



Rift Valley Institute

GREAT LAKES

2024 Field Course Q&A

JUNE 19-21



Kilifi
KENYA

Frequently asked questions & answers about this year's course

This Q&A provides an overview of the topics to be covered during our 2024 Great Lakes Course. This includes the political crisis in the Great Lakes region which focuses on conflict dynamics, governance issues, security sector reform, gender politics, and climate change. It also preempts participant questions pertaining to the course.

For more information on the 2024 Rift Valley Institute courses, scan the QR code or visit bit.ly/2024RVICourses. You can also email us at courses@riftvalley.net.



DIRECTORS OF STUDIES

Q&A

1. The Great Lakes region arguably faces the most severe political crisis in the past twenty years. Will the RVI Great Lakes Course explain how we ended up here?

Absolutely. Over three immersive days, adopting a decidedly regional perspective, the course will unpack conflict dynamics in the Great Lakes and put them in historical context. On the first day, we will discuss histories of war and violence, considering seriously the role of memory politics in the region. We will then zoom in on land and displacement as root causes of conflict and debate the recent triggers of the current crisis, from geopolitics to economic interests and military considerations. Subsequent days will build on and refer to these themes to offer a comprehensive understanding of a region that has been ridden by armed conflicts, but should not be reduced to them.

2. Surely there is so much more to understanding the Great Lakes besides discussing causes of violent conflict. How will the course give justice to other imminent socio-political issues in the region?

Indeed. An overly narrow focus on armed conflict risks losing sight of the logics of governance that in part enable it, and that may also harbour clues as to how to put an end to violence. The second day therefore takes a step back from conflict to better understand how the region is really governed. Using the security sector and gender politics as case studies, sessions will examine what these can teach us about broader dynamics of governance and issues of legitimacy. A comparative exploration of the inner workings of national armies, for instance, offers tangible hints at the way governments function, while the politics of representation and participation explain much about who is included, who remains excluded, how such decisions are made, and why.

3. This is heavy stuff, but it cannot all be doom and gloom. What about opportunities for and pathways to change?

Spot on. A concluding panel on the second day will shed light on the ways state power is always contested and resisted, and offer reflections on the opportunities for change these present. The third day is dedicated to two of the biggest topics of the day in the field of development; namely nature conservation and climate change. What can future initiatives learn from past interventions? What risks and opportunities offer green transitions? And what are some practical take-aways from current debates about decolonizing development and localizing aid? A final session will invite participants and teachers to reflect on the meaning(s) of peace and explore innovative paths towards it. Moreover, in the evenings, a quiz, a documentary and a music night introduce lighter, but indeed poignant aspects of life in the Great Lakes.

4. This all sounds interesting, but I am worried my very specific questions and concerns will not be sufficiently addressed. What can you do about that?

Fair point. The Great Lakes Course covers a vast and highly diverse region rich in deserving themes to debate and discuss. To give justice to all this complexity, the course takes a highly interactive and dialectic approach. We understand it as a learning space at whose heart lies the mutual exchange of different kinds of knowledges and perspectives. Lectures are short and cut to the point(s). Each session provides ample space for conversation, questions and answers. Coffee, lunch and dinner breaks offer opportunities for informal exchange. Dedicated one-on-one sessions with teachers give time for participants to raise specific concerns. And we invite everyone to contribute their own experiences and insights. We are excited to spend three days together and learn from one another.

SIGN UP

Find out more about the 2024 Great Lakes Course [here](#). Apply for the course [here](#).