



ANTHRO 255

CINEMATIC PORTRAITS OF AFRICA

WINTER 2015

TUESDAY NIGHTS in HEDGE 106

PROFESSOR ELIZABETH EAMES

ANTHROPOLOGY DEPARTMENT

159 PETTENGILL HALL

EEAMES@BATES.EDU

786-6082 OFFICE (VOICE)/841-5738 CELL (TEXT/VOICE)

OFFICE HOURS: MONDAYS & THURSDAYS 2:30-4:00

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Course Description:

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? Let's be very clear up front that this is *not* a class about Africa, Africans, or about African culture—this is a course about *representations* of African culture, altogether quite another story.

Course Goals and Objectives:

Fostering your media literacy is the central aim of this course. Part and parcel of building media literacy will be figuring out the politics of representation—in this case, exploring how colonial legacies and capitalist relations govern who gets to say what about whom, with what cumulative effects? Honing such media decoding skills now will forever assist you in reflecting critically on your everyday encounters with the ever-expanding 21st century media landscape. In addition, the course provides opportunities to advance your writing and presentation skills. This means analyzing and interpreting both words and images while also connecting them to larger course themes in seminar-style discussion. We will all work together to shape a supportive learning community.

ANTH 255 within the Bates Curriculum:

While ANTH 255 is not specifically required to complete any major, *Cinematic Portraits of Africa* can be counted towards the Anthropology major or minor, the African American Studies major, and the Rhetoric major. It also counts towards eight (yes, 8!) General Education Concentrations: Considering Africa; Culture and Meaning; Diasporas; Evidence; Film and Media studies; Identity, Race and Ethnicity; Popular Culture; and Racisms.

Accommodation:

We do not have any exams or time-constrained assignments. Nonetheless, learning differences come in many shapes, so if you have any certified learning difference hindering your ability to succeed in the course as laid down in this syllabus, please inform me directly and immediately. Be sure to have the Dean of Students' Office send me information about any recommended accommodation. I will then endeavor to make adjustments to improve the learning environment for all concerned.

Academic Honesty:

As you learned in your FYS, at Bates the work you submit or present must be your own. You will acknowledge and properly cite any ideas, information, or resources that contribute to your understanding. Learn and abide by Bates' Academic Integrity Policy:

<http://www.bates.edu/entering/policy/judicial-affairs/code-of-student-conduct/academic-misconduct/>.

If you have any questions about how to use sources, consult the Guide to Working with Sources:

http://www.bates.edu/writing/files/2011/06/Guide_to_Working_with_Sources_August_2013_print.pdf.

Failure to abide by any of these principles will result at minimum in having to do the assignment over again and could entail a failing grade for the assignment, or even for the course, depending upon the severity of the infraction. According to Bates policy, faculty-imposed sanctioning is completely independent of any ruling by the Dean of Students or the Student Conduct Committee. Fair warning: As Faculty Co-Chair of the Student Conduct Committee I am very familiar with this aspect of Bates' functioning.

More on Your Responsibilities:

Attendance is expected because I organize this course on the conviction that we learn from each other in our conversational exchange. With your second missed session, you will lose credit, and with your third missed session comes grounds for failing the class. Students are responsible for all assigned readings, screenings, essays, and for participating in our collective close textual analysis. In addition, small groups conduct independent research on a particular film and teach the rest of the class about the context of its production, its reception, and how to "read" its politics. Details of these carefully prepared class discussions will be worked out by the group in advance of a required planning meeting with Professor Eames. Please note that if something is unclear in a syllabus or in a class session, it is your responsibility to seek clarification. Email is the customary method of communication if you cannot find me in my office. Normally, I will respond within 24 hours. Extra credit goes to the first student reporting an availability problem with any assigned reserve or lyceum text. You can also gain extra credit with an emailed account of your experience at a relevant extra-curricular event not already assigned for this course.

Class Decorum and Professionalism:

Liberal arts college students are being groomed for futures in the professions, so you should learn to comport yourselves professionally. Come to every class with assigned material in hand and be prepared to discuss it. Practice active and respectful listening, especially when peers are finding their way through this material. Realize that we are all learning how to talk civilly about racism, one of the most profound and challenging issues of our time. Arrive to class on time, leave only during official breaks (unless it is a full on *emergency*), and turn off all cell phones. Only on rare occasions should a computer be open in class (but have Dean Gurney contact me if yours is required as an accommodation). Only under pre-approved unusual circumstances may you submit an assignment digitally. If you are not handing me the paper face to face, slip it safely *under* my door. Assignments handed in late without prior negotiation will be graded down, in fairness to students who have met the deadline. You must successfully complete all course work to qualify for a passing grade.

Course Materials:

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: Nichols Introduction to Documentary (use the shorter 2001 first edition not the longer 2010 second edition), Pieterse White on Black: Images of Africans and Blacks in Western Popular Culture, and Spadoni A Pocket Guide to Analyzing Films. Most of your shorter reading assignments will be on Lyceum, a few are handouts. Please be aware that this syllabus may be subject to change as the term unfolds (check lyceum). It is front loaded with reading to provide you with the tools to perform screen analysis. Should the class reach consensus, I can arrange for a joint screening time for you in Ladd Library's viewing theater. Some of our films are not found online.

Requirements:

Note the term requirement. Successful completion of each and every item listed below is *required* to pass AN 255

- 20% = consistent, thoughtful, active, constructive, in-class participation**
- 20% = group presentation during first half of term; self and group evaluations**
- 20% = short essay during first half of term**
- 20% = second half of term's in-class group presentation; self and group evaluations**
- 20% = second half of term's short essay**

**CINEMATIC PORTRAITS OF AFRICA
SCREENING & READING PROGRAM
2015**

- 1/13 COURSE ORIENTATION: in class screening of Adichie's *The Danger of the Single Story* as well as two "firsts" in African cinematic portraiture: *Africa Speaks!*; *Borom Sarret*. If time permits, a contemporary short film may be screened, either *Scapegoat* or *Pumzi*.
- 1/20 "Reading" Film
Viewing: *Tarzan the Ape Man* (1932 version with Weismuller and Sullivan)
Reading: Spadoni chapter 1 "Form"
Lutz and Collins "The Photograph as an Intersection of Gazes"
Pieterse White on Black Intro & Part I (skim first few chapters, read chapters 4 & 5 and actually *study* chapter 7)
Dunn "Lights...Camera...Africa"
Morton "You Tarzan"
- 1/27 Wild Life, Wild Death
Viewing: *Congo*
Reading: Spadoni chapter 2 "Narrative"
Krasznewiez "Round Up the Usual Suspects"
Wainaina "How to Write about Africa"
Lull "Hegemony"
- 2/3 Wildlife, Wild Death, continued
Video: *Blood Diamond*
Reading: Spadoni chapter 3 "Mis-en-Scene"
Pieterse White on Black Part III
- 2/10 Growing Up Colonial
Viewing: *Chocolat* (the one by French dir. Claire Denis not the one with Johnny Depp)
Reading: Spadoni chapter 4 "Cinematography"
Pieterse White on Black Part II (focus especially on chapters 8 and 12)
Long Pauses website entry on "Chocolat"
Bekolo "No one would be able to tell my story except me"

YOUR FIRST SHORT PAPER IS DUE IN FEBRUARY, AND MUST BE TURNED IN BEFORE BREAK

[2/17]

[BREAK]

- 2/24 Introduction to African Feature Film: Acquiring a Voice
 Viewing: *Wooden Camera*
 Reading: Spadoni chapter 5 "Editing"
 Hondo "What is Cinema for Us?"
 Diawara "African Cinema—Foreign Aid as Tarzanism"
- 3/3 African Feature Film, Acquiring a Voice, continued
 Viewing: *Ezra*
 Reading: Spadoni chapter 6 "Sound" and "Conclusion"
 Korman's "African Cinema: Comparative Look at *Blood Diamond* & *Ezra*"
 Aduaka "Look, I'm not Francophone"
- 3/10 Issues in Documentary Production
 Video: *Bye Bye Africa*
 Reading: Achebe "Anthills of the Savannah" (excerpt)
 Nichols Introduction to Documentary Chapters 1-3
- 3/17 Issues in Documentary Production, continued
 Viewing: *Awaiting for Men*
 Reading: Nichols Introduction to Documentary Chapters 4-6
- 3/24 Documentary Production, continued
 Viewing: *Blood in the Mobile* and *The History Channel's Blood Diamonds*
 Reading: Nichols Introduction to Documentary Chapters 7-8
- 3/31 Documentary Production, continued
 Viewing: *War/Dance*
- 4/7 Class Choice
 Viewing: What film do you want to discuss as a group in our last meeting together?
 So many to choose from! Here in alphabetical order are some suggestions, but perhaps you know of something you really want to discuss. If so, bring it up!
- The Constant Gardener? Daarat? Divine Carcasse? Flame? Hyenas? The Kitchen Toto? Last King of Scotland? Lumumba? Milking the Rhino? Nowhere in Africa? Out of Africa? Reassemblage? Thunderbolt? Xala? Yeelen?

YOUR SECOND SHORT PAPER IS DUE IN APRIL, AND MUST BE TURNED IN BEFORE APRIL 18TH

Cinematic Portraits of Africa

Discussion Questions

Borom Sarret (translated as either The Cart Driver or The Wagoneer)

1. What was the experience of viewing this film like for you, given your personal context? Explain. How might the experience vary depending upon viewers' "subject positions"?
2. Were you to tell a friend about this film, what words would you use to convey its technique, its meaning or its impact?
3. What background knowledge might help viewers better grasp or appreciate this film?
4. What seem to be Sembene's big themes? How are they conveyed cinematically? Think of a striking scene and consider how it encodes its meanings. Sembene is known as a highly political filmmaker. How does the camera work encode his critique? How has editing added to this message? What about his use of sound?
5. Can we discern a distinction between the driver and the director's ideas? What might we say is the point of view of this film?
6. Try to put yourself in the position of the colonized Senegalese worker at the center of the piece. What does Sembene assert the donkey cart driver thinks of The Heights? Traffic lights? Money? Class? Religion? Race? Gender?
7. What do you make of the ending?
8. What genre of film were you watching? How can you tell?

AN255 FIRST SHORT PAPER ASSIGNMENT

All clarifying examples [italicized] use the porters in *Tarzan* as the 'for instance'

1. **Symbolic Analysis:** Choose *one* common or shared image, trope, icon, representation, symbol, portrayal, depiction, or stereotype from our material and relate it to *one* North Atlantic fantasy about sub-Saharan Africa discussed in our readings. You may choose to deal with more than one film in prompt #1, but be sure to focus on only one fantasy and on only one image. Cite course material copiously. [*for example: How porter image encapsulates layered notion of white colonial as forceful yet burdensome*]
 2. **Montage:** Explicate the manner in which power & dominance (or better yet: power, dominance and resistance) are encoded in one short sequence of shots from one (only one) of our films. In your analysis of editing choices cite course material constantly. [*ex.: Message in depiction of nameless porter falling off cliff*]
 3. **Mise-en-Scene:** Explicate the manner in which the problematics of dominance are encoded in one shot selected from our film material. In your analysis of a frame, cite, cite, cite. [*ex.: How/why dangling porter encodes 'lynching'*]
 4. **Politics of Representation:** Make up a well-focused question of your own concerning encoded messages about inequality and difference (or, possibly, equivalence and likeness); then also answer it. Be sure to include the written formulation of your question or prompt in the final submission as well as your own answer to it. You should create a question that allows you to cite a variety of course material, including those on film structure and technique.
- Answer one prompt; tell me which one you think it is (don't make me guess). Important: Your choice should minimize overlapping content with what you or your group covered as class discussion leaders. Do not make this mistake.
 - To me, "short" means approximately four pages, but say what you have to say, do not focus on length.
 - Only hard copies accepted—that means in my hand or under my door.
 - This is NOT a research paper—you are to dig deep and pull an array of course material together for your analytical purpose. Pepper your paper with quoted or paraphrased citations in proper format (AAA, MLA, APA, etc.).
 - When assessing assignments I take mechanics into consideration, as well as the clarity of your writing at both the structural and sentence levels.
 - Most important of all will be the extent to which you demonstrate an ability to perform cultural analysis. Cultural analysis is neither review nor plot summary, but rather rests upon well-argued and persuasive assessment of powerful underlying symbolic meanings coded in—for our purposes here—popular film texts. Use our readings. I assign them for a reason.
 - While in some ways 20% of your grade is at play as I assess the quality of your written submission, note that *if you do not turn in this paper, you cannot pass the course*. You have had weeks and weeks to prepare. Nonetheless, should you find yourself in crisis, contact a dean (not me). If you cannot obtain a dean's permission, consider dropping AN255.

CINEMATIC PORTRAITS OF AFRICA
SHORT PAPER ASSIGNMENT #2
HARD COPY DUE BEFORE THE END OF TERM
WORTH 20% OF YOUR COURSE GRADE (and necessary to pass)

ANSWER ONE OF THE FOLLOWING PROMPTS ABOUT ONE OR MORE OF THESE FILMS:
Africa Speaks!; Borom Sarret; Single Story; Wooden Camera; Ezra; Bye Bye Africa;
Awaiting for Men; Blood in the Mobile; Africa's Blood Diamonds; War/Dance.

1. **WHO GETS TO SAY WHAT ABOUT WHOM? WHY MIGHT INEQUALITY AND AUDIENCE MATTER?**
2. **HOW DO YOU KNOW WHAT SORT OF FILM YOU ARE WATCHING? WHY MIGHT GENRE OR MODE MATTER?**
3. **MAKE UP YOUR OWN QUESTION ABOUT YOUR CHOSEN FILM OR FILMS AND THEN ANSWER YOUR QUESTION AS POSED.**

- Meaningfully quote or paraphrase from a *bare minimum* of four different assigned readings, using proper academic citations. (More would be better, perhaps two per page or so?).
- Papers and essays are opportunities to analyze and synthesize course material. They are meant to help you to develop your writing skills and your intellectual creativity as well as your familiarity with a formal academic style of presentation. They draw on different skills than do group presentations. They compel more extended analysis than do class discussions. As with the first paper, you should avoid focusing on the film/s for which you led class discussion.
- The paper should be short, meaning approximately 4 typed double-spaced pages, should be page-numbered, have a bibliography/filmography, and must document how you marshalled your evidence, that is, tell the reader about all your sources, including textbooks, articles, profs, peers, class discussions, even other courses, and definitely the films themselves. This is not a research paper--you should dig into assigned course material for inspiration and support.
- Always, always provide the question as well as your answer—don't make the professor guess!
- Consultation during the writing of your multiple drafts is strongly recommended—with each other and/or with me.
- Check the readability and quality of the writing itself. Grammar, spelling, and other elements of writing style do factor into my evaluation, as with other profs (and future employers!)
- More important than grammar, though, is the paper's organizational structure. Is it made explicitly clear in the introduction what question this paper is to address? Is the body of the paper organized around answering this question? Do the answers flow logically from the analytical body of the paper into the conclusion? Assess. Go back. Edit accordingly.
- Most important of all, though, as with the mid-term paper, is demonstrate your ability to perform cultural analysis.
- It is often handy to outline your own paper AFTER you think you are finished, to see if you have a functional or optimal structure. Of course, you should revise accordingly, before handing it in.
- It is also often handy to read the draft out loud to yourself or a friend, and also it helps to have someone read it out loud to you. Pay attention to where they stumble. Revise to clarify structure and smooth out the prose.
- You may wish to review Chap 8 in Nichols concerning writing about film.
- You have been given plenty of warning about the contents of this assignment, so there should be no problems meeting this deadline. Nevertheless, should you find yourself needing extra time, contact a dean (not me).
- I provide a guiding rubric on the reverse.

**Rubric
Anthropology 255
Essay #2**

Student's Name: _____

Cultural analysis demonstrated through compelling and effective use of:

Filmed course material:	0	1	2	3	4	5
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Written course material:	0	1	2	3	4	5
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Organizational structure made clear to reader:	0	1	2
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Source citations are

Well-deployed:	0	1	2
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Adequate in number:	0	1	2
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Well-formatted:	0	.5	1
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Prompt is [clearly] indicated and answered:	0	.5	1
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Mechanics meet college level expectations:	0	.5	1
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Works cited section is present and well-formatted:	0	.5	1
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TOTAL	/20
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CINEMATIC PORTRAITS OF AFRICA
GROUP PRESENTATIONS
CLASS EVALUATIONS

Please fill out at least two of these during the term, preferably more. Write your name on the **back** of this page, I will provide copies of the front to the relevant parties, keeping the back for my records only.

For a group in which you did NOT participate, answer the following questions:

To which group are you writing this?

Did it appear to you, as an audience member, that the division of labor was equitably shared? Did the group successfully convey to you/the class what they uncovered in the course of their project? What did they help you to learn about the "Politics of Representation?"

How successfully did they deploy cinematic evidence? How well did they draw your attention to the assigned reading? Did they manage to get the class to participate enthusiastically? How was their comportment overall?

If they had it to do over again, what advice would you give this group?

If you were to assign a grade to this group as a whole, what would that be and why?

AN 255 GROUP EVALUATIONS

NAME:

DATE:

GROUP ADDRESSED:

CINEMATIC PORTRAITS OF AFRICA
GROUP PRESENTATIONS
SELF-EVALUATIONS

Name: _____

In which group did you participate?

In what area/s did this project provide you with a learning opportunity?

By what process was the division of labor amongst group members worked out? Explain why you feel that it was fairly/unfairly decided and evenly/unevenly distributed (Note: "equitable" does not always mean "identical," so, in your answer be sure to consider whether the final product called upon different members' diverse strengths).

Assess you and your group's final product. Did your group convey successfully to the class as a whole what it uncovered over the course of this project? Did you each get to say what you wanted to say? If you had it to do over again, what, if anything, would you do differently?

Choose one option below:

1. I think we each deserve the same grade and it is: _____.
2. I deserve a different grade than the rest of my group. My grade should be _____, which is (circle one) *higher / lower* than my group as a whole.