



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 (CWSHDC)  
Kimana, Kenya

2 credits

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

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***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, this is a field program, and the field can change.

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## 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. This module prepares and assists students to communicate more effectively with community members 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 to grasp the language quickly, we will cover the main noun classes and their concord-prefixes and the various rules of the grammatical structure. 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. Emphasis will be on the historical and contemporary issues that affect the Maasai, culture, lifestyle and society since this is the main ethnic group in the Amboseli region where the Kenya program is carried out. The course will cover topics on Kinship system, age groups and their significance among the Maasai community. Other areas that will be covered include gender roles and Ceremonies, rituals, and festivals among the Maasai. Students will also participate in various community activities and projects that will expose them to the day-to-day lives of the Maasai people.

## Learning Objectives

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### 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 various Swahili noun classes and their concord prefixes
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

## 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.
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.

## Assessment

Assessment Item	Value (%)
Language: Exercise 1	25
Language: Exercise 2	15
Language: Exercise 3	15
Language: Participation	10
Culture: Essay	35
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

### Language: Exercise 1 (25%)

Written exercise covering various basics including self-introduction, greetings, questions, counting, days of the week, parts of the body, family members, etc.

### Language: Exercise 2 (15%)

Written exercise on constructing sentences using prefixes, tenses, and noun classes.

### Language: Exercise 3 (15%)

Oral exercise on translation, phrases, speech, and communication.

### Language: Participation (10%)

Everybody should be prepared for each academic session. Active participation during classes, discussions, assignments, and activities is expected.

### Culture: Essay (35%)

After a Field Excursion to a Maasai homestead, students will write a critical analysis of Maasai Manyattas as ecotourism enterprises and/or cultural entities

## 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 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.

## Lectures

**Type: L:** Lecture, **FL:** Field Lecture, **FEX:** Field Exercise, **D:** Discussion, **P:** Presentation

No	Title and outline	Type	Time (hrs)	Readings
<b>Swahili Language Module</b>				
1	<b>Language Part 1 (over multiple sessions)</b> Introduction to Swahili and Pronunciation Greetings (Salamu) Self-introduction ( Kujitambulisha) Counting (Nambari) Question words Family members (Wanachama wa familia) Parts of human body (Sehemu za mwili) Animal names (Majina ya wanyamapori) Days of the week (Siku za wiki)	L	7.0	Alice W. Mangat (2004).  Wilson.P.M. (1985).  Kiswahili na Utamaduni

No	Title and outline	Type	Time (hrs)	Readings
	Time (Muda)			Baba Malaika-Dictionary
2	<b>Language Part 2 (over multiple sessions)</b> Personal pronouns Object markers Verbs and verb infinitives Tenses Adjectives	L	6.0	Hassan et al (2004).
3	<b>Language Part 3 (over multiple sessions)</b> Sentences formation and order Noun classes and their concord prefixes	L	3.0	
4	<b>Written exercise</b> Translation of Questions Translation of Answers Translation of Phrases	D	2.0	
5	<b>Oral exercise</b> Greetings Self-introduction	P	1.5	
<b>Socio-Cultural Module</b>				
6	<b>Kinship system, age groups and their significance among the Maasai community</b> Lecture will examine kinship system and age groups among the Maasai and their importance at the family and societal levels.	L	1.5	John L. Berntsen (1979).
7	<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 lead by faculty on the experience gained by the students will be done at the end of the exercise.	FEX; D	3.0	Bruner and Kirshenblatt - Gimblett (1994).  Hitchcock and Brandenburgh (1990).  Macleod (2002).
8	<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	GL	1.5	Spencer (1991).  Fratkin (1991).
9	<b>Experience of Maasai tradition, culture, and lifestyle</b> Students will have an overnight 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.	FEX	9.0	
<b>Total</b>			<b>35</b>	

## Reading List

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**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, 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