



THE SCHOOL  
FOR FIELD STUDIES

# Introduction to Swahili Language and East African Tribal Communities SFS 2060

## Syllabus

The School for Field Studies (SFS)  
Center for Wildlife Studies and Human Dimensions of Conservation  
Kimana, Kenya

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 they may present. In other words, the elephants are not always where we want them to be, so be flexible!

## Course Overview

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This course contains two distinct but related modules: Swahili language and the Kenya Maasai Socio-culture. The Swahili module offers listening, oral and written practice of the language at a basic level of proficiency (beginners only) to increase students' communication and comprehension skills. Much of the Maasai population does not speak Swahili, but it is the national language of Kenya and Tanzania. The Kenya Maasai socio-culture module emphasizes understanding of, and direct contact and interaction with the Maasai community with which the Center works with, and where most of the Kenya program will be carried. This exposure to culture and Swahili language will be done and processed through lectures, field exercises and classroom discussions. Overall, the socio-cultural module is designed to help students experience intense immersion in the local culture(s) through use of Swahili, and therefore be more adept at working effectively in their community based field exercises and directed research work at the end of the semester.

## 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. The vast majority of our students have no prior Swahili language training and use. This module will therefore prepare and assist students to communicate more effectively with community members, clients and others who speak Kiswahili, offer them insight into the Kenyan cultures via language history and development. It will also enable students to increase their basic conversation and comprehension skills in Kiswahili.

There are 8 noun classes in the Swahili language which are key to learning the language. To assist 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 module 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 assist them 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 Kenyan ethnic groups' history, society, and culture; Maasai role in natural resource conservation; and the challenges facing pastoralism and wildlife conservation in Kenya. Particular emphasis will be on the historical and contemporary issues that affect the Maasai traditions, culture, lifestyle and society since this is the main ethnic group in the Amboseli region where the Kenya program will be carried. The course will cover topics on the role of cultural practices including ceremonies and rituals in shaping the Maasai social systems. Historical process of change in the territorial and socioeconomic conditions of the community and how this has influenced natural resource conservation will also be covered. Other areas that will be covered include the cultural and ecological significance of farming in the traditional livestock-based production system of the Maasai in Kenya. Students will participate in various community activities and projects that will expose them to the day-to-day lives of the Maasai people in particular.

## Learning Objectives

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### Maasai Culture Module

The overall aim of this module is to expose students to the Maasai culture, traditions and lifestyle. Specifically, its objectives are to introduce students to:-

1. Natural resource exploitation by the Maasai; mainly use of wild fauna and flora in their day-to-day lives, and how this influences conservation of these resources. Students will examine the impact of modernity on the Maasai, and its influence on use and conservation of natural resources as well as their culture and lifestyle
2. The role of rituals, ceremonies, kinship (clans and family) and age sets (age group) system in Maasai social organization and livestock production
3. Maasai lifestyle, traditions and culture through a day long home stay with local Maasai families. Students will learn the roles and tasks undertaken by women, men, morans and children in the Maasai community
4. Community activities where students will visit local schools to get insights on the impacts of formal education and modernity among Maasai children
5. The role of Maasai culture in cultural tourism in the Amboseli region. Students will visit local Maasai cultural bomas/manyattas for a cultural experience and presentation, and thereafter have a critique of the experience

### Swahili Language Module

This module aims at exposing students to the Swahili language which is Kenya's national language, and which is spoken and used for communication among the numerous ethnic groups in the country.

Students will:-

1. Learn the various Swahili noun classes and their concord prefixes which will help them grasp use of the language
2. Practice pronunciations, greetings, counting and reading in Kiswahili
3. Practice conversation including asking and answering questions
4. Conduct exercises on translating words and phrases from Swahili to English and vice versa
5. Use Kiswahili where necessary to communicate with locals especially those who can't speak in English. This will apply during visits to Kimana town, market days, while carrying out field exercises in the community, and during the directed research session at the end of the semester

## Assessments

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Kiswahili Exercises	Assessment Item	Value (%)
SSC01 & SSC02	<b>Exercise I:</b> written exercise covering: self-introduction , greetings, counting, days of the week, parts of human body, family members, and animal names, verbs, vocabularies and pronouns	25
SSC03 & SSC04	<b>Exercise II:</b> Written exercise on constructing sentences using prefixes, tenses and noun classes	25
SSC05 & SSC06	<b>Exercise IV:</b> Oral exercise on translation, phrases, speech and communication	15

Kiswahili language total percentage		65
Culture Course Exercises/Essay	Assessment Item	Value (%)
SSC 10 (FE)	FE I: A critical analysis of Maasai Manyatta as ecotourism enterprises and/or cultural entities	15
SSC 13	Essay II: Based on the home stay	20
Socio-culture total Percentage		35

## Grading Scheme

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

**Readings and handouts:** Assigned readings and hand outs (exercises / assignments) will be available prior to the scheduled activities. Course readings must be read and clarification on issues sought where necessary since ideas and concepts contained in them will be expected to be used and cited appropriately in assigned course essays and research papers.

**Academic Honesty:** SFS has adopted a zero-tolerance policy towards student cheating, plagiarism, data falsification, and any other form of dishonest academic and/or research practice or behavior (including but not limited to, standards set by any college or institution with which the student is associated). As a result, any SFS student found by SFS to have engaged in or to have facilitated academic and/or research dishonesty will receive no credit (0%) for that particular activity.

**Deadlines and expectations:** Deadlines for written field exercises and other assignments are posted to promote equity among students and to allow faculty ample time to review and return assignments in good time. As such, deadlines are firm and extensions will only be considered under the most extreme circumstances. Late assignments will carry a 10% grade reduction for each day late; after three days no material or request for review will be accepted.

**Class attendance and 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 program is mandatory because your actions can significantly affect the experience you and your classmates have while at CWWS. Therefore, it is important that you are prompt for all course activities.

## Course Content

**Type- L:** Classroom lecture, **FL:** Field lecture, **FEX:** Field Exercise, **FEX/D:** Field exercise combined with a class discussion

\*Readings in **Bold** are required.

No.	Titles	Time (hrs)	Type	Readings
<b>Swahili Component</b>				
SSC 01	Introduction to Swahili and Pronunciation Greetings(Falamu) Self-introduction( Kujitambulisha) Counting (Family members) Parts of human body(Sehemu za mwili) Animals names ( Majina ya wanyamapori) Miezi katika mwaka(months of the year) Muda(Time) Siku za wiki(Days of the week)	4	L	
SSC 02	Personal pronouns and object markers Verb and verb infinitives Tenses, Adjectives	3	L	<b>Alice W. Mangat</b> (2004).
SSC 03	Sentences formation and order- Noun classes and their concord prefixes M-WA [a-wa] KI-VI [ki-vi] M-MI [u-i] JI-MA [li-ya]	3	L	Wilson.P.M. (1985). <b>Kiswahili</b> na Utamaduni <b>Baba Malaika</b> -Dictionary
SSC 04	Question words	2	L	<b>Hassan</b> et al 2004. Test Yourself Swahili
SSC 05	<b>Written exercise</b> Translation of Questions Translation of Answers Translation of phrases	4	L	
SSC 06	<b>Oral exercise</b> Oral exercise preparation on greetings self-introduction( to test knowledge of identifying family members/ what one likes doing e.tc)	4	L	
<b>Sociocultural Component</b>				
SSC 07	<b>Policies and rules for living within the communities of SFS and the surrounding community.</b> This is an introduction to SFS and center specific policies and sensitizing students on community living	1.5	L	None
SSC 08	<b>Playing it safe in a foreign place: risk management and health issues in Kenya.</b>			None

No.	Titles	Time (hrs)	Type	Readings
	Covers SFS safety guidelines, and introduction to various hazards students are likely to encounter while at the center and some of the most common diseases and illnesses	1.5	L	
SSC 09	<b>Kinship system and its significance among the Maasai.</b> Lecture will examine kinship system among the Maasai and its importance at the family and societal levels	1.5	L	None
SSC 10	<b>A critical analysis of Maasai Manyattas as ecotourism enterprises and/or cultural entities.</b> Students will examine the role played by Maasai cultural bomas or manyattas in cultural tourism in the Amboseli region, and whether there are any substantial financial gains made by those involved. A critique led by Faculty on the experience gained by the students will be done at the end of the exercise	3	FEX/ D	<b>Bruner, M. E</b> and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, B. (1994).  <b>Hitchcock, Robert K.,</b> Brandenburgh and Rodney L.(1990)  Donald Macleod, (2002). 53-67
SSC 11	<b>Ceremonies, rituals and festivals among the Maasai.</b> The lecture will provide students with insights on the various rituals, ceremonies and festivals that are carried out by the Maasai and their significance to the society	1.5	L	<b>Paul Spencer</b> (1991). 334-342  <b>Elliot Fratkin</b> (1991). 318-333
SSC 12	<b>The role of sections and age-group structure in the Maasai society.</b> The focus of this lecture will be on the various sections that exist among the Maasai people, and how age groups are established and named. The significance of sections and age-sets/groups in the society will also be explored	1.5	L	<b>John L. Berntsen.</b> 1979. 134-146
SSC 13	<b>Experience of Maasai tradition, culture and lifestyle.</b> Students will have a full day home-stay with selected Maasai families, during which they will have an opportunity to immerse themselves and experience a typical Maasai lifestyle. Prior to this, the students will be thoroughly briefed, prepared and oriented on what to look for during the homestay, how to spend the day with the families and some of the tasks they are likely to engage in. A debrief led by the Center Director , SAM and program	7	FEX	None

No.	Titles	Time (hrs)	Type	Readings
	staff will be done during RAP to evaluate how the experience went, some of the challenges encountered and how the experience can be improved for better learning			
SSC 14	<b>Community service.</b> Students will work closely with the SAM and other program staff to identify suitable activities that can be done jointly with local communities including schools. This is in line with SFS philosophy of providing services to communities living within its Centers. It also provides an opportunity for students to interact and learn more about communities living in the Center's environs where the program will be carried out.	15	FEX	None
SSC 15	<b>Cultural sensitivity for the Directed Research (DR).</b> This lecture will be done prior to students embarking on their DR work at the end of the semester. Its aim is to sensitize students on the cultural norms to be observed and adhered to during the DR fieldwork with the Faculty, program assistants and local field guides. These norms will also apply during DR work presentations to locals and other stakeholders by the students at the Center	1.5	L	None
SSC 16	<b>Natural resource conservation dimensions in Kenya and Tanzania.</b> This will be a student's group discussion and reflection guided by Faculty, and will broadly examine the human dimensions of natural resources conservation in the Amboseli, Tarangire-Manyara Ecosystems. An exploration on the effects of modernity on natural resource use and conservation will also be done	0.30	L	None
	<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>		

## Reading List

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\*Readings in **Bold** are required.

**Alice W. Mangat** (2004). Swahili for Foreigners. Kenway Publications, Nairobi, Kenya



## **Baba Malaika-Dictionary**

**Bruner**, M. E and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, B. (1994). Maasai on the lawn: tourism realism in East Africa

Donald Macleod, (2002). Disappearing Culture? Globalization and a Canary Island Fishing Community. *History and Anthropology*,13 (1). 53-67

**Elliot** Fratkin (1991). The Loibonas sorcerer. A Samburu Loibon Among the Ariaal Rendille, 1973-87. *Africa* 61 (3): 318-333

**Hassan** et al 2004. Test Yourself Swahili

**Hitchcock**, Robert K., Brandenburgh and Rodney L.(1990). Tourism,Conservation, and Culture in the Kalahari Desert, Botswana. *Cultural Survival Quarterly*. Cambridge, 14 (2): 20

**John** L. Berntsen. 1979. Maasai age-sets and prophetic leadership: 1850-1910. *Africa*, 49 (2) 134-146

## **Kiswahili na Utamaduni**

**Paul** Spencer (1991). The Loonkidongi Prophets and the Maasai: Protection Racket or Incipient State? *Africa* 61 (1):334-342

Wilson.P.M. (1985).Simplified swahili. Longman