The purpose of this course is to examine and critique the ways in which “Africa” has been constructed as an object of Western knowledge. Readings and discussions will interrogate how Africa and Africans have been portrayed to outside audiences historically and contemporarily, as well as the socio-political ramifications of such portrayals. The course will also 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.

Course readings and topics will be divided into three sections. The first section—Representing Africa and Africans in Historical Perspective—will provide context, tracing the evolution of Western representations of Africa from the pre-colonial era to the present day. The second section—The Ethics of Engagement—will be the longest. During this section students will examine contemporary Western engagements with and representations of Africa and Africans, and will examine their own positionality vis-à-vis these process. Sub-topics covered will include human rights discourse, media portrayals, international aid and development, and voluntourism. The final section of the course—Writing Back, Challenging Stereotypes—will attempt to chart a path forward.

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. Students are encouraged to keep up-to-date on African current affairs (see Resources section below), 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:
Four 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 myCourses, or online.
Books to purchase:
*Hergé. 1931. *Tintin in the Congo.*
*Binyavanga Wainaina. 2011. *One Day I Will Write About This Place.*

Course Assignments:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EVALUATION</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group presentation</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper proposal</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final paper</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.

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 points out of 30 for their overall participation mark per class missed. Students arriving late to class without justification will have between 0 and 2 points deducted from their participation grade based on the degree of tardiness.

The participation grade will consist of three components, which will be graded according to a “check + / check – ” system that will be explained during the first class.

1. Weekly Reading Response Questions: Students must post 2 comments or questions on the upcoming week’s readings on the myCourses discussion board by noon on Thursday 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 African independence era thinkers that we discussed during Week 3? 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.

2. **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.

3. **myCourses Participation:** Students are also encouraged to participate in the class through the myCourses 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.

**BONUS - McDonald Currie Lecture:** The Institute for the Study of International Development (ISID) annual McDonald Currie Lecture will take place on Thursday, October 23, 2014, from 5:00-6:30 p.m. The location, speaker and topic will be confirmed shortly. Attending students will receive an extra 1 point (out of 30) toward their participation grade. (Please note that the participation grade is never to exceed the percentage established for the course.) At the lecture, there will be a sign up sheet. Before the lecture begins, students should sign up, providing their name, student ID number, and provide a signature. Attendance for the full lecture is necessary to receive the extra credit.

**Group Presentation**

In groups of four, 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 (Prezi, PowerPoint, film clips, etc.) 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, poise in answering classmates’ questions, and respect of the assignment time limit.

**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 in .doc or .docx format to the instructor before the beginning of class on Friday, October 10th. The proposal must identify a central research question,
provide an introduction to the research topic, and outline the structure to be followed for the research paper. The proposal should also include a preliminary bibliography of at least eight academic sources.

Final papers must be submitted in .doc or .docx format by email to the instructor by 9 a.m. on Monday, December 8th.

Citation and Formatting Style
Assignments 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.)

All written assignments must be double-spaced, in 12 pt. Times New Roman font, left justified, with 1-inch margins.

Late and Missing Assignments
Students who miss their group presentation must provide written documentation of illness or bereavement or will receive a 0.

Late proposals and final papers and book review assignments will be docked 5% (out of 100) per day or portion of a day late (including weekends) unless prior arrangements are made with the instructor and/or proper documentation is provided.

McGill Policies, Student Rights and Responsibilities
“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 http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/academicrights/integrity/cheating for more information).”

“In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.” In accordance with international translation standards, assignments submitted in French may be 20-25% longer than assignments submitted in English.

“Additional policies governing academic issues which affect students can be found in the McGill Charter of Students' Rights” (The Handbook on Student Rights and Responsibilities is available here).

“In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University’s control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.”

McGill Writing Centre
University-level writing must be clear, properly structured and free of any grammatical, spelling or formatting errors. The McGill Writing Centre (http://www.mcgill.ca/mwc/) offers courses, workshops, and tutorials for students seeking to improve the technical quality of their writing.

McGill Counselling Service
“University can be a difficult experience for many of us. Stress, depression and difficulty in coping with schoolwork are not uncommon. Student experiencing personal difficulties can contact McGill Counselling Services for help. Students experiencing a crisis situation will be seen by a counsellor or psychologist at the first available opportunity and no appointment is required. The McGill Counselling
Service is located on the fourth floor of the Brown Student Services building. The focus of the service is to assist students in dealing with personal, academic, and vocational concerns. The service is confidential and free of charge to eligible students (see http://www.mcgill.ca/counselling/ for more information or call 514-398-3601).”

Disabilities Office
“As the instructor of this course I endeavour to provide an inclusive learning environment. However, if you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with me and the Office for Students with Disabilities, 514-398-6009.”

SYLLABUS

WEEK 1 (September 5): INTRODUCTION & COURSE OVERVIEW


SECTION I: REPRESENTING AFRICA AND AFRICANS IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

WEEK 2 (September 12): ORIENTALISM

- Jan Pieterse. 1995. “Savages, Animals, Heathens, Races” and “In the Dark Continent” pp. 30-51 and 64-75 in White on Black: Images of Africa and Black in Western Popular Culture.
- *Hergé. 1931. Tintin in the Congo.

WEEK 3 (September 19): INDEPENDENCE AND THE LEGACY OF COLONIALISM

- IN CLASS FILM: Frantz Fanon: une vie, un combat, une œuvre. 2001. Cheikh Djemaï, dir. 53 min
• Recommended:

WEEK 4 (September 26): AFRICA WRITES BACK: LITERATURE – NGŨGĪ WA THIONG’O

WEEK 5 (October 3): AFRICA WRITES BACK: FILM – ROUCH VS. SEMBÈNE
• IN CLASS FILMS: Les Maîtres Fous. 1955. Jean Rouch, dir. 28 min.
  Borom Sarret. 1963. Ousmane Sembène, dir. 20 min.

SECTION II: THE ETHICS OF ENGAGEMENT

WEEK 6 (October 10): HUMAN RIGHTS AND GENDER (CASE STUDY: FGM/C)

***PAPER PROPOSALS DUE OCTOBER 10th AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS***
• IN CLASS FILM: Warrior Marks. 993. Prathibha Parmar, dir. 54 min.
• Dorothy Hodgson. 2011. “‘These Are Not Our Priorities’: Maasai Women, Human Rights and the Problem of Culture” pp. 138-158 in Gender and Culture at the Limit of Rights, ed. Hodgson.
WEEK 7 (October 17): MEDIA AND REPRESENTATION


- DEBATE: Western Media Coverage of Africa

WEEK 8 (October 24): WRITING AND SPEAKING ABOUT DEVELOPMENT


- DEBATE: Foreign Aid


WEEK 9 (October 31): VOLUNTOURISM AND HASHTAG ACTIVISM


- DEBATE: Voluntourism
  - Nicholas Barber. 2012. “Gurls, Go To Africa” The Link Africa, April 17. (PDF in myCourses)

- DEBATE: Hashtag Activism

WEEK 10 (November 7): “AFRICA RISING” NARRATIVES

- *Dayo Olopade. 2014. The Bright Continent.

WEEK 11 (November 14): CULTURAL APPROPRIATION? (CASE STUDY: “WORLD” MUSIC)

SECTION III: WRITING BACK, CHALLENGING STEREOTYPES

WEEK 12 (Nov 21): AFRICAN SCIENCE FICTION

- **IN CLASS FILM:** *Pumzi*. 2012. Wanuri Kahiu, dir. 22 min.
- Nav Haq and Al Cameron. 2012. *Notes from the Sun: Representations of Africa in Science Fiction*.
  - ---. 2014. “African Science Fiction is Still Alien”

WEEK 13 (Nov 28): ONE DAY I WILL WRITE ABOUT THIS PLACE

- Binyavanga Wainaina. 2011. *One Day I Will Write About This Place*.

***FINAL PAPERS DUE BY 9 A.M., MONDAY DECEMBER 8th***

RESOURCES

- * Africa is a Country: [http://africasacountry.com/](http://africasacountry.com/) -- Examining portrayals and perceptions of Africa in the West
- * All Africa: [http://allafrica.com/](http://allafrica.com/) -- A compendium of newspaper articles from across the continent
Another Africa: http://www.anotherafrica.net/ -- Showcasing African creativity; “arts and culture, design and architecture, fashion, music, photography.”


Art and Life in Africa (University of Iowa): http://africa.uima.uiowa.edu/ -- Essays and profiles examining the intersection of art and life


Buni.tv: http://buni.tv/ -- The African Hulu; films and clips from across the continent

Compare Afrique: http://www.compareafrique.com/ -- “A website dedicated to providing a forum for innovative writing and discussion about Africa’s development challenges.”

CP-Africa: http://www.cp-africa.com -- “One of the fastest growing online media outlets covering business, technology and culture in Africa.”

Everyday Africa: http://everydayafrica.tumblr.com/ -- Photos of everyday life on the continent


Middle Classes in Africa: http://www.classesmoyennes-africaine.org/en/ -- Research project documenting Africa’s rising middle class


Slate Afrique (en français): http://www.slateafrique.com/ -- News magazine


This Is Africa: http://thisisafrica.me/ -- “A leading forum for African opinion, arts and music.”

Timbuktu Chronicles: http://timbuktuchronicles.blogspot.ca/ -- “A view of Africa and Africans with a focus on entrepreneurship, innovation, and technology.”


What’s Up Africa (radio program) (Radio Netherlands): http://www.rnw.nl/africa/dossier/WhatsUpAfrica