

University of Wisconsin-Madison
 Department of History
 Fall 2008

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 Learn@UW : 600-1

History 600-1 : Imagining Africa (19th-21st centuries)

Wed. 11:00 am-1:00 pm, 5255 Humanities

Since the publication of Edward Said's seminal book, *Orientalism* (1978), historians and cultural critics have accumulated studies on Western images, stereotypes and representations of Africa as the 'Other'. More recently, historians have probed how such images came into action and shaped the conquest of Africa. Colonial narratives about tribes, diseases, race and gender helped to formulate powerful native policies, and transform African societies. Since independence, stereotypes have changed, but not disappeared. How do they continue to work? Anthropologists such as Paulla Ebron and Christopher Steiner reflect on consumerism culture and Africa: music, international tourism to the continent, or the global market for African art. More importantly, they explore how Africans themselves negotiate and manipulate the circulation of such ideas and commodities. Thus the seminar offers you, besides inroads into canonical works on the Western imaginary of Africa from the 19th to the 21st century, critical insights on Africans' representations of themselves, and of Africa. Moreover, it will encourage you to reflect on the history of the relation between imagination and practice, representation and social engineering.

Grading:

ORAL (20%)

An important core of our work will be intensive weekly discussions of assigned readings. Discussion are based on a careful analysis of the assigned readings for the week. They also depend on your willingness **to share** the ideas, questions and comments that the readings suggest to you. Taking the time and energy **to contribute** to class discussion, and **move it forward** in a **collegial** way (i.e. not monopolizing the floor but helping a collective conversation to flow) whether with a comment, question, doubt or criticism, is a crucial component of this. Active participation in the discussions will be evaluated on a weekly basis according to the criteria just outlined.

On week 9 & 10 (10/29 & 11/05) each student will prepare a short presentation of an artist of her choice, and one of his/her art work. The list of artists, and websites/information will be handed out in class early on.

WRITTEN (80%)

Two Short Essays (30%)

- Week 3: Chose either Conrad or Kingsley, and write a three-page paper (min. 600 words-max. 900 words) analyzing one aspect of her/his writing and picturing of Africa. You may use other critical readings in your essay (i.e., references from Pratt, Achebe, Gikandi, or McClintock). Due in class on 09/17.
- Week 9: Using the readings for week 9, write a three-page paper (min. 600 words-max. 900 words) discussing one or two examples of commodified African culture. Reflect on

African agency in producing such artifacts for global consumption. Reflect also on what you learned about Western desire for African items. Due in class on 10/29.

- One Main Essay (50%)-- After choosing a topic related to the seminar theme, and clearing your choice with me no later than week 5, you will write a 10-12 page research paper. A completed draft of your paper is due the Monday of week 13 or 15, the same week you present an oral summary of your findings. Final version of essay due 12/15 in instructor's mailbox before 12-noon.

Writings tips and Course regulations

An excellent paper

- contains arguments based on specific examples from the readings and lecture materials.
- has original ideas and is thought-provoking.
- has a clearly evident one-sentence thesis statement in the introductory paragraph. This statement of the paper's argument is systematically developed in the body of the paper, and summarized in a concluding paragraph.
- is nuanced and complex (using expressions such as: according to XXX....this suggests...probably...)
- uses active voice, and avoids contractions and informal language.
- notes all references to sources consistently following any standard form of citation.
- uses normal police for characters (max. 12) and reasonable margins.

Course regulations

- Absences affect the final grade. Two unexcused absences mean a failed course (graded F).
- Late written assignments will be marked down a grade (e.g.: from a "B" to a "C") for each school day missed, and will not be accepted after three school days after the due date (thus marked "F"). Papers put under instructors' office door will not be graded. Papers turned late can be put in my mailbox ONLY if signed, dated and timed by administrator at History Department front desk.

Readings:

I have collected articles and book chapters and made them available in a reading packet, for purchase at the Humanities Copy Center, Hum. 1650.

The following books are required and available at the University Book Store. They are also on reserve at Helen C. White.

Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes* (1992)
 Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (1990, orig. pub. 1902)
 Jomo Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya* (1965, orig. pub. 1938)
 Christopher Steiner, *African Art in Transit* (1994)

***** SCHEDULE *****

09/03 Week 1. Introduction—

Reading: Pratt, chap. 3, 38-68 [41 pp]

Movie: Henry Louis Gates Jr., Lost Cities of the South (PBS Series: The Wonders of The African World, 1999). More information available online [Learn@UW]

09/10 Week 2. Eros and Science

Reading: Pratt, chaps. 2 & 5, 15-37 & 86-107

E-Reading Anne McClintock, Imperial Leather, chap. 1, 22-74 [e-book on MadCat, read online] [93pp]

09/17 Week 3. On the Ground: Explorer-Writers in Africa

*****SHORT ESSAY 1 DUE IN CLASS*****

Reading: Conrad, Heart of Darkness, all book
Pratt, chap. 9, especially 213-216
Chinua Achebe, "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's Heart of Darkness" [link online at Learn@UW]
Kingsley, Travels in West Africa, chaps. V & XI: 100-122 & 192-230
Gikandi, Maps of Englishness [reading packet], 143-156 [160 pp]

09/24 Week 4. Another Africa? The View From African-Americans and Creole Elites

Reading Packet: Fairhead, The Liberia of the Journeys, 7-47
Seymour, Journal to the Interior of Liberia, 124-155
Zachernuk, Colonial Subjects, 47-79 [101pp]

10/01 Week 5. Cannibal Stories

Re-read Kingsley, 100-122 & 192-230

Reading Packet: Malchow, Cannibalism and Popular Culture, 41-123
Hunt, Dining and Surgery, 117-158 [122pp]

*****LAST WEEK TO CLEAR YOUR ESSAY TOPIC WITH INSTRUCTOR*****

10/08 Week 6. Encoding Tribes and Ethnicity During Colonialism

Reading: Jomo Kenyatta, Facing Mount Kenya, all book

Illiffe, The Creation of Tribes, 318-340 [reading packet]

[300+pp]

10/15 Week 7. Female Circumcision Then and Now

Re-read J. Kenyatta, Facing Mount Kenya, 130-154

Reading Packet: Sandgren, Christianity and the Kikuyu, 49-85
Davidson, Voices from Mutira , 20-31, 40-45, 64-69, 95-98, 199-209
Thomas, Imperial Concerns and Women's Affairs, 121-145
Kratz, Affecting Performance, 341-47

[120 pp]

10/22 Week 8. Seeing Themselves: Women, Gender, and Race

Reading Packet: Gondola, Popular Music, Urban Society, 65-84
Thomas: Modern Girl and Racial Respectability, 461-490

[60pp]

10/29 Week 9. African Art and Authenticity

*****PRESENTATION OF YOUR CHOSEN ARTIST AND ART WORK***
SHORT ESSAY 2 DUE IN CLASS**

Reading: Steiner, African Art in Transit, all book

[165 pp]

11/05 Week 10 Consuming Africa: Sex, Music and Video Tapes

*****PRESENTATION OF YOUR CHOSEN ARTIST AND ART WORK*****

Reading Packet: Ebron, Performing Africa, chaps 1, 2, 6 & 7: 33-72 & 167-212

[86 pp]

11/12 Week 11. Working on Paper

11/19 Week 12. Working on Paper

11/26 Week 13. Oral Presentations in Class

12/03 Week 14. Working on Paper

12/10 Week 15. Oral Presentations in Class

*****FINAL PAPER DUE ON 12/15 BEFORE 12:00-NOON IN MY MAILBOX*****