

ANTHROPOLOGY 155

CINEMATIC PORTRAITS OF AFRICA

Winter Term 2009

Tuesdays 1-4pm, Pettengill G21

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Office Hours: Thursdays and Fridays 1.30-4pm or by appointment

Most Americans have "seen" Africa only through non-African eyes, coming to "know" about African society through such characters as Tarzan and such genres as the "jungle melodrama" or the "nature show." In this course, films from the North Atlantic are juxtaposed with ethnographic and art films made by Africans in order to examine how to "read" various cinematic texts. Related written texts help to answer central questions about the politics of representation: what are some of the differences in how African societies are depicted; why might particular issues and points of view become privileged?

Normally, we will meet for two-hours, as a compromise facilitating class discussion as well as film screening time. A collective screening-time for reserve material may be arranged by a paid "screener" if so desired. Small groups will regularly lead carefully prepared class discussions, details to be worked out in a meeting with me, preferably by Friday afternoons with a "check in" on Monday mornings.

Although the bulk of the "texts" for this course are the films themselves, you will have regular reading assignments as well. Available at the bookstore are: Bordwell and Thompson Film Art, Nichols Introduction to Documentary and Pieterse White on Black. Some of your reading assignments will be on Lyceum. Please be aware that this syllabus may be subject to change as the term unfolds.

- 10% = attendance (debits start to accrue after missing one class)**
- 30% = consistent, thoughtful, active, constructive, participation**
- 30% = two in-class group presentations, 15% each**
- 30% = two short papers, 15% each**

2009 CINEMATIC PORTRAITS OF AFRICA SCREENING & READING PROGRAM

- 1/13 COURSE ORIENTATION: in class screening of two “firsts” in African cinematic portraiture:
Africa Speaks! and *Borom Sarrat*
- 1/20 “Reading” Film
Video: *Tarzan the Ape Man* and (the first half of) *George of the Jungle*
Reading: Lutz and Collins “The Photograph as an Intersection of Gazes”
Bordwell and Thompson Film Art Part One, Chapter 1
Pieterse White on Black Part I
- 1/27 Wild Life, Wild Death
Video: *Congo*
Reading: Pieterse White on Black, skim Part II and read Part III
Bordwell and Thompson Film Art Part Two, Chapters 2 and 3
Dunn “Lights...Camera...Africa”
Conrad “Heart of Darkness” (excerpt)
Achebe “An Image of Africa”
- 2/3 Wildlife, Wild Death, continued
Video: *Blood Diamond*
Wainaina “How to Write about Africa”
Bordwell and Thompson Film Art Part Three, Chapters 4 and 5
Pieterse White on Black, re-read Part I
- 2/10 Introduction to African Feature Film: Acquiring a Voice
Video: *Wend Kuuni* and *Yeelen*
Reading: Bordwell and Thompson Film Art Part Three, Chapters 6 and 7
Diawara "Oral Literature and African Film: Narratology in *Wend Kuuni*"
Gentile "In the Midst of Secrets: Souleymane Cisse's *Yeelen*"
Mbiti “The Concept of Time”
Lakoff and Johnson “Metaphors We Live By”

YOUR FIRST SHORT PAPER IS DUE BEFORE BREAK

- 2/24 African Feature Film, continued
Video: *Ezra*
Bordwell and Thompson Film Art Part Three, Chapter 8
Korman www.offscreen.com/biblio/pages/essays/blood_diamond_and_ezra/
- 3/3 Contemporary African Feature Film: The Nollywood Phenomenon
Video: *Thunderbolt*
Reading: Bordwell and Thompson Part Four, Chapter 9
Webwork: go online and see what you find

- 3/10 Issues in Documentary Production: Technique and Voice In class screening *Passing Girl; Riverside*
Video: *Ghanaian Video Tales*
Reading: Nichols Introduction to Documentary Chapters 1-3
Bordwell and Thompson Film Art Part Four, Chapter 10
- 3/17 Issues in Documentary Film Making
Video: *War/Dance*
Nichols Introduction to Documentary Chapters 4-6
Bordwell and Thompson Film Art Part Five, Chapter 11
- 3/24 Issues in Documentary Filmmaking: Technique and Voice
Video: *Monday's Girls* and *Becoming a Woman in Okrika*
Nichols Introduction to Documentary Chapters 7-8
Bordwell and Thompson Film Art Part Six, Chapter 12
- 3/31 Documentary, continued
Video: National Geographic *Africa's Blood Diamonds*; History Channel *Blood Diamonds*
- 4/7 Conclusion
Video: *Bye Bye Africa*

SECOND SHORT PAPER IS DUE BEFORE THE END OF TERM, *i.e.*, NOON APRIL 18TH