Is there such a thing as Swahili civilization? Who and where are the Swahili people? What is their historical journey to civilization? How did historians discover their civilization? Do all anthropologists and historians agree on where Swahili civilization originated from? What are the theories behind the Swahili civilization and how do we make sense of them? What was the source of Swahili civilization and how has it influenced trade, economical structures, and modern day architectural designs? How are the Swahili connected to Arabs and Islam? Who colonized Africa and how does that explain the rise and fall of the Swahili civilization? What about the Suez Canal, does it have anything to do with colonization and trade? Why do many Swahili historians perceive the Swahili Coast as having a triple heritage?

In our journey to answer many questions regarding the Swahili civilization, such as those highlighted here, we will explore the aspects of Swahili literary history and civilization. The course will provide knowledge of East Africa (not explored in regular language classes) through geography, history, political, and economic structures. The main focus will be on critical readings on Swahili literature, history, and civilization. Occasionally, we will also watch videos/films to illustrate key issues covered. The course will take a discussion mode; students will be assigned specific texts, present and lead class discussions. This course will expand your worldview. It will challenge the way you look at the economic decline of formerly colonized African countries, and how the prosperity of many parts of the world can be traced back to the Swahili civilization. You DON’T need to speak or to have taken any Swahili language class to take this course.

Course reading: 1. Future publication

For more information, please contact Professor Dainess Maganda (magandad@uga.edu)