

SOUTH AFRICA: CONTESTED TRANSITIONS

Online Collaboration in History 48Q: Overview

Our course will be organized as a seminar. Limited enrollment will permit close and frequent interactions among seminar participants. Equally important, the content and conduct of a seminar are significantly shaped by its participants.

We will do that in several ways. One is to use a new feature of the course web site both to facilitate weekly exchanges on course themes and topics and to maintain an online notebook or scrapbook focused on the individual or organization that each seminar participant will study throughout the quarter. The weekly exchanges are discussed here. The topical focus, leading toward a Critical Essay, will have separate instructions.

Since two hours of discussion per week—20 hours for the entire course!—will not permit us to address fully all of the questions and issues of interest to seminar participants, we will extend our discussions online. The vehicle for that is called a *wiki* (drawn from *wiki wiki*, a Hawai'ian expression used for the quick shuttle buses at Honolulu airport). For our purposes the History 48Q wiki is simply a place where we can talk and work together online. It differs from a discussion group or a blog in that we can easily contribute to or even edit each other's work. One of the best known wikis is an encyclopedia (Wikipedia) entirely written by the online community—essentially, anyone who takes the trouble to submit or edit a contribution (<http://wikw.wikipedia.org>). Your critical essays for History 48Q could well become the basis for a Wikipedia article.

Access to our course wiki is through a link on the course web page: history48q.stanford.edu Course Activities on the left-side menu. You will find there basic explanations about a wiki and how to use it. Fear not. It really is easy. You can experiment and try things out in what is called the wiki sandbox.

Our wiki includes a page for **Seminar Topic Comments**. To extend our class discussion, each week every seminar participant will add a comment (a paragraph or two) about that week's topic. Reactions, clarifications, elaborations, and more are all in order. That should be done by Thursday, 5 pm. Then, to move from statements to discussion, seminar participants will respond to or comment on at least one other participant's initial contribution. *In short, by Thursday afternoon, comment on that week's seminar topic. By the next session, respond to someone else's comment.*

Our wiki also includes a page for **Seminar Session Questions**. To help inform and shape the discussion in subsequent sessions, each week every seminar participant will add a question related to that week's topic that was not addressed fully or at all. Put simply, what would you like to have talked about more that we did not get to?

To summarize: our in-class discussions will continue online. For that, each week all seminar participants will use the wiki page on our course web site to:

1. Comment on that week's topic (by Thursday, 5 pm).
2. Respond or react to another seminar participant's comment (by the next seminar session).
3. Post a question related to that week's topic that deserves more attention

Done well, these comments and questions should not be a burden, but rather a helpful way of learning more about South Africa and its contested transitions. We can refine this process as the Quarter progresses.