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## AFRI 598: IMAGES OF AFRICA

WINTER 2012

McGill University  
African Studies Program

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:35 – 3:55  
Leacock 424

Instructor: Nicholas Barber  
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 10:30 – 12  
Peterson Hall 114

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As a “capstone”, this course offers African Studies degree students the opportunity to meet together to discuss issues related to Africa in an integrated, interdisciplinary context. The theme of this year’s course, “Images of Africa”, draws attention to the ways in which the African continent is constructed as an object of academic and popular knowledge, to how Africa and Africans have been portrayed to outside audiences historically and contemporarily, and to the socio-political ramifications of such portrayals. The course will trace images of Africa through time, from the late colonial period to the present day. Topics discussed will include independence movements, postcolonial African film and literature, international aid/development, human rights, modernity/capitalism, and contemporary African media/popular culture. The course will place considerable emphasis on the ways in which African individuals and groups act to put forward alternate visions of African realities and to reveal the flaws, contradictions, and simplifications inherent in outside images of Africa.

The course will take the form of a small, interdisciplinary seminar. The seminar will not be based on lectures, so it is important that students participate actively in class. Class discussions will draw on weekly assigned readings, information derived from other courses, and knowledge of African history and current events. Readings and other course materials originate from a variety of disciplines within the social sciences and humanities, and include academic, literary and journalistic sources. Most degree students in African Studies are also pursuing another discipline, and students are encouraged to contribute these perspectives to the group. Students are also encouraged to keep up-to-date on African current affairs, and to bring timely issues and topics to class discussions so that the seminar becomes a dynamic setting for engaging with African realities.

### **Books and Readings:**

Five required books are available for purchase at Paragraph Bookstore on Ave. McGill College (listed below and denoted in the syllabus with an asterisk \*). All other readings are available for download on Web CT, or online. Students should complete all assigned readings for a given week before the Tuesday class so that discussions can compare and contrast the different texts.



Books to purchase:

- \*Hergé. 1931. *Tintin in the Congo*
- \*Jan Pieterse. 1995. *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture*
- \*Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. 1982. *Devil on the Cross*
- \*Mike Tidwell. 1990. *The Ponds of Kalambayi: A Peace Corps Memoir*
- \*James Ferguson. 2006. *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order*

### **African Studies Film Series:**

Films, videos, and other visual representations are one of the primary ways that non-Africans learn about African issues and cultures, especially in the contemporary context. The viewing of films and film clips will be an integral part of the course. Students are encouraged to think critically about on-screen portrayals, and to relate these to the class readings. A few short works will be screened in their entirety during regular class meetings, as noted in the class syllabus. Some works, however, are too long to be shown in class. For these works, a special African Studies Film Series has been organized. Five screenings will be held on Monday evenings from 7:15-9:45 p.m. throughout the semester in the Cultural Studies Screening Room (3475 Peel St.). Screenings have been arranged to coordinate with the topics discussed in the class, and are noted on the class syllabus. Attendance is highly recommended. Students who are unable to attend the screenings should make arrangements to view the films on their own time. All films are available from the McGill library.

### **EVALUATION:**

Participation	30%
Group presentation	20%
Paper proposal	10%
Final paper	40%

### **Course Assignments:**

#### *Participation*

Because this is a small seminar, participation is crucial, and a substantial portion of each student's mark will be based on in-class and online participation. The participation grade will consist of four components:

1. Class Attendance: Class attendance is *MANDATORY*. All absences must be approved in advance by the instructor or justified with a doctor's note or other proper documentation. Students missing class without approval or documentation will be docked 2% or their participation mark per class missed.
2. Weekly Reading Response Questions: Students must post 3 comments or questions on the upcoming week's readings on the Web CT discussion board by *9 a.m. on Tuesday* before class. These posts will be used to guide the week's class discussions. Comments and questions need not be long (a few sentences will suffice), but should demonstrate substantive intellectual engagement with the week's texts.



For instance, if the assigned reading was *The End of Poverty* by Jeffrey Sachs, the following would be a bad discussion question:

- How does Sachs argue that we can “end poverty” in Africa?

The following would be a good discussion question:

- Sachs views the tighter integration of “impoverished communities” into global capitalism as “the key to ending poverty” (p. 242). Yet Sachs describes local people in a way that gives them little agency or power over their lives (see, for instance, his discussion of the Kenyan Millennium Villages project on page 227), repeatedly stating that it will be increased support from the West that will “save” Africa. How does Sachs’ prescription for development differ from those of the Pan-Africanist thinkers that we read during Week 4? Nkrumah and Cabral, for instance, believed that African development would be facilitated precisely by limiting engagement with the West. How can we account for these different positions?

Students do not need to treat every assigned reading in their questions and comments, but should make an effort to identify general themes and make connections, rather than focusing all questions on a single text. *Students should read one another’s posts online before class and come prepared to offer responses and comments.*

3. Class Participation: Students are expected to come to class having done the assigned readings and prepared to offer specific insights or ask specific questions. Students should be attentive in class and participate actively in class discussions. Students are expected to make at least one substantive intervention per class discussion.
4. Web CT Participation: Students are also encouraged to participate in the class through the Web CT discussion board. Students can use the discussion board to share links to interesting articles or other resources with their classmates, as well as to comment on one another’s posts and discussion questions. Students are expected to make at least one post, or one response to another student’s post, per week.

### *Group Presentation*

In groups of three, students will present a specific issue or event in African current affairs that is not covered in the course syllabus. Presentations should first provide background and explanation and then undertake a detailed analysis of how the event has been portrayed in at least *two different newspapers, magazines, or websites, at least one of which must be from Africa* (allafrica.com is an excellent source for African newspaper stories). Students may pursue more “typical” stories relating to conflict, crisis, underdevelopment, etc., or explore issues that are not usually discussed in the mainstream Western press, such as cultural and sporting events, local politics, etc. Presentations should be 15-20 minutes in length, with another 10 minutes allotted for class questions and discussion. Students are encouraged to use visual aids such as multimedia clips and PowerPoint presentations to enhance their work. A group mark will be allotted based on the thoroughness and innovativeness of the presentation and discussion of the chosen topic, the insightfulness of the critique of media representations of the topic, the quality of visual aids and other supporting materials, and poise in answering classmates’ questions.



### *Final Paper (and Paper Proposal)*

Students will submit a final, 12-15 page paper. Because of the wide range of topics covered, the various types of sources used, and the general interdisciplinary nature of the course, the scope of possible research questions is nearly unlimited. The only stipulation is that the paper relate in some way to how Africa and/or Africans are portrayed or viewed by non-Africans. Or indeed how Africans view themselves.

A 2-3 page paper proposal must be submitted by email to the instructor by the beginning of class on **Thursday, February 16**. The proposal should discuss the key question or problem to be addressed, the aims and objectives of the student's research, and the strategy and methods that will be used. The proposal should also include a preliminary bibliography of at least eight academic sources.

The final paper and paper proposal must conform to the formatting and citation guidelines (in-text, author-date style) specified in the *Chicago Manual of Style, 16<sup>th</sup> edition*. (Available as an e-book through the McGill library website.)

Final papers must be submitted by email to the instructor by *11:59 p.m. on Tuesday, April 17<sup>th</sup>*. Late papers will be docked 2 points out of 40 per day or portion of a day late unless prior arrangements are made with the instructor.

*"McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures. See [www.mcgill.ca/integrity](http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity) for more information."*

## SYLLABUS

### WEEK 1 (January 10 & 12): INTRODUCTION

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- Binyavanga Wainaina. 2005. "How to Write about Africa". *Granta* 92. <http://www.granta.com/Magazine/92/How-to-Write-about-Africa/Page-1> and "How to Write about Africa II: The Revenge". *Bazaar II* 21. <http://www.bidoun.org/magazine/21-bazaar-ii/how-to-write-about-africa-ii-the-revenge-by-binyavanga-wainaina>
- *Africa is a Country* (blog). <http://africasacountry.com/>
- \*Hergé. 1931. *Tintin in the Congo*. 64 pp.

Recommended:

- Philippe Met. 1996. "Of Men and Animals: Hergé's *Tintin au Congo*, a Study in Primitivism". *Romantic Review* 87. 15 pp.

### WEEK 2 (January 17 & 19): ORIENTALISM

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**In Class Film:** *The Hunters*. 1957. John Marshall, dir. (USA, 72 min.)

- Vachel Lindsay. 1914. *The Congo* (poem). <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/Lindsay/lindsay.html#congo>



- \*Jan Pieterse. 1995. *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture*. Introduction, Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 15. 125 pp.

Recommended:

- Edward Said. 1978. "Introduction". In *Orientalism*. 28 pp.

### **WEEK 3 (January 24 & 26): "INVENTING" AFRICA**

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- Terence Ranger. 1983. "The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa". In *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger. 51 pp.
- Andrew Apter. 1999. "Africa, Empire, and Anthropology: A Philological Exploration of Anthropology's Heart of Darkness". *Annual Review of Anthropology* 28. 21 pp.
- Josephine Beoku-Betts. 1976. "Western Perceptions of African Women in the 19th & Early 20th Centuries" *Africana Research Bulletin*. 27 pp.

Recommended:

- Mahmood Mamdani. 1996. "Decentralized Despotism" and "Indirect Rule – Indirect Rule as Colonial Reform". In *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*. 42 pp.

### **WEEK 4 (January 31 & February 2): INDEPENDENCE AND BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS MOVEMENTS**

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**African Studies Film Series:**

***Franz Fanon: Black Skin, White Mask*. 1996.  
Isaac Julien, dir. (United Kingdom, 52 min.)**

***Amílcar Cabral*. 2000. Ana Lúcia Ramos, dir.  
(Cape Verde/Portugal, 52 min.)**

*Monday, January 30 @ 7:15 p.m.*

*Cultural Studies Screening Room, 3475 Peel*

- Robert J. C. Young. 2001. "Nkrumah and Pan-Africanism" and "The Senghors and Francophone African Socialism". In *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*. 37 pp.
- Tsenay Serequeberhan. 1994. "African Philosophy: Horizon and Discourse" and "The Liberation Struggle: Existence and Historicity". In *The Hermeneutics of African Philosophy: Horizon and Discourse*. 48 pp.
- Amílcar Cabral. 1970. "National Liberation and Culture". Speech delivered at Syracuse University. February 20. 14 pp.
- RFI. Africa: 50 years of independence. (website). <http://www.english.rfi.fr/africa/20100212-africa-50-years-independence>



Recommended:

- Kwame Anthony Appiah. 1992. "The Invention of Africa" and "Illusions of Race". In *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*. 43 pp.

## WEEK 5 (February 7 & 9): AFRICA WRITES BACK I

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**In Class Film:** *Moi, Un Noir*. 1958. Jean Rouch, dir. (France, 70 min.)

- Albert Cervoni. 2008[1965]. "A Historic Confrontation in 1965 between Jean Rouch and Ousmane Sembène: "You Look at Us as If We Were Insects"". In *Ousmane Sembène: Interviews*. eds. Annett Busch and Max Annas. 4 pp.
- Nwachukwu Frank Ukadike. 1994. "Introduction". In *Black African Cinema*. 21 pp.
- Manthia Diawara. 1992. "The Artist as Leader of the Revolution: The History of the Fédération Panafricaine des Cinéastes". In *African Cinema: Politics & Culture*. 16 pp.
- Joseph Gugler. 2003. "Xala: Impotence Sexual, Cultural, Economic, and Political". In *African Film: Re-Imagining a Continent*. 11 pp.

Recommended:

- Françoise Pfaff. 1984. "Sembène, A Griot of Modern Times" In *The Cinema of Ousmane Sembène: A Pioneer of African Film*. 14 pp.

## WEEK 6 (February 14 & 16): AFRICA WRITES BACK II

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**\*\*\*FINAL PAPER PROPOSALS DUE THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 16 BY THE BEGINNING OF CLASS\*\*\***

<p><b><u>African Studies Film Series:</u></b> <b><i>Xala</i>. 1974. Ousmane Sembène, dir. (Senegal, 123 min.)</b></p> <p><i>Monday, February 13 @ 7:15 p.m.</i> <i>Cultural Studies Screening Room, 3475 Peel</i></p>
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- \*Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. 1982. *Devil on the Cross*, trans. Ngũgĩ (entire). 254 pp.

Recommended:

- Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. 1986. "The Language of African Fiction". In *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. 23 pp.

**\*\*\*READING WEEK\*\*\***



## WEEK 7 (February 28 & March 1): DEVELOPMENT

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**In Class Film:** *ABC Africa*. 2001. Abbas Kirostami, dir. (Iran, 85 min.)

- \*Mike Tidwell. 1990. *The Ponds of Kalambayi: A Peace Corps Memoir* (entire). 304 pp.
- Ian Birrell. 2010. "Before you pay to volunteer abroad, think of the harm you might do." *The Guardian*, 14 November. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/nov/14/orphans-cambodia-aids-holidays-madonna>
- *Gurl Goes to Africa* (Tumblr). <http://gurlgoestoafrika.tumblr.com/>

## WEEK 8 (March 6 & 8): HUMAN RIGHTS AND GENDER VIOLENCE

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**African Studies Film Series:**  
***Moolaadé*. 2004. Ousmane Sembène, dir.**  
**(Senegal, 124 min.)**

*Monday, March 5 @ 7:15 p.m.*  
*Cultural Studies Screening Room, 3475 Peel*

- Metesebia Woldemariam. 2009. "It Takes One Woman to Change a Village: African Feminism in Sembène's *Moolaadé*". Presentation at the 29th Annual SW/Texas Regional Meeting of the Popular Culture and American Culture Association. 12 pp.
- Makau Mutua. 2002. "Introduction", "Human Rights and the African Fingerprint", and "Human Rights, Religion, and Proselytism". In *Human Rights: A Political and Cultural Critique*. 49 pp.
- Bettina Shell-Duncan. 2008. "From Health to Human Rights: Female Genital Cutting and the Politics of Intervention." *American Anthropologist* 110(2). 11 pp.

Recommended:

- Sally Engle Merry. 2006. "Introduction: Culture and Transnationalism". In *Human Rights and Gender Violence*. 36 pp.



## WEEK 9 (March 13 & 15): DISCOURSES OF INTERVENTION

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**In Class Film:** *The Death of Kevin Carter*. 2004. Dan Krauss, dir. (USA, 27 min.)

- Susan D. Moeller. 1999. "Compassion Fatigue" and "Covering Famine: The Famine Formula". In *Compassion Fatigue: How the Media Sell Disease, Famine, War and Death*. 106 pp.
- Hernando de Soto, Dambisa Moyo, Stephen Lewis, and Paul Collier. "Be it Resolved Foreign Aid Does More Harm than Good" (video). Munk Debates. <http://www.munkdebates.com/The-Debates/Foreign-Aid>.

## WEEK 10 (March 20 & 22): MODERNITY AND CAPITALISM

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**African Studies Film Series:**  
*Bamako*. 2006. Abderrahmane Sissako, dir.  
(Mali, 115 min.)

Monday, March 19 @ 7:15 p.m.  
Cultural Studies Screening Room, 3475 Peel

**In Class Film:** *Un Matin Bonne Heure*. 2006. Gahité Fofana, dir. (France/Guinea, 75 min.)

- \*James Ferguson. 2006. *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order*. (selections).

## WEEK 11 (March 27 & 29): THE MODERNITY OF TRADITION

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- Dorothy Hodgson. 2011. "Becoming Indigenous in Africa". In *Being Maasai, Becoming Indigenous: Postcolonial Politics in a Neoliberal World*. 36 pp.
- John and Jean Comaroff. 2009. "Three or Four Things about Ethno-futures". In *Ethnicity, Inc.* 15 pp.
- Adam Ashforth. 2005. "On Believing, and not Believing, in Witchcraft" and "Poison, Medicine, and the Power of Secret Knowledge". In *Witchcraft, Violence and Democracy in South Africa*. 41 pp.

Recommended:

- Dorothy Hodgson. 2011. "Introduction". In *Being Maasai, Becoming Indigenous: Postcolonial Politics in a Neoliberal World*. 23 pp.
- Edward Bruner. 2001. "The Maasai and the Lion King: Authenticity, Nationalism, and Globalization in African Tourism." *American Ethnologist* 28(4). 27 pp.





## WEEK 12 (April 3 & 5): YOUTH CULTURE

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**African Studies Film Series:**

***Viva Riva!*. 2010. Djo Munga, dir.  
(DRC/France/Belgium, 98 min.)**

*Monday, April 2 @ 7:15 p.m.  
Cultural Studies Screening Room, 3475 Peel*

**In Class Film:** *Democracy In Dakar*. 2009. Magee McIlvaine, Chris Moore and Ben Herson, dirs. (USA, 69 min.)

- Sarah Nuttall. 2004. "Stylizing the Self: The Y Generation in Rosebank, Johannesburg". *Public Culture* 16(3). 22 pp.
- Paul Ugor. 2008. "Small Media, Popular Culture and New Youth Spaces in Nigeria". *Review of Education, Pedagogy and Cultural Studies* 31. 21 pp.
- Zine Magubane. 2006. "Globalization and Gangster Rap: Hip Hop in the post-Apartheid City." In *The Vinyl Ain't Final: Hip Hop and the Globalization of Black Popular Culture*. Sid Lemelle and Dipa Basu, eds. 22 pp.

## WEEK 13 (April 10 & 12): POPULAR CULTURE AND MEDIA

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- Johannes Fabian. 1998. "African Presence: Terrains of Contestation". In *Moments of Freedom: Anthropology and Popular Culture*. 27 pp.
- Herman Wasserman. 2011. "Introduction: Taking it to the Streets" (pp. 1-16) In *Popular Media, Democracy and Development in Africa*. Wasserman, ed. 17 pp.
- Francis B. Nyamnjoh. 2011. "De-Westernizing Media Theory to Make Room for African Experience" (pp. 19-31) In *Popular Media, Democracy and Development in Africa*. Herman Wasserman, ed. 13 pp.
- *Pop Africana* (blog). <http://www.popafricana.com/blog/>

Recommended:

- Karin Barber. 1997. "Introduction" (pp. 1-12) In *African Popular Culture*. Barber, ed. 13 pp.
- Sean Jacobs. 2007. "Big Brother, Africa Is Watching". *Media Culture & Society* 29. 18 pp.

**\*\*\*FINAL PAPERS DUE BY 11:59 p.m. ON TUESDAY, APRIL 17<sup>th</sup>\*\*\***