



ANTHRO 255

CINEMATIC PORTRAITS OF AFRICA

WINTER 2019

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 2-4 & WEDNESDAYS 1-3

(or by appointment)

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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 Africana major, and the Rhetoric major. It also counts towards eight 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 comes in many shapes, so if you have any certified learning difference altering your ability to succeed in the course as laid down in this syllabus, please inform me directly and immediately. Be sure to have Abigail Nelson's Office send me information about any recommended accommodation. I will then endeavor to make adjustments to improve the learning environment for all concerned. Adjustments for the few may help everyone, and inclusivity is my fundamental goal, so please speak up. Here is the link for the accessibility office: <http://www.bates.edu/accessible-education/requesting-services/how-to-register-for-accommodations/>

Academic Honesty:

As you learned in your FYS, at Bates as in life 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 and Guide to Working with Sources: <http://www.bates.edu/student-affairs/student-conduct/academic-integrity-policy/>

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.

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, no matter the reason for the absence. 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 as adult learners 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. If you spot a typo or inconsistency in this syllabus, extra credit is earned as well as long as you report it promptly.

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 printed out and 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 bio-emergency*), and, normally, turn off all cell phones. Computers may at certain times and for certain reasons be open in class, but their use in general is not encouraged. 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 (do use the shorter 2001 first edition and *not* the longer 2010 second edition) and Pieterse White on Black: Images of Africans and Blacks in Western Popular Culture. 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 and the level of work lightens up considerably after a few weeks. 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 easy to find online. Should you find a link for one of these less accessible films, please share that link with the classlist wanth255a@lists.bates.edu. This would be another way to earn extra credit!

Requirements:

Note the term used above is 'requirement.' Successful completion of each and every item listed below is *required* to pass AN 255. Note, too, that I will not chase you down if something is missing, though I may remind you once. It is *your* responsibility as adult learners to abide by this syllabus, including the emphasis on engaged participation.

- 20% = consistent, thoughtful, active, constructive, in-class participation throughout**
- 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
2019**

1/8 COURSE ORIENTATION: in-class showing and discussion of two “firsts” in African cinematic portraiture: *Africa Speaks!* and *Borom Sarret*. As time permits I may also screen a contemporary short sci-fi film called *Pumzi*, as well as a TEDTalk by Chimamanda Adichie.

1/15 “Reading” Film

Viewing: *Tarzan the Ape Man* (1932 version with Weismuller and Sullivan)
Adichie’s TEDtalk *Danger of the Single Story* (if not screened in class)
Pumzi (if not screened in class)

Reading: Spadoni chapter 1 on “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 then **study chapter 7**)
Dunn “Lights...Camera...Africa”
Morton “You Tarzan”

1/22 Wild Life, Wild Death

Viewing: *Congo*

Reading: Spadoni chapter 2 “Narrative”
Krasznewiez “Round Up the Usual Suspects”
Lull “Hegemony”
Wainaina “How to Write about Africa”

1/29 Wildlife, Wild Death, continued

Viewing: *Blood Diamond*

Reading: Spadoni chapter 3 “Mise-en-Scene”
Pieterse White on Black Part III

2/5 Growing Up Colonial

Viewing: *Chocolat* (the one with that title by French dir. Claire Denis from 1988)

Reading: Spadoni chapter 4 “Cinematography”
Pieterse White on Black Part II (focus especially on chapters 8 & 12)
Long Pauses website entry on “Chocolat”
Bekolo “No One Would Be Able to Tell my Story except Me”

FIRST SHORT PAPER DUE DURING FIRST HALF OF FEBRUARY, TO BE TURNED IN BEFORE BREAK (i.e., your first short paper is due by 5pm February 15th but I will begin accepting them Feb 1st)

2/12 Introduction to African Feature Film: Acquiring a Voice
Viewing: *Xala*
Reading: Spadoni Chapter 5 "Editing"
Hondo "What is Cinema for Us?"
Diawara "African Cinema—Foreign Aid as Tarzanism"
Gabriel "Xala: A Cinema of Wax and Gold"

[BREAK WEEK]

2/26 African Feature Film, continued
Viewing: *Ezra*
Reading: Spadoni chapter 6 "Sound" and his "Conclusion"
Korman's "African Cinema: Comparative Look at *Blood Diamond* & *Ezra*"
Aduaka "Look, I'm not Francophone"

3/5 A Contemporary Cinematic Griot
Viewing: *Timbuktu*
Reading: Sragow "Deep Focus: *Timbuktu*"
Guillen "Hidden Certainties and Active Doubts: An Interview..."
Fofana and Hall "*Timbuktu*: What Call to Action?"

3/12 Issues in Documentary Production
Viewing: *Sembene!* (plus any youtube clips on lyceum for this week)
Reading: Nichols Introduction to Documentary Chapters 1-3

3/19 Documentary Production, continued
Viewing: *Awaiting for Men* (plus any youtube clips on lyceum for this week)
Reading: Nichols Introduction to Documentary Chapters 4-6

3/26 Documentary Production, continued
Viewing: *WAR Dance* (plus any youtube clips on lyceum for this week)
Reading: Nichols Introduction to Documentary Chapters 7-8

4/3 What about Wakanda?
Viewing: *Black Panther*
Reading: Thrasher article in Esquire
Vanguard of the Revolution: The Black Panther Party (clips)

**YOUR SECOND SHORT PAPER IS DUE DURING THE FIRST HALF OF APRIL.
IT MUST BE TURNED IN BEFORE THE END OF TERM, WHICH MEANS SATURDAY APRIL 13TH**

Cinematic Portraits of Africa
Discussion Questions

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

1. Were you to tell a friend about this film, what words would you use to convey its technique, its meaning, or its impact?
2. Think of a striking scene and consider how it encodes its meanings. What seem to be Sembene's big themes? How are they conveyed cinematically?
3. What background knowledge do you suspect might help viewers better grasp or appreciate this film?
4. 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"? How might you find out?
5. 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? Discuss how these particular assertions are conveyed by the director.
6. Can we discern a distinction between the driver and the director's ideas? What might we conclude is the point of view of this film?
7. 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?
8. What do you make of the ending?
9. 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 instance: *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. [for ex.: *Messages encoded in cuts/juxtapositions while depicting nameless porter falling off cliff*]
 - 3. Mise-en-Scene:** Explicate the manner in which the problematics of dominance are encoded in one single shot selected from our film material. In your analysis of a frame, cite, cite, cite. [for instance: *How/why dangling porter encodes 'lynching'*]
 - 4. Politics of Representation:** Make up a narrowly 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 very approximately four pages, but say what you have to say, do not focus on length.
 - With very rare exceptions, 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 (MLA, APA...)
 - 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. Listen to each other. Wisdom is in the room! Cite your peers.
 - 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, and/or cannot get this paper in, consider dropping AN255 before the final drop date of March 1st.

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; Xala; Sembene!; Ezra;
Timbuktu; Awaiting for Men; Africa's Blood Diamonds; War/Dance; Black Panther.

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, TELL ME WHAT IT IS, 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 must avoid focusing on the film/s for which you led class discussion. That is important.
 - 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, at ARC, or with me.
 - Most important of all, as with the mid-term paper, is that you demonstrate your ability to perform cultural analysis.
 - 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, of course, 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.
 - 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? Just a suggestion not assigned.
 - 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 sample rubric on the reverse.

**[SAMPLE—subject to minor modification] 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
Written course material:	0	1	2	3	4
Oral course material:	0	1	2		
Organizational structure made clear to reader:	0	1	2		
Source citations are					
Well-deployed:	0	1	2		
Adequate in number:	0	1	2		
Well-formatted:	0	.5	1		
Chosen prompt is clearly indicated (and addressed):	0	.5	1		
Mechanics meet college level expectations:	0	.5	1		
Works cited section is present and well-formatted:	0	.5	1		

TOTAL **/20**

CINEMATIC PORTRAITS OF AFRICA
GROUP PRESENTATIONS
CLASS EVALUATIONS

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?

DO NOT NEGLECT TO WRITE YOUR NAME ON THE REVERSE SIDE OF THIS PAGE →

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 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? Feel free to use the other side of this paper (or to type up your answers to these questions). →

Choose *ONLY ONE* option below:

Either:

I think we each deserve the same grade and it is: _____;

Or:

Certain members of my group deserve different grades than others. I explain on the reverse side of this form where I think I fit, who stood out, and who let us down. →

For those who have the wrong edition, so you can follow along:

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BILL NICHOLS' 2001 FIRST EDITION
*INTRODUCTION TO DOCUMENTARY***

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