



THE SCHOOL  
FOR FIELD STUDIES

# Introduction to Swahili Language and East African Tribal Communities

## SFS 2060

**2 credits**

The School for Field Studies (SFS)  
Center for Wildlife Management Studies  
Karatu, Tanzania

This syllabus may develop or change over time based on local conditions, learning opportunities, and faculty expertise. Course content may vary from semester to semester.

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## COURSE CONTENT SUBJECT TO CHANGE

***Please note that this is a copy of a recent syllabus. A final syllabus will be provided to students on the first day of academic programming.***

SFS programs are different from other travel or study abroad programs. Each iteration of a program is unique and often cannot be implemented exactly as planned for a variety of reasons. There are factors which, although monitored closely, are beyond our control. For example:

- Changes in access to or expiration or change in terms of permits to the highly regulated and sensitive environments in which we work;
- Changes in social/political conditions or tenuous weather situations/natural disasters may require changes to sites or plans, often with little notice;
- Some aspects of programs depend on the current faculty team as well as the goodwill and generosity of individuals, communities, and institutions which lend support.

Please be advised that these or other variables may require changes before or during the program. Part of the SFS experience is adapting to changing conditions and overcoming the obstacles that may present. In other words, the elephants are not always where we want them to be, so be flexible!

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## Course Overview

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This course contains two distinct but related modules: Swahili language and Tanzanian Tribal/Maasai Socio-culture. The Swahili language module offers listening, oral and written practice of the Swahili language at a basic level of proficiency (beginner only) to increase students' communication and comprehension skills. Much of the Maasai population does not speak Swahili, but it is the national language of Tanzania. The Tanzanian Tribal/Maasai socio-culture module emphasizes understanding of, and direct contact and interaction with, the native communities with which the Center works, primarily the Maasai but also the Iraqw in Tanzania. This exposure to culture and language will be reviewed and processed through lectures, field exercises and classroom discussion. The socio-cultural module is designed to help students experience intense immersion in the culture and be therefore more adept at working effectively in their community based directed research efforts.

## Swahili Language Module

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This module is designed to provide students with a basic understanding of the Swahili language at a rudimentary level. Most of our students have no prior Swahili language training. This module will help students communicate more effectively with community members, clients and others who speak Kiswahili, offer them insight into the Tanzania culture via language history and development, and enable students to increase their basic conversation and comprehension skills in Kiswahili.

There are 8 noun classes in the Swahili language, which are the key to learning the language. To help students grasp the language quickly, we will first cover these noun classes and their concord-prefixes and the various rules of the grammatical structure. After this, the course will proceed by learning and practicing grammar and vocabulary, including terms and phrases commonly used. Students will engage in oral and written practice exercises to develop skills to understand and communicate in Kiswahili.

## Socio-culture Module

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This module provides students with an understanding of the various Tanzanian ethnic groups' history, society, and culture; Maasai/Iraqw roles in natural resource conservation; and the challenges facing pastoralism and wildlife conservation in Tanzania. Emphasis will be given to the historical and current issues that affect the Maasai/Iraqw culture and society. The course will cover topics on the role of cultural practices including ceremonies and rituals in shaping the Maasai/Iraqw social systems. Historical process of change in the territorial and socioeconomic conditions of the Maasai/Iraqw and how this has influenced natural resource conservation will also be covered. Other areas covered will be the cultural and ecological significance of cultivation in the livestock-based production system of the Maasai/Iraqw. Students will participate in various community projects and day-to-day community activities.

## Learning Objectives

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### Swahili Language Module

In this module students will:

- Learn the various Swahili noun classes and their concord prefixes which will help the student in grasping the use of the language
- Practice pronunciations, greetings, counting and reading in Kiswahili
- Practice conversation including asking and answering questions
- Conduct exercises on translating words and phrases from Swahili to English and vice versa.

## Socio-Culture Module

The objective of this module is to introduce students to:

- Natural Resource exploitation by the Maasai/Iraqw; mainly exploitation of wild fauna and flora for cultural reasons and how this influences the conservation of these resources.
- The role of Rituals, Ceremonies, Kinship (clans and family) and Age sets (age group) system in Maasai social organization and livestock production
- Maasai/Iraqw and cultural interactions through a day long home stay
- Iraqw and cultural interactions through a day long home stay
- Community activities where students will visit local schools to observe the extent of the spread of education among Maasai/Iraqw children and compare the number of girls to boys. Also visit a Maasai Manyatta and Iraqw boma to observe the role of women in the production economy.

## Assessment

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The evaluation breakdown for the course is as follows:

| Assessment Item  | Value (%)  |
|--|------------|
| Language Exercise 1  | 10         |
| Language Exercise 2  | 10         |
| Language Exercise 3  | 10         |
| Language Exercise 4  | 10         |
| Language Exam  | 30         |
| Analysis of Maasai Manyatta as ecotourism enterprises and/or cultural entities | 20         |
| Participation  | 10         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   | <b>100</b> |

### Language Exercises (Four exercises, 10% each)

A variety of written and oral exercises covering:

1. self-introduction, greetings, counting, days of the week
2. parts of the human body, animal names, family members, verbs and tenses, constructing sentences using prefixes
3. translation of words, phrases, speech, and communication
4. noun classes such as m/wa, m/mi, ma and ki/vi(ch/vy)

### Language Exam (30%)

There will be a one-hour written and oral exam. The test will be based on materials covered from exercises, readings, classes, field visits and observations.

### Analysis of Maasai Manyatta as ecotourism enterprises and/or cultural entities (25%)

Students will write a short 2,000-word communication article, critically analyzing tourism enterprises and their positive or negative influences on peoples' culture, particularly addressing the economic, ecological, and socio-cultural issues associated with cultural Bomas.

### Participation (10%)

This assessment strategy seeks to encourage students to do background reading and preparation for class sessions. Active participation will encompass active learning in class and group work.

## Grading Scheme

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|    |                 |    |                |    |                |   |                |
|----|-----------------|----|----------------|----|----------------|---|----------------|
| A  | 95.00 - 100.00% | B+ | 86.00 - 89.99% | C+ | 76.00 - 79.99% | D | 60.00 - 69.99% |
| A- | 90.00 - 94.99%  | B  | 83.00 - 85.99% | C  | 73.00 - 75.99% | F | 0.00 - 59.99%  |
|    |                 | B- | 80.00 - 82.99% | C- | 70.00 - 72.99% |   |                |

## General Reminders

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**Honor Code/Plagiarism** – SFS places high expectations on their students and we hold students accountable for their behaviors. SFS students are held to the honor code below. SFS has a zero-tolerance policy towards student cheating, plagiarism, data falsification, and any other form of dishonest academic and/or research practice or behavior. Using the ideas or material of others without giving due credit is cheating and will not be tolerated. Any SFS student found to have engaged in or facilitated academic and/or research dishonesty will receive no credit (0%) for that activity.

*“SFS does not tolerate cheating or plagiarism in any form. While participating in an SFS program, students are expected to refrain from cheating, plagiarism and any other behavior which would result in a student receiving credit for work which they did not accomplish on their own. Students are expected to report any instance of cheating or plagiarism by others.”*

**Deadlines** – Deadlines for written and oral assignments are instated to promote equity among students and to allow faculty ample time to review and return assignments before others are due. As such, deadlines are firm; extensions will only be considered under extreme circumstances. Late assignments will incur a penalty of 10% of your grade for each day you are late. After two days past the deadline, assignments will no longer be accepted. Assignments will be handed back to students after a one-week grading period. Grade corrections for any assessment item should be requested in writing at least 24 hours after assignments are returned. No corrections will be considered afterwards.

**Content Statement** – Every student comes to SFS with unique life experiences, which contribute to the way various information is processed. Some of the content in this course may be intellectually or emotionally challenging but has been intentionally selected to achieve certain learning goals and/or showcase the complexity of many modern issues. If you anticipate a challenge engaging with a certain topic or find that you are struggling with certain discussions, we encourage you to talk about it with faculty, friends, family, the HWM, or access available mental health resources.

**Participation** – Since we offer a program that is likely more intensive than you might be used to at your home institution, missing even one lecture can have a proportionally greater effect on your final grade simply because there is little room to make up for lost time. Participation in all components of the course is mandatory, it is important that you are prompt for all activities, bring the necessary equipment for field exercises and class activities, and simply get involved.

## Course Content

Type- **L**: Lecture, **FL**: Field lecture, **FEX**: Field Exercise, **GL**: Guest lecture, **CD**: Class Discussion

| No                           | Title and outline   | Type  | Time (hrs) | Required Readings  |
|------------------------------|---|-------|------------|--|
| <b>Language Module</b>       |   |       |            |  |
| 1                            | Greetings, introduction, counting, days of week, months, colors, question words, Exercise 1   | L; CD | 4.0        | Ali and Mazrui (2004).<br>Wilson (1985).   |
| 2                            | Family members, parts of human bodies, animal names, time, Exercise 2   | L; CD | 3.0        |  |
| 3                            | Verbs and infinitives, tenses, sentence formation, Exercise 3   | L; CD | 4.0        |  |
| 4                            | Past perfect, noun classes and their concord prefixes, exercise 4   | L; CD | 3.0        |  |
| 5                            | KI/VI noun classes, Ma noun classes   | L; CD | 3.0        |  |
| <b>Socio-Cultural Module</b> |   |       |            |  |
| 7                            | <b>Natural Resource exploitation and kinship in the Iraqw and hadzabe production system</b><br>How do the Iraqw utilize wild fauna and flora?<br>Which plant and wild animal species do they utilize?<br>Do women play a significant role in the Iraqw's livestock and agricultural production?<br>Individual and family roles in the Iraq social and production system | L; CD | 4.0        | Kiringe, J.W. (2005).<br>Kiringe, J. W. (2006).  |
| 8                            | <b>A critical analysis of Maasai Manyattas as ecotourism enterprises and/or cultural entities</b><br>What role do cultural Manyattas play in exposing the Maasai culture to tourists and what benefits do the Maasai derive from this activity?   | L; CD | 3.0        | Bruner and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1994).<br>Hitchcock, Brandenburgh, and Rodney (1990).<br>Donald Macleod, (2002). |
| 9                            | <b>Maasi Ceremonies, Rituals and Festivals</b><br>What rituals and ceremonies do the Maasai continue to perform and what is their significance?   | GL    | 1.5        | Paul Spencer (1991).<br>Elliot Fratkin (1991).   |
| 10                           | <b>Massai Society Structure</b><br>The role of sections, kinship, and the age-group structure in the Maasai society   | GL    | 1.5        | John L. Berntsen (1979).   |
|                              | <b>Total contact hours</b>  |       | <b>27</b>  |  |

## Reading List

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1. **Hassan O. Ali and Ali M. Mazrui (2004)**. Teach Yourself Swahili na Utamaduni (KIU) Ltd: Swahili for Beginners. Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania. ISBN 9987-9113-1-5
2. **Wilson. P.M. (1985)**. Simplified Swahili. Longman.
3. **Kiringe, J.W. (2005)**. Ecological and anthropological threats to ethno-medicinal plant resources and their utilization in Maasai communal ranches in the Amboseli region of Kenya. *Ethnobotany Research and Applications* 3: 231-241
4. **Kiringe, J. W. (2006)**. A survey of traditional health remedies used by the Maasai of Southern Kajiado District, Kenya. *Ethnobotany Research and Applications* 4:57-69
5. **Bruner, M. E and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, B. (1994)**. Maasai on the lawn: tourism realism in East Africa
6. **Hitchcock, Robert K., Brandenburgh and Rodney L. (1990)**. Tourism, Conservation, and Culture in the Kalahari Desert, Botswana. *Cultural Survival Quarterly*. Cambridge, 14 (2): 20
7. **Donald Macleod (2002)**. Disappearing Culture? Globalization and a Canary Island Fishing Community. *History and Anthropology*,.13 (1): 53-67
8. **Paul Spencer (1991)**. The Loonkidongi Prophets and the Maasai: Protection Racket or Incipient State? *Africa* 61 (1):334-342
9. **Elliot Fratkin (1991)**. The Loibonas Sorcerer. A Samburu Loibon Among the Ariaal Rendille, 1973-87. *Africa* 61 (3): 318-333
10. **John L. Berntsen (1979)**. Maasai Age-Sets and Prophetic Leadership: 1850-1910. *Africa* 49 (2) 134-146