

Africa 983
Interdepartmental Seminar in African Studies
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Fall 2020
Wednesday, 1:20-3:15
5233 Humanities

This graduate seminar provides a setting for participants to consider Africa – as an idea, a field of study, a place in the world, a subject for teaching – from a multi-disciplinary perspective. It is available to graduate students as African Cultural Studies 983, Anthropology 983, Economics 983, Geography 983, History 983, or Political Science 983. The course is divided into three parts. In Part I (weeks 1-6), we will interrogate the notion of ‘Africa’ and explore the benefits and drawbacks of an area studies orientation in scholarship and teaching. We will also discuss the multiple meanings and varying expectations associated with working as an “Africanist” in academia, the ways in which these meanings and expectations might differ according to discipline and the location of institutions of higher education, and ongoing calls for decolonizing African Studies. In Part II (weeks 7-9), we will shift attention to a discussion of course development and online learning, with particular attention to the process of developing content for a multidisciplinary undergraduate course on Africa. Finally, in Part III (weeks 10-15), each student will create a module for one week of an online undergraduate course.

Neil Kodesh
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Office hours: Tuesday, 11 a.m.-1 p.m. via
Blackboard (appointment
required through Canvas)



“Kuba-Bushong Counsellor with ‘Basket of Wisdom’”
Jan Vansina, 1956
Africa Focus, UW Digital Collections

Required Text:

Julie Livingston, *Self-Devouring Growth: A Planetary Parable as Told from Southern Africa* (Duke University Press, 2019)

I have placed all other learning materials on the course website.

ASSIGNMENTS, REQUIREMENTS, and EXPECTATIONS



The credit standard for this 3-credit course is met by an expectation of a total of 135 hours of student engagement with the course's learning activities (at least 45 hours per credit or 9 hours per week), which include regularly scheduled meeting times (group seminar meetings of 115 minutes per week), dedicated online time, reading, writing, field trips, individual consultations with the instructor, and other student work as described in the syllabus

"Call to the Initiation"
Jan Vansina, 1954
Africa Focus, UW Digital Collections

- 1) Weekly discussions of the assigned readings are a crucial component of the seminar. You should come to class prepared to share your thoughts on the assigned readings and to actively participate in discussion. One or two students will be assigned to facilitate the discussion each week for weeks 2-6. The discussion leaders will make a short (10 minutes maximum) presentation at the beginning of the class. You are welcome to consult with me about your plans for leading discussion for your assigned week.
- 2) For weeks 2-6, each student will post a short response (maximum 1 page) to the readings and other learning materials for the week on the course website. These responses are required but will not be graded. Your responses should offer a critical assessment of some aspect of the week's materials – significance of the key arguments, most and least persuasive aspects, new research inspired by the work, etc. – and may also analyze how the materials relate to other courses and outside texts. You should avoid summarizing the materials and should instead focus on a particular theme or issue addressed by the author(s). Since these responses will be available for all members of the course to read, you may also choose in your post to respond to the observations of your classmates. These responses will serve, along with the introductory remarks prepared by the discussion leaders, as the basis for in-class discussions. You do not need to post a response for the week that you are

leading discussion. Please post your responses by 7:00 pm on the Tuesday before our class meeting on Wednesday.

- 3) In addition to attending and participating in weekly classroom discussions, you are required to attend the following events organized by the African Studies Program.
 - a) Third Annual Jan Vansina Lecture. [Dr. Jacob Dlamini](#) of Princeton University will deliver the lecture on **Wednesday, September 9 from noon-1:30**. The lecture will be hosted by the African Studies Program and will take place virtually.
 - b) Attend Africa@Noon event in celebration of the 10th anniversary of [Brittle Paper](#). The event will take place on **Wednesday, September 16 from noon-2:00**. The event will be hosted by the African Studies Program and will take place virtually.

****Please let me know if you cannot attend these events, in which case we can find a way to make the recordings accessible to you****

- 4) For the final assignment, each student will create a module for one week of an online undergraduate course on "Introduction to Africa." Students will develop the topic for their modules in consultation with me. The modules will include a variety of elements, including but not limited to lectures, learning materials (readings, videos, etc.), diagnostic assessments, and assignments. We will begin discussing this assignment in detail during week 7 of the course. Completed modules are due by 5 p.m. on Wednesday, December 16.

EVALUATION

Grades

- 50% prepared participation, including leadership of class discussion and weekly responses
- 50% final assignment

SCHEDULE OF CLASS MEETINGS

PART 1: Africa, African Studies, and Decolonizing Knowledge

Week 1 Introduction to Course

Sept. 2

Week 2 What is Africa?

Sept. 9

Learning

Materials: Mudimbe, Valentin Y. "E.W. Blyden's Legacy and Questions" in Valentin Y. Mudimbe, *The Mudimbe Reader*, edited by Pierre-Philippe Fraiture and Daniel Orrells. University of Virginia Press, 2016.

Appiah, Anthony. "The Invention of Africa" and "The Myth of an African World," in *In my father's house: Africa in the philosophy of culture*. Oxford University Press, 1993.

Mbembe, Achille. "The Subject of Race" and "Difference and Self-Determination," in A. Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason*, trans. by Laurent Dubois. Duke University Press, 2017.

**** Attend the Third Annual Jan Vansina Lecture on Wednesday, September 9 from noon-1:30. The lecture will be hosted by the African Studies Program and will take place virtually****

Week 3 What is African Studies?

Sept. 16

Learning

Materials: Watch "Herskovits at the Heart of Blackness"

Allman, Jean M. "# HerskovitsMustFall? A Meditation on Whiteness, African Studies, and the Unfinished Business of 1968." *African Studies Review* 62, no. 3 (2019): 6-39.

Hountondji, Paulin J. "Knowledge of Africa, knowledge by Africans: Two perspectives on African studies." *RCCS Annual Review. A Selection from the Portuguese Journal Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais* 1 (2009): 121-131

Mama, Amina. "Is it ethical to study Africa? Preliminary thoughts on scholarship and freedom." *African Studies Review* 50, no. 1 (2007): 1-26.

Arowosegbe, Jeremiah O. "African scholars, African studies and knowledge production on Africa." *Africa* 86, no. 2 (2016): 324-338.

Adomako Ampofo, A. 2016. 'Re-viewing Studies on Africa, #Black Lives Matter, and Envisioning the Future of African Studies'. *African Studies Review* 59 (2): 7–29.

** Attend Africa@Noon event in celebration of the 10th anniversary of Brittle Paper. The event will take place on **Wednesday, September 16 from noon-2:00**. The lecture will be hosted by the African Studies Program and will take place virtually**

Week 4 What is decolonizing knowledge?

Sept. 23

Learning

Materials:

Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Sabelo J. "The cognitive empire, politics of knowledge and African intellectual productions: reflections on struggles for epistemic freedom and the resurgence of decolonisation in the twenty-first century." *Third World Quarterly* (2020): 1-20.

Mbembe, Achille. "Decolonizing the university: New directions." *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education* 15, no. 1 (2016): 29-45.

Mamdani, M., 2016. Between the public intellectual and the scholar: Decolonization and some post-independence initiatives in African higher education. *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 17(1), pp.68-83.

Branch, Adam. "Decolonizing the African studies centre." *The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology* 36, no. 2 (2018): 73-91.

Comaroff, Jean, and John L. Comaroff. "Theory from the South: Or, how Euro-America is evolving toward Africa." In *Anthropological forum*, vol. 22, no. 2, pp. 113-131. Routledge, 2012.

Week 5 **Conceptual Pathways in African Studies**
Sept. 30

Learning

Materials: Selections from Gaurav Desai and Adeline Masquelier (eds.), *Critical Terms for the Study of Africa*

Week 6 **Reading Africa: growth and environmental sustainability**
Oct. 7

Learning

Materials: Livingston, Julie. *Self-Devouring Growth: A Planetary Parable as Told from Southern Africa*

PART 2: Teaching Africa and Designing a Course

Week 7 **Teaching Africa: the case of history**
Oct. 14

Learning

Materials: Selections from Trevor R. Getz *A Primer for Teaching African History: Ten Design Principles*

Task 1: Complete the online lesson on "Ideals of Social Organization and the Art of Life in the Inner Congo Basin"

Task 2: Choose the theme of your module, develop module-level objectives, and begin identifying learning materials

Assignment: **Complete worksheet on “Designing a Module, Part 1.”** Submit your completed worksheet to the drop box located in the “Assignment” tab by 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, Oct. 12

Week 8 **Module design, part 1**
Oct. 21

Learning

Materials: Explore the material about online course design and teaching on the Design + Teach+ Engage website: <https://designteachengage.wisc.edu/>

Read relevant material on the website contained in “Designing Online Courses” and “Self-Directed Courses”

Task 1: Complete the online lesson on “Beyond the Colonial Library: Fictionalizing the Past”

Task 2: Choose the topics of your lessons, develop lesson-level objectives, and finalize selection of learning materials for your lessons. Remember that your module will consist of 2 lessons.

Assignment: **Complete worksheet on “Designing a Module, Part 2.”** Submit your completed worksheet to the drop box located in the “Assignment” tab by 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, Oct. 20

Week 9 **Module design, part 2**
Oct. 28

Task 1: Choose the topics of your lectures, develop lecture-level objectives, and write abstracts for your lectures.

Task: 2 Begin developing warm-up activity and selecting learning materials for one lesson.

Assignment: **Complete worksheet on “Designing a Module, Part 3.”** Submit your completed worksheet to the drop box located in the “Assignment” tab by 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, Oct. 27.

PART 3: Developing Course Content

Week 10 **No class: work on developing module content**

Nov. 4

Task: Work on all of the components for 1 lesson: warm-up activity, lecture, learning materials, and content check

Week 11 **Peer Review Workshop 1**

Nov. 11

Task: Complete all of the components for 1 lesson: warm-up activity, lecture, learning materials, and content check

Assignment 1: **Upload one complete lesson to Canvas sandbox** by 5:00 p.m. on Sunday, November 8

Assignment 2: Review classmate's lesson in preparation for peer review workshop

Week 12 **African Studies Association Meeting**

Nov. 18

Week 13 **Thanksgiving**

Nov. 25

Week 14 **No class: work on developing module content**

Dec. 2

Week 15 **Peer Review Workshop 2**

Dec. 9

Assignment 1: **Upload second complete lesson to Canvas sandbox** by 5:00 p.m. on Sunday, December 6

Assignment 2: Review classmate's lesson in preparation for peer review workshop

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

By enrolling in this course, each student assumes the responsibilities of an active participant in UW-Madison's community of scholars in which everyone's academic work and behavior are held to the highest academic integrity standards. Academic misconduct compromises the integrity of the university. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and helping others commit these acts are examples of academic misconduct, which can result in disciplinary action. This includes but is not limited to failure on the assignment/course, disciplinary probation, or suspension. Substantial or repeated cases of misconduct will be forwarded to the Office of Student Conduct & Community Standards for additional review. For more information, refer to <https://conduct.students.wisc.edu/academic-integrity/>

Knowing how or when to cite can be confusing; if you are having trouble, rather than living in fear of inadvertent plagiarism please come discuss it with me during office hours. You may also find the following link helpful:

<http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QuotingSources.html>

STUDENTS' RULES, [RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES](#)

During the global COVID-19 pandemic, we must prioritize our collective health and safety to keep ourselves, our campus, and our community safe. As a university community, we must work together to prevent the spread of the virus and to promote the collective health and welfare of our campus and surrounding community.

UW-MADISON [BADGER PLEDGE](#)

UW-MADISON [FACE COVERING GUIDELINES](#)

While on campus all employees and students are required to [wear appropriate and properly fitting](#) face coverings while present in any campus building unless working alone in a laboratory or office space.

Face Coverings During In-person Instruction Statement (COVID-19)

Individuals are expected to wear a face covering while inside any university building. Face coverings must be [worn correctly](#) (i.e., covering both your mouth and nose) in the building if you are attending class in person. If any student is unable to wear a face-covering, an accommodation may be provided due to disability, medical condition, or other legitimate reason.

Students with disabilities or medical conditions who are unable to wear a face covering should contact the [McBurney Disability Resource Center](#) or their Access Consultant if they are already affiliated. Students requesting an accommodation unrelated to disability or medical condition, should contact the Dean of Students Office.

Students who choose not to wear a face covering may not attend in-person classes, unless they are approved for an accommodation or exemption. All other students not wearing a face covering will be asked to put one on or leave the classroom. Students who refuse to wear face coverings appropriately or adhere to other stated requirements will be reported to the [Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards](#) and will not be allowed to return to the classroom until they agree to comply with the face covering policy. An instructor may cancel or suspend a course in-person meeting if a person is in the classroom without an approved face covering in position over their nose and mouth and refuses to immediately comply. **The History Department has directed instructors to halt the class and, if necessary, leave the classroom if anyone in the room is not wearing a properly fitted mask.**

QUARANTINE OR ISOLATION DUE TO COVID-19

Student should continually monitor themselves for COVID-19 [symptoms](#) and get [tested](#) for the virus if they have symptoms or have been in close contact with someone with COVID-19. Student should reach out to instructors as soon as possible if they become ill or need to isolate or quarantine, in order to make alternate plans for how to proceed with the course. Students are strongly encouraged to communicate with their instructor concerning their illness and the anticipated extent of their absence from the course (either in-person or remote). The instructor will work with the student to provide alternative ways to complete the course work.

COURSE EVALUATIONS

Students will be provided with an opportunity to evaluate this course and your learning experience. Student participation is an integral component of this course, and your feedback is important to me. I strongly encourage you to participate in the course evaluation.

UW-Madison now uses an online course evaluation survey tool, [AEFIS](#). In most instances, you will receive an official email two weeks prior to the end of the semester when your course evaluation is available. You will receive a link to log into the course evaluation with your NetID where you can complete the evaluation and submit it,

anonymously. Your participation is an integral component of this course, and your feedback is important to me. I strongly encourage you to participate in the course evaluation.

ACADEMIC CALENDAR & RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES

See: <https://secfac.wisc.edu/academic-calendar/#religious-observances>

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES STATEMENT

The University of Wisconsin-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (Faculty Document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility. Students are expected to inform faculty [me] of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. Faculty [I], will work either directly with the student [you] or in coordination with the McBurney Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA. (See: [McBurney Disability Resource Center](#))

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION STATEMENT

[Diversity](#) is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW-Madison. We value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity as inextricably linked goals.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison fulfills its public mission by creating a welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background – people who as students, faculty, and staff serve Wisconsin and the world.

Additional Readings on African Studies and Decolonizing Knowledge

- Alpers, Edward A., and Allen F. Roberts. "What is African studies? Some reflections." *African Issues* 30, no. 2 (2002): 11-18.
- Appiah, Anthony. *In my father's house: Africa in the philosophy of culture*. Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Asante, Molefi Kete. "Africology and the Puzzle of Nomenclature." *Journal of Black Studies* 40, no. 1 (2009): 12-23.
- Aubrey, Lisa Asili. "African Americans in the United States and African Studies." *African issues* 30, no. 2 (2002): 19-23.
- Bates, Robert H., Vumbi Yoka Mudimbe, and Jean F. O'Barr, eds. *Africa and the disciplines: The contributions of research in Africa to the social sciences and humanities*. University of Chicago Press, 1993.
- Chachage, Chambi. 2019. ["From Ghettoizing to Gentrifying African Studies."](#) *Africa Blogging*.
- Challenor, Herschelle S. "African studies at historically Black colleges and universities." *African issues* 30, no. 2 (2002): 24-29.
- Clapham, C. (2020). Decolonising African Studies? *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 58(1), 137-153.
- Guyer, Jane I. *African Studies in the United States: a perspective*. African Studies Assn, 1996.
- Guesmi, Haythem. ["The Gentrification of African Studies"](#)
- Heleta, Savo. "Decolonizing Knowledge in South Africa: Dismantling the 'pedagogy of big lies'." *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies* 40, no. 2 (2018).
- Lonsdale, John. "African Studies, Europe & Africa." *Africa Spectrum* (2005): 377-402.
- Mbembe, Achille. *Critique of Black Reason*, trans. by Laurent Dubois. Duke University Press, 2017.

Miller, Joseph C. "Life begins at fifty: African Studies enters its age of awareness." *African Studies Review* 50, no. 2 (2007): 1-35.

Mudimbe, Vumbi Yoka. *The invention of Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988.

Ndlovu, Morgan. "Coloniality of knowledge and the challenge of creating African futures." *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies* 40, no. 2 (2018).

Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Sabelo J. *Epistemic freedom in Africa: Deprovincialization and decolonization*. Routledge, 2018.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Sabelo J. "The Dynamics of Epistemological Decolonisation in the 21st Century: Towards Epistemic Freedom." *Strategic Review for Southern Africa* 40, no. 1 (2018): 16-45.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Sabelo J. "Decoloniality as the future of Africa." *History Compass* 13, no. 10 (2015): 485-496.

Nyamnjoh, Francis B. "Decolonizing the University in Africa." In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*. 2019.

Pailey, Robtel Neajai. ["Where is the 'African' in African Studies?"](#)

Robbe, Ksenia. "African studies at a crossroads: producing theory across the disciplines in South Africa." *Social Dynamics* 40, no. 2 (2014): 255-273.

Robinson, P. T. 2007. 'Area Studies in Search of Africa: The Case of the United States'. In P. T. Zeleza (ed.), *Study of Africa: Volume 2: Global and Transnational Engagements*. Dakar: CODESRIA, 235–276. Gordon, Jacob, and Emmanuel Acheampong. 2016. *Trends in African Studies*. New York: Nova Science Publishers.

Zeleza, Paul Tiyambe. "The disciplinary, interdisciplinary and global dimensions of African Studies." *International journal of African Renaissance studies* 1, no. 2 (2006): 195-220.

Zeleza, Paul Tiyambe, ed. *The Study of Africa Volume 2: Global and Transnational Engagements*. Vol. 2. African Books Collective, 2006

Zezeza, Paul Tiyambe. "The perpetual solitudes and crises of African studies in the United States." *Africa Today* 44, no. 2 (1997): 193-210.