. More information about how to complete each one will be provided on D2L, in rubrics, and in email and video communication from your instructor.

Reflection Papers (40%)

Over the course of our class you will write four reflection papers: in weeks 1, 2, 3, and 5. Each reflection paper is worth 10 points, and must be between 1 and 1.5 pages long, double spaced, 12-point font, standard margins. There is a different prompt for each reflection paper, but each one will ask you to engage thoughtfully with the materials from that week to explore a particular theme or question. A rubric for the reflection papers is available on D2L, and will be used to grade all four papers. **All four reflection papers are due Thursday by 11:59pm EXCEPT your Week 1 Reflection paper, which is due on Friday by 11:59pm to accommodate the July 4th holiday.**

Quizzes (35%)

You will take one quiz every week, for a total of seven quizzes. Each quiz consists of 10 questions and each question is worth 0.5 points, for a grand total of 5 points per quiz. The quizzes are meant to help guide you through the most important points of the material that week, and they are open note: I encourage you to consult the readings and videos for the week as you are completing your quiz. The quizzes are automatically graded by D2L. **Your weekly quiz is due each Wednesday by 11:59pm.**

Final Project: You Be the Editor (15%)

Your final project is called "You Be the Editor," and it asks you to critically edit and improve five recent news items of your choice from major Western media outlets on any aspect of Africa-China relations. To do so you will draw on our full range of course materials, and you will also reflect on what you notice about Africa-China reporting, including how a historical, arts and humanities perspective changes the dominant narrative. Your final project can take the form of an essay, but it doesn't have to: it could be a video, a web page, a podcast, or anything else you wish to propose. If you choose to present it as an essay, I would expect the final product to be between 7-8 pages (double spaced, 12-point font, 1-inch margins). That is, approximately 1 page per

article, plus 2-3 pages of your high-level take aways. If you choose an alternate final project format, it should therefore still be the equivalent of 7-8 pages of double spaced text. A rubric for the final project is available on D2L. **Your final project is due on the last day of the course, August 15th, by 11:59pm.**

Final Project Proposal (7%)

To set you up for success on your final project, you will first submit a proposal outlining your plans for it that I will give you feedback on. This proposal is meant to be the start of your brainstorming process, and it is fine if your project changes and evolves over the following three weeks, provided that you keep me informed. The proposal requires you to identify your five chosen news items for editing, as well as some of the primary course materials you plan to incorporate in the edits. It also asks that you suggest a format for your final project. A rubric for the final project proposal is available on D2L. **Your final project proposal is due at the end of Week 4 on Thursday, July 25th by 11:59pm.**

Discussion Posts (3%)

You will complete three short discussion posts on D2L: one introducing yourself to your classmates in Week 1, a second sharing your thoughts on Chinese propaganda poster art on Africa in Week 2, and a final post in Week 6 sharing your final project plans with your classmates. The goal of the discussion posts is for you to learn from your classmates while benefiting from the practice of sharing your own views and approaches. Each post is worth 1 point, and **each discussion post is due by Friday at 11:59pm.**

Late Work

Because this is a short and intensive online summer course, missed deadlines can quickly snowball. I strongly urge you to stay on top of each and every deadline using the D2L calendar. If for any reason you feel you need an extension, you must **contact me in advance of the deadline** and I will consider your request in relation to university guidelines and on a case-by-case basis.

For work submitted late **without an extension**, the policy is as follows:

- No late quizzes will be accepted.
- Late written assignments will lose one point per day that they are late

Ethics and Academic Integrity

Plagiarism or cheating on any assignment and any other type of academic misconduct will result in a failing grade of zero on the assignment. I will report all academic misconduct to the university, which could impose additional sanctions. If you are in doubt as to what constitutes plagiarism, cheating, or any other type of academic misconduct, I encourage you to email me or drop by office hours, I will be happy to clarify. In addition, the resources below can help:

- [Integrity of Scholarship and Grades](#) (all-university policy)
- [MSU Ombudsperson Academic Integrity](#)

Accommodations

Michigan State University is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services and activities. Requests for accommodations by persons with disabilities may be made by contacting the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities at 517-884-RCPD or on the web at [rcpd.msu.edu](https://www.rcpd.msu.edu). Once your eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, you will be issued a verified individual services accommodation (VISA) form. Please present this form to me at the start of the term and/or two weeks prior to the accommodation date (test, project, etc.). Requests received after this date will be honored whenever possible. For more on RCPD, see: <https://www.rcpd.msu.edu/>

I follow university guidelines on Grief Absences and Religious Observances (see below for more). Please do your best to communicate with me directly as far in advance as possible regarding any accommodations you are requesting, and I will be glad to work with you to find a reasonable solution that adheres to the university guidelines.

- [Disability Access](#)
- [Grief Absences](#)
- [Religious Observances](#)

Course Schedule and Activities

Each week of our seven week course will cover a different topic, beginning in the 1950s and ending in the present. The list below describes the weekly activities including week, topic, readings, activities, and due date. This information is also available on the D2L course calendar. All materials are on D2L under "Content," and all activities will be completed and submitted on D2L as well.

Week 1, July 1-5: Introductions and Concepts

READ:

- Binyavanga Wainaina, "How to Write about Africa," *Granta*, 2005.
- Chandran Nair, "Anti-China Rhetoric is off the Charts in Western Media," *The Diplomat*, 2023.
- Marc Silver, "Memo to the People of Earth: 'Third World' is an Offensive Term!" *NPR*, 2021.

WATCH:

- Lecture video, "Welcome to the Course"
- Lecture video, "Introduction to the Syllabus"
- *Guangzhou Dream Factory*, Christiane Badgley, 2016 (on Kanopy, link on D2L, access for free with MSU NetID)

DO

- Submit Week 1 Quiz by July 3rd, 11:59pm
- Submit Reflection Paper #1 by July 5th, 11:59pm
- Complete Introductory Survey by July 5th, 11:59pm

- Submit Discussion Post #1, introducing yourself via a picture or a poem, by July 5th, 11:59pm

Week 2, July 8-12: Bandung Spirit

READ:

- Han Pei-ping “Drums at Night,” *Afro-Asian Poems Anthology Part I*, 1963
- Kofi Awoonor, “The Black Eagle Awakes,” *Afro-Asian Poems Anthology Part II*, 1965
- Prefaces to *Afro-Asian Poem Anthologies*, parts I and II
- “Chinese Propaganda Posters on Africa” collection (see D2L)
- Kyle Haddad-Fonda, “Afro-Asian Writers Conferences,” *Blackpast*, 2017.

WATCH:

- *Visualizing Afro-Asian Networks* video + explore Afro-Asian Conferences Visualization Tool
- Lecture video, “Cold War History: Foundational Concepts”
- Lecture video, “Bandung Spirit: Egypt-China Relations”

DO

- Submit Week 2 Quiz by July 10th, 11:59pm
- Submit Reflection Paper #2 by July 11th, 11:59pm
- Submit Discussion Post #2, on Chinese propaganda posters about Africa, by July 12th, 11:59pm

Week 3, July 15-19: Decolonizing

READ:

- Patrice Lumumba, “May our People Triumph,” 1960
- Patrice Lumumba, “Letter from Thysville Prison to Mrs. Lumumba,” 1961
- Mamadou Gologo, *China: A Great People, a Great Destiny*, 1965 (excerpts)
- Mao Zedong, “Africa's Task is to Struggle Against Imperialism',” February 21, 1959
- Excerpts from the article “Using Revolutionary Arts and Literature to Support the People of the World’s Revolutionary Struggle: How the Drama War Drums on the Equator was Created and Produced” *People's Daily*, 1965

WATCH:

- Pathé News video excerpt, “Lumumba Rally in Beijing,” 1961
- Pathé News video excerpt, “Women’s Delegations in China,” 1963
- “War Drums on the Equator” performance video excerpt, 1965

- Lecture video, “African Decolonization”
- Lecture video, “African women’s diplomacy with China”
- Lecture video, “Chinese Support for Decolonization in Guinea and Algeria”
- Lecture video, “Congo-China relations”

DO

- Submit Week 3 Quiz by July 17th, 11:59pm
- Submit Reflection Paper #3 by July 18th, 11:59pm

Week 4, July 22-26: Nation Building

READ:

- Final Project Proposal Guidelines
- Wancheng Xu and Lixin L “Sing Aloud, Rafiki Bird!” from *Reports from the TAZARA Railway*, 1976

WATCH:

- Lecture video, “Chinese Medical Delegations in Africa”
- *TAZARA Stories*, Jamie Monson, 2021
- Lecture video, “Final Project Proposal”

DO

- Submit Week 4 Quiz by July 24th, 11:59pm
- Submit Final Project Proposal by July 25th, 11:59pm

Week 5, July 29-August 2: Industrializing

READ:

- Kofi Awoonor, “The Red Bright Book of History,” 1989
- Winslow Robertson, “A brief history of anti-black violence in China,” *Africa is a Country*, 2020.
- Suglo, Ignatius G. D. “‘Sound of Friendship’: Music Iconography in Twentieth-Century Africa–China Relations.” *Verge: Studies in Global Asias* 8, no. 1 (2022): 195–216.

WATCH:

- Lecture Video, “Introduction to Week 5”
- Lecture Video, “1980s Africa and Post-Mao China”
- Zhu Mingying performances (1983 and 2021)

DO

- Submit Week 5 Quiz by July 31st, 11:59pm
- Submit Reflection Paper #4 by August 1st, 11:59pm

Week 6, August 5-9: Rising

READ:

- Jean Tardif Lonkog, *The Black Man and His Visa*, 2013 (Chapters 2-4)
- Nedine Moonsamy, "African writers are using science fiction to explore deepening relations with China," *Quartz*, September 2019.
- Circle Art Gallery, "Michael Soi: China Loves Africa," September 2018.
- Nanjala Nyabola, "Why is Africa always portrayed as a passive woman?" *African Arguments*, September 2018.
- Romain Dittgen and Mark Lewis, "Shifting Urbanity and Global China in Conversation: Views from Johannesburg and Lusaka," in *Visualizing China in Southern Africa*, 2023.

WATCH:

- *China Remix*, Dorian Carli-Jones and Melissa Lefkowitz, 2015 (on Kanopy, link on D2L, access for free with MSU NetID)
- Lecture video, "The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation"

DO

- Submit Week 6 Quiz by August 7th, 11:59pm
- Work on your final project!!
- Submit Discussion Post #3, describing your final project plans, by August 9th, 11:59pm

Week 7, August 12-15: Conclusions

READ:

- Kofi Awoonor, "Xiansi, Pou Tou Dalla," 2013
- Pezold, Johanna von, and Miriam Driessen. "Made in China, Fashioned in Africa: Ethnic Dress in Ethiopia and Mozambique." *Africa* 91, no. 2 (February 2021): 317–36.
- "'Eat Bitter': A Conversation with Ningyi Sun and Pascale Appora-Gnekindy," *Global China Pulse*, 2024

WATCH:

- *Eat Bitter*, Ninygi Sun and Pascale Appora-Gnekindy, 2024 (link on D2L, need MSU NetID to access)

DO

- Submit Week 7 Quiz by August 14th, 11:59pm
- Submit your final project by August 15th, 11:59pm