

Honors 4260: African Democracy Project

Democracy in Liberia

Fall 2011

Wayne State University's **African Democracy Project** was launched in 2009. The project includes a series of seminar courses designed to give students a richer understanding of politics, society and culture in Africa and to think about these issues in relation to Metro Detroit. Past seminars have visited Mozambique and Botswana.

For Fall 2011, the African Democracy Project seminar will focus on Democracy in Liberia. The 10–12 students selected to participate will experience a semester of intensive study of the challenges of democratization in Liberia, challenges which are shared by many other developing nations. As part of the course, students will accompany WSU President Emeritus Irvin D. Reid on a two-week trip to Liberia in October 2011. While there, they will observe national elections and interview a wide spectrum of participants in the construction of Liberian democracy. Upon their return, students will complete original research papers and share their work and experiences with the class, the university and the greater Detroit community. Throughout the course students will document their experiences through video, blogging and journaling. Course participants will also engage in a service learning experience with a local community service organization in Metro Detroit. Here, students will be expected to apply their experience in Liberia to better understand how local issues resonate globally and how global issues resonate locally. **If you seek a course that will challenge you, expand your horizons, and connect you to the university, the community and the world in new ways, consider applying to participate in the African Democracy Project through Honors 4260 in Fall 2011.**

Key Dates:

Class begins: Monday, August 22 and meets weekly for 3-hour sessions throughout the fall semester.

Travel to Liberia: October 5–October 16, subject to flight availability

Course outline:

During the preparation period, students will study contemporary Liberian history and contemporary issues in African politics. We will emphasize theories of democratization, with a focus on three key issues: peace and reconciliation in societies that have experienced serious civil conflict, free and fair elections and the rule of law, and the strategy of decentralization to improve governance and reduce corruption.

During the trip itself we will be based in the capital city of Monrovia, but we will also travel to rural areas. Students will meet with national and local government and political party officials, election officials, representatives of the truth and reconciliation commission and non-governmental organizations, academics and peers. Students will play a major role in selecting and arranging interviews in Liberia. We have timed the trip to be present in Liberia for national elections, scheduled for Tuesday, October 11, and will observe the voting process on that day.

After the trip, students will reach out to the Wayne State and metro Detroit community, to present their research and to talk about their experiences in a variety of venues. Throughout the course, students will document and reflect on their experiences through film, blogging and journaling.

Requirements:

- **Solid academic standing** (junior or senior status in Fall 2011 preferred but not essential)
- **Valid passport** (or commitment to obtain one by August 2011)
- **Ability to contribute to the costs of the trip** and/or to apply for range of financial resources.
- **A commitment to attend every class session** beginning August 22, 2011, including sessions that may fall outside the regular schedule.
- **Ability to travel for up to two weeks during the fall semester**. This means that you will be missing some of your other classes. We will provide a letter of support to help you ask your other instructors to accommodate your absence, but you must obtain their consent in order to travel for this course.

How to apply:

Admission to the course is by application only, and requires a faculty reference. Application materials are available from Dr. Sharon Lean, at sflean@wayne.edu.

Applications are due on **Friday, April 8, 2011 at 5:00pm** and should be delivered to **Dr. Lean in the Political Science Department office, 2040 Faculty Administration Building**. Students will be informed in late April about the status of their applications.

For more information about the course:

Contact Dr. Lean at sflean@wayne.edu.

Application Information

Honors 4260: African Democracy Project Democracy in Liberia – Fall 2011

To apply to participate in Honors 4260 in Fall 2011, on a separate sheet or two, please complete the following tasks. Because we seek a mix of participants – experience foreign travelers and those seeking their first study abroad opportunity – there are no correct or even preferred answers to any of the questions. Please simply answer them as fully as you can.

1. Basic information

- Full name
- Home address
- Email address that you check regularly
- Telephone number
- Citizenship
- Do you have a passport?
- Year in college, major field of study (and if applicable co-major), GPA

2. Statement of Interest

In 300-500 words explain how the African Democracy Project seminar related to your program of academic study and to your career or life interests. Keep in mind that while you need to demonstrate the seriousness of your interest in the African Democracy Project course and the trip to Liberia, it is not necessary that you be developing an academic or career specialization in political science, African politics or any other specialized field.

3. Travel Experience

List all of the places to which you have traveled outside the United States and Canada since the age of fourteen. Explain briefly the nature and duration of these travel experiences.

4. Regional Connections

Please indicate whether you have any special relationship to any of the countries on the continent of Africa (e.g. family ties, travel, language skills)

Please also attach the following two supporting documents:

5. Transcript

A copy of your WSU Pipeline transcript is sufficient.

6. Recommendation

Provide a letter of recommendation from a faculty member at WSU or another university. This letter should be in a sealed envelope with the signature across the seal, or can be sent by the faculty member directly via email to sflean@wayne.edu.