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*


*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 entirely 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.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>EVALUATION:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
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<td>Group presentation</td>
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<td>Paper proposal</td>
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<td>Final paper</td>
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**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, 16th 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 17th. 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 for more information.”

SYLLABUS

WEEK 1 (January 10 & 12): INTRODUCTION


Recommended:


WEEK 2 (January 17 & 19): ORIENTALISM

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](http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/Lindsay/lindsay.html#congo)

Recommended:

**WEEK 3 (January 24 & 26): “INVENTING” AFRICA**


Recommended:

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

**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*


Recommended:

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

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


Recommended:

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

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

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**African Studies Film Series:**

*Xala*. 1974. Ousmane Sembène, dir. (Senegal, 123 min.)

*Monday, February 13 @ 7:15 p.m.*

Cultural Studies Screening Room, 3475 Peel

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Recommended:

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***READING WEEK***
WEEK 7 (February 28 & March 1): DEVELOPMENT

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


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

**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


Recommended:

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

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


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

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


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


Recommended:

WEEK 12 (April 3 & 5): YOUTH CULTURE

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


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

- Pop Africana (blog). http://www.popafricana.com/blog/

Recommended:

***FINAL PAPERS DUE BY 11:59 p.m. ON TUESDAY, APRIL 17***