AFRICA STUDY TRIP
KENYA 2009
The John and Elnora Ferguson Centre for African Studies (JEFCAS) organised its 6th Africa Study Visit in March 2009. This year’s trip had twenty Peace Studies MA students participating and the trip was facilitated by Prof. Nana Poku. Unlike previous study visits, this year’s was unique because it was the first time the Centre had organised a Study Trip to Kenya. The Africa Study Visit Module is an assessed practical module of the MA degree programme in African Peace and Conflict Studies. The study visit offers the students an opportunity to engage on a scholarly and practical level, while experiencing first-hand the realities of an African state in light of the theoretical foundations that students have received in peace, conflict, security and development.

The students had the opportunity to not only attend lectures, but to engage with some of Kenya’s top leading experts on a myriad of issues surrounding the conflict, including: political history of the Kenyan state; the post-election crisis in Kenya; the politics and workings of coalition governments; the ethnicity of politics; the role that religion and religious organisations play in peaceful societies; and the activities and role of the youth and women in politics. The class also had the occasion to participate in intellectual discourses with regional experts who spoke of the political and economic structures of the region; the security architecture of the East-African region; and the complexities of the Somali State.

The fact that Kenya is at the stage of recovery from the 2008 Post-Election Violence, the team had the unique opportunity to engage with victims of the crisis. A fact-finding visit was arranged to an Internally Displace Persons (IDP) camp in Naivasha, where the students had had one-to-one interactions with the recovering victims of the post-election crisis. The students who were moved by the circumstances of the people at the camp were compelled to pull together and make contributions that would assist the IDP camp.

During their two week stay, the students spent time visiting institutions with specific programmes in conflict areas around Africa, which included: the British High commission and the African Union Mission to Somalia.

The trip was not devoid of fun filled activities with students visiting tourist sites such as: the National Museum; the Bomas of Kenya, where they had an opportunity to learn more of the Kenyan ethnic groups and cultures; the Game Parks; an evening at the Carnivore and various ‘nyama choma’ outings; and a visit out of town to the Rift Valley.

Overall the feedback from this trip has been remarkable, with students having a clearer understanding of the theoretical debates on African politics, but more than that, students have a clearer and more accurate understanding and interpretation of the Kenyan realities. It is clear that the trip offered not only a learning opportunity that provided a deeper understanding of the African political tapestry, but also inspired the students towards working – and, as a result, we have about nine of the Masters dissertations focussing on selected themes and debates centred in Kenya.
**Student Comments**

“The study trip was a very enriching experience for me because I had the opportunity to see firsthand effects of conflicts. The visit to the IDP Camp in Naivasha was really moving, and seeing the effect of conflict gave me more determination to focus on my course so as to help resolve future conflicts in the continent”.  

*Hanson Shie*

“It ROCKED. I loved the people. The constant engagement in a universe of issues provided an excellent opportunity to accelerate our learning curve on the issues”.  

*Autumn Fielding*

“The AST completely exceeded my expectations. It was an opportunity to hear from those who were directly involved in addressing the post-election violence issues and to engage in intense discussions with my classmates. We were constantly challenged by Professor Poku, but the most insightful and humbling experience was hearing Esther’s story, a 64 year old grandmother displaced by the conflict”.  

*Yvette Selim*

“The study trip was a new and unconventional mode of learning that was welcome. Being from Kenya, it was enriching to engage with my colleagues and receive different perspectives of my country from their brief experience there. It also helped me realise the depth of the problem that brought on the post election violence and I was truly inspired by hope that my fellow Kenyans had for our country”.  

*Pauline A Onunga*

“The Study Trip reaffirmed my belief that, while there is life, there is hope”.  

*Shuhei Takami*

“The study trip helped me make the connection between the beautiful theories from class, and the reality on the ground. Turns out the reality doesn’t really care about theories. I came away with serious grievances towards bad leaders - I just might become that rebel leader after all....Yes, it’s an experience everyone should attempt”.  

*Olivia Nalubwama*

“The Kenyan trip was like a two sided sword: on one side I had more time for lectures on African politics from Professor Nana and the invited lecturers than the whole first semester in Bradford, and on the other side, the trip was the most touristic experience ever”.  

*Lamin Gano*

“The study trip to Kenya was well organised, introduced a range of interesting speakers and issues, and gave us the opportunity to discuss African politics all day long. Even more valuable to me was the fact that we were a very friendly, open-minded group of diverse students working alongside a committed Professor. I am really glad I went on this trip as I learned a lot”.  

*Sabrina Ensenbach*