Africa: Representation and Conflict

I. Course Description

Africa is an immense continent of fifty-four countries and strikingly rich geographic, political, and cultural diversity. This diversity has developed over time, as Africans created many ways to respond to their environment and organize their beliefs, societies, and political systems. African societies continue to be dynamic, both as living, creative cultures and through their responses to colonial legacies and a changing and challenging global context.

Contemporary anthropology contributes to this dynamic, historically contextualized, heterogeneous representation of Africa and Africans. It counters other representations that exoticize Africa as steeped in timeless tradition and wracked by conflict; in fact, anthropologists now take these representations as objects of study and analysis. Current anthropological representations of African societies also vary considerably from those produced by colonial-era anthropologists. Recognizing the enduring value of earlier anthropological work as well as the urgent need for new approaches is a major goal of this course.

To reach this goal, Africa: Representation and Conflict pairs classics in Africanist anthropology with contemporary re-studies to explore changes in the types of questions anthropologists have posed about African societies as well as transformations in the societies themselves. Through the use of both written and visual representations, we gain a uniquely processual perspective on the role Africa has played in the development of anthropological theory.

In the first segment of the course, we address issues of representation and self-presentation in written ethnographies as well as in African portrait photography. Using a set of Cameroonian photographic portraits, we explore changing modes of the staging of the self (choice given to photographic subjects) and representation of self and client (choices made by the photographer). We contextualize these processes within cultural, economic, and technological (availability of electricity and supplies; invention of digital photography) developments. Some themes and concepts include local Cameroonian idioms of “seeing” as knowledge, seeing into other-worldly realms as a dangerous capacity shared by healers and sorcerers, control of what one sees/doesn’t see/dares not describe or represent, and the relationship of photography to other modes of self-(re)presentation (e.g. the use of royal display cloth and royal insignia). We read works written by both African and Euro-American anthropologists, photographers, art historians, and a playwright. These include materials from Kenya, South Africa, and Mozambique in addition to an in-depth study of the Cameroon Grassfields.
In the second segment of the course, initiation rituals, war, and migration place selfhood and belonging back in this-worldly contexts. We use the insights we have gained regarding the role of the visual and of visual metaphors in epistemological and representational debates within anthropology to address two Africanist anthropological classics and their restudies. Audrey Richards’ *Chisungu* describes a girls’ initiation ceremony among the Bemba, a monarchic, matrilineal, agricultural society in Zambia; her work adds the perspectives of symbolism, psychology, and gender to the toolkit of social anthropologists. Evans-Pritchard’s *The Nuer* is a hallmark of structural-functional analysis of an acephalous, patrilineal, pastoral society living in southern Sudan. The world’s youngest country, South Sudan, is currently ravaged by civil war and the source of numerous refugees to the US. Evans-Pritchard’s ethnographic monograph has led to debates on the nature of the relation of worldviews and cosmologies to the social systems of the people who express them, society as an adaptive response to the environment, and the relationship of structure to function in social systems. Through later ethnographies of the Nuer in both film and written forms, we explore transformations in African societies after the colonial era as well as increasing anthropological attention to history, social change, and indeterminacy.

Taken together, the works we read in this course address issues affecting the entire continent, including colonialism, gender, relations between local communities and post-colonial states, the role of history, and African debates about war, human/cultural rights, migration, governance, witchcraft, religion, and desire.

II. Course Requirements and Student Learning Outcomes

A. Required Reading

Readings should be completed before the class session for which they are assigned. Readings consist of book length ethnographic monographs (available in the bookstore), and scholarly articles. All articles are available on e-reserves (password SOAN). Required texts (available in the bookstore) are as follows:


B. Attendance and Participation (5%) 

This class combines lecture and discussion of readings, films or slides, and concepts. Attendance is important because your very presence adds something to class; frequent absences will lower your grade. More importantly, the way you are present and participating makes a difference in how both you and other members of this class learn. It is important that you have read and thought about the readings for the day. There are many ways of participating: questioning, commenting, listening carefully when other students ask questions or propose a new or different way to think about the materials we are studying, eye
We should all honor and encourage these different forms of participation in each other. I hope and expect that everyone will participate verbally by at least the second week of class. Please let me know before class, if possible, if and why you will be absent. Make friends with classmates to share notes in case of absences, or if you feel you didn’t fully understand something. More importantly, ask questions, call me, or come to my office hours if anything is unclear to you or if you want to discuss something related to this class. In grading class participation, I will take into consideration class attendance, and most importantly, discussing readings and issues in a thoughtful and prepared way.

C. News/Media on/from Africa Forum (5%) On the class Moodle site, we will have an African News Forum. At least once during the term, find and post (with URL, or scanned) a news item (perhaps even including news photography) on and event or issue in Africa. This can be from African or non-African news sources. I am particularly interested in print media, but if it is particularly relevant you may also post radio or television broadcasts. Add a one paragraph explanation about what you find particularly compelling about this news piece, and why you think it is worth sharing with your classmates. If you are a French and Francophone Studies major or concentrator, you should use French-language media for this assignment. Don’t wait until the last week!!!

D. Discussion Starters (10%) Based on your reading of assigned texts and the way you relate these to other readings or issues, prepare a small set of questions to start class discussion for a day. Each student will do this around two times, depending upon the size of the class. A sign-up sheet will be posted on my office door, and passed around on the second day of class.

E. Adopt a Photograph: Ethnographic Fiction Exercise (15%) Write a three to four page play or story, in the style of Athol Fugard’s Sizwe Bansi is Dead, incorporating your photo and your knowledge thus far of African anthropology. Here the point is to be creative using what you’ve learned about the photographic experience in Africa—why and how people have photos taken of themselves, how they use these photos, and how others use them. This exercise and the next should also heighten your awareness of writing for different audiences, melding playfulness and seriousness.

F. Adopt a Photograph: Anthropological Contextualization and Analysis Exercise (15%) Write a three to four page paper in the style of a (very short) scholarly anthropological article about your photo and its context. The articles by Heike Behrend and David Zeitlyn, as well as Geary’s work on Bamum provide examples of anthropological contextualization and analysis of photographic practices. West and Evans-Pritchard provide examples of anthropological contextualization and analysis of practices surrounding the seen and unseen (i.e., witchcraft). Again, in combination with the previous assignment, this exercise aims to heighten your awareness of writing for different audiences.

G. Response Paper: Girls’ Initiation or South Sudan (20%) Write a four-page “think” paper on one class topic’s set of readings from the second half of the course. This means, you would write your response paper on one of the four books we are reading, or on the two sets of articles on girls’ initiation or on the new South Sudan. It is always more successful to choose one or two issues to discuss in depth rather than to treat each topic in each of the readings in a superficial manner. What do you find most interesting and worthy of deeper reflection in your reading, and why? How does the work further anthropological thinking about Africa? If the reading assignment includes a collection of articles, think about how they relate together and reach for some synthesis in your paper. Please remember to cite your sources, using anthropological citation style. Response or “think” papers are always due at 8:30 a.m. on the day following your assigned unit (for example, if we finish discussing the topic on a Thursday, your paper is due 8:30 Friday morning). Please send me your paper as an MS-Word e-mail attachment, including your name in the document filename (e.g. pfeldmanThinkpaper.docx).

H. Final Project: Mock Fulbright Proposal (25% of grade) For your final project, you will develop a mock Fulbright proposal to conduct ethnographic field research in an African setting. Although the proposal text itself is much shorter than a conventional term paper, it requires a similar amount of library research. In addition to the format prescribed by the Fulbright proposal, you will hand in a bibliography, in anthropological citation style, of works you cited or consulted. Writing a good proposal
also requires understanding of anthropological methodology and ethics; use what you have learned in this
class to develop a doable and ethical project. The research you propose can be on a topic of your choice
relating to the ethnography of Africa. Keep in mind your own experiences and interests; I hope the work
you do on this project will help you in other endeavors both at Carleton and beyond (e.g. comps, real
Fulbright and/or Watson applications, graduate school, non-profit work). While using sources from other
disciplines is fine, and in many cases desirable, the project must use contemporary anthropological
writing from prominent professional journals and presses. In evaluating the final project, I look for
thoroughness and imagination in topic development and library research skills, synthesis of materials,
critical analysis, and use of anthropological concepts.

I. Oral Presentations: Mock Fulbright Interviews (5%) During our final class session, you
will present your proposal and answer questions from the “Student Fulbright Interviewing Board,”
namely your classmates.

J. Writing Portfolio If you are a first or second year student, you may find one or more of the writing
assignments in this course to be appropriate for your writing portfolio, which is due at the end of your
sixth term. For more information on the portfolio, consult the folder you received as a first-year student,
talk with your advisor, or read about it on the web at: http://www.acad.carleton.edu/campus/wp/

K. Assumptions
I assume and expect:
• That we will all be enthusiastic and respectful participants in class.
• That you will let me know (ahead of time whenever possible) if you need to be absent and why.
• That you will follow rules of academic honesty (i.e. cite correctly and do not plagiarize).
• That you will follow anthropological citation style in any written work.
• That if you have a disability that affects your ability to participate fully in class or to meet all
course requirements, you will tell me at the beginning of the term, to arrange appropriate
accommodations.
• That if you have any other concerns (e.g. little prior experience with anthropological inquiry, not
a native speaker of English, special family circumstances), you will bring this to my attention
early in term.
• That you will hand in assignments and be prepared for oral presentations on time. Deadlines are
deadlines, including presentations for which you have signed up. Nonetheless, if you talk to me
before the due date about extenuating circumstances, I am not an ogre and will accommodate
your needs within the realm of fairness. Departmental policy is to subtract one letter grade per
assignment for each day an assignment is late.

L. Student Learning Outcomes for SOAN include learning to: 1) Connect information about
historical and contemporary socio-cultural phenomena; 2) Formulate appropriate anthropological research
questions; 3) Select appropriate anthropological research methods and 4) Apply anthropological theory to
analyze socio-cultural phenomena. For AFAM, student learning outcomes include: 1) Demonstrate an
understanding about the rich complexities of social, political, economic, environmental, and cultural life
among African peoples past and present; 2) Demonstrate intellectual curiosity in formulating a research
question. Be able to locate and analyze primary sources, to locate and critically read and evaluate
secondary sources, and to weave them into an argument. Apply ethical practices in research, including
ethical obligations to research subjects and to the world of scholarship; 3) Communicate ideas well in
written and oral form, appropriate for an academic setting, including proper citation, revision skills and
responsiveness to constructive critique; 4) Be able to critically assess public positions and understand
scholars’ responses regarding central issues facing African peoples.
This course fulfills the following requirements: Social Inquiry, International Studies, WR2
III. The Term at a Glance

A. Topics
Part One: Themes in the Anthropology of Africa
Part Two: Anthropology and Photography in Africa: Representation and Self-Presentation
Seen and Unseen, Self and Representation, Cameroonian Contexts I and II
Part Three: Classic Ethnographies and their Restudies
Chisungu (the Bemba, Zambia) and Restudies
The Nuer (Sudan) and Restudies I & II
New work on newly independent South Sudan
Part Four: Contemporary Issues in the Anthropology of Africa: Student Presentations

B. Due Dates
Ethnographic Fiction Exercise
Anthropological Analysis Exercise
Oral presentation of final project
Final project (Fulbright proposal)
Response paper, Discussion starters
African News Forum
Friday April 17, 9:00 a.m.
Friday May 1, 9:00 a.m.
Tuesday June 2
Wednesday June 3, 4:00 p.m.
By sign-up, 8:30 a.m.
Throughout the Term—don’t procrastinate!

C. Grading
Class participation/attendance 5%
African News Forum 5%
Discussion starters 10%
Ethnographic Fiction Exercise 15%
Anthropological Analysis Exercise 15%
Response paper 20%
Final project (Fulbright proposal) 25%
Oral presentation of final project 5%

IV. Resources
These can be found in the stacks or in the reference section. See also: http://gouldguides.carleton.edu/soan256
Readers and Collected Essays
Encyclopedias, Almanacs, and Bibliographies
Encyclopedia of Sex and Gender (Ref. HQ16.E53 2003 v. 1-2)
Europa World Yearbook. (Ref. JN1 .E85)
Africa Bibliography, (International African Institute) (Ref. DT3.A38)
International African Bibliography (Ref. DT3.I58)
V. Anthropological Citation Style and Paper Format

Paper Format
Your papers should be printed double spaced, 12 pt. font, 1 inch margins; include a title page and, if relevant, a “references cited” section in anthropological citation style. Put your name on your work!

Anthropological Citation Style
In papers for this and other anthropology classes, you should use the correct citation style, following the major professional journals published by the American Anthropological Association, including American Anthropologist. Following this style is a requirement. An online guide is available via the SOAN Department website (https://apps.carleton.edu/curricular/soan/resources/citation/). Click on AAA Style Guide, which will bring you here: http://www.aaanet.org/publications/style_guide.pdf (reference style is on pp. 10-14 of the AAA document). Ask if you have questions. A summary of this citation style is below:

In the course of your text, you should cite authors whose ideas you use with their last name and the date of publication, and can even include more than one citation if you got the idea from more than one source (Ginsburg 1989; Ginsburg and Rapp 1991). If you quote an author, e.g. that “the powers of village women... [do not] provide women with the last word” (Harding 1975:308), you include the page number(s). It is preferable to include page numbers for specific ideas, even if you are not quoting. Note the placement of punctuation, and that the citation and period/comma are outside of the quotation marks.

References Cited (not “Bibliography”), placed starting on a new page at the end of your text, does not include any publication not cited in the text. All entries must be listed alphabetically by last name of author, and chronologically arranged for two or more titles by the same author. Nothing, except “in,” is underlined in References Cited. The layout should be as follows:

1) for a journal article, showing the volume and issue numbers, and page numbers:
   Coe, Cati

If the journal article is in a theme issue, include information as follows:
   Heriot, M. Jean

2) for a chapter in a book with editors (“in” is italicized, book title comes before editors’ names, page numbers come before the place of publication and publisher; this one shows how to cite co-authored works):
   Bledsoe, Caroline H. and Papa Sow

3) for a book (title is capitalized; date, place of publication [use the first one listed], and publisher all included):
   Ferguson, James

4) for internet sources: include the entire URL as well as as much author, date, and publisher information as possible. The point is to let the reader find what you have found, and to let the reader assess the quality and context of the source:
   United Nations.
Course Schedule

Part One: Themes in the Anthropology of Africa

WEEK I

T 3/31

AFRICA AND ANTHROPOLOGY: KEY QUESTIONS AND MULTIPLE HERITAGES

INTRODUCTION


Th 4/2

Guest Speaker: Dr. Dienke Hondius, Free University Amsterdam (2-3pm)


Public lecture by Dr. Hondius, “Mapping Urban European Histories of Slavery,” 5:00 pm, Leighton 304

Part Two: Anthropology and Photography in Africa: Representation and Self-Presentation

WEEK II

T 4/7

SEEN AND UNSEEN


Recommended:

**Th 4/9** Self and Representation N.B.: Meeting in Weitz 008

**Guest Speaker:** Laurel Bradley, Director, Perlman Teaching Museum, Weitz 008


New York: Theatre Communications Group.


**WEEK III** Cameroonian Contexts I

**T 4/14**


**Th 4/16**


**F 4/17** Adopt a Photo: Ethnographic Fiction Exercise Due (9:00 a.m., electronic submission)

**WEEK IV** Cameroonian Contexts II

**T 4/21**


Film: *Funeral Season* *(in class)*

**Th 4/23**


**Part Three: Classics and Their Restudies**

**WEEK V** Chisungu, an Anthropological Classic I: Initiation, Symbolism, and Identity

**T 4/28**

A.I. Richards (1956), *Chisungu.* (through p. 111)

Film: Monday’s Girls (selection)

**Th 4/30**

A.I. Richards (1956), *Chisungu.* (through p. 169; skim appendices)

**F 5/1** Adopt a Photo: Anthropological Contextualization and Analysis Exercise Due (9:00 a.m., electronic submission)

**WEEK VI** Modern Studies of Initiation

Moore, H. and M. Vaughan (1994) *Cutting Down Trees: Women, nutrition and agricultural change in the northern province of Zambia, 1890-1990,* pp. 136-177 from Ch. 6, Migration and Marriage.”


Th 5/7

**THE NUER, AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL CLASSIC I: LAND, LINEAGE, AND IDENTITY**

E.E. Evans-Pritchard (1940), *The Nuer* (through Chapter 2)

Film: The Nuer (first half, in class)

**WEEK VII**

T 5/12

E.E. Evans-Pritchard (1940), *The Nuer* (complete the book)


Th 5/14

**THE NUER RE Studied I: STEREOTYPES, MONEY, AND WAR**

**Guest Speaker: Sharon Hutchinson (’75), Professor of Anthropology (Emerita), University of Wisconsin**

S. Hutchinson (1996) *Nuer Dilemmas* (through page 55, including Prologue)

**WEEK VIII**

T 5/19

S. Hutchinson (1996) *Nuer Dilemmas* (Chapters 2, 4, 6, and Afterword)

Film: The Nuer (second half)

Th 5/21

**THE NUER RE Studied II: REFUGEES, GLOBALIZATION, AND LINKS TO “HOME”**


Film: Lost Boys of Sudan (selections)

Public lecture: LaToya Beck, “Social Service Careers in Federal Government for WGST/AFAM/SOAN Majors,” 5:00-6:30 pm, Leighton 236

**WEEK IX**

T 5/26


Th 5/28

**THE NEW SOUTH SUDAN**

**Guest Speaker: Prof. Noah Salomon, Religion Dept., Carleton College**


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**Part Four: Contemporary Issues in the Anthropology of Africa**

**WEEK X**

T 6/2

Mock Fulbright Interviews: Project presentations
Have a great summer!! Go visit an African country!!☼

Recommended Readings
Should you want to do further research—now or in the future—on the topics we are investigating in this course, here is a non-systematic set of recommended readings. Please note: to save space, they are not listed in anthropological citation style.

AFRICA AND ANTHROPOLOGY: KEY QUESTIONS AND MULTIPLE HERITAGES
SEEN AND UNSEEN
For more works on witchcraft and modernity in West Africa, see books by: H. Moore and T. Sanders, eds. (2001) and by H. West and T. Sanders, ed. (2003).

SELF AND REPRESENTATION

CAMEROONIAN CONTEXTS


S. Diduk (1989). “Women's agricultural production and political action in the Cameroon Grassfields,” *Africa* 59(3):338-


… and the political novels of M. Béti: Remember Ruben, *La Ruine Presque Cocasse d’un Polichinelle, Mission to Kala*, The Poor Christ of Bomba, Main Basse sur le Cameroun.

**CHISUNGU, AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL CLASSIC I, AND MODERN STUDIES OF INITIATION**


C.A. Kratz (1994), Affecting Performance: Meaning, Movement, and Experience in Okiek Women’s Initiation. (Ch. 4, Kepa Tuuanto: The Journey to Adulthood, pp. 93-125)


THE Nuer AND THE Nuer RESTUDIED


THE NEW SOUTH SUDAN

F. Deng et al. (2010) Sudan after Separation: New Approaches to a New Region. Berlin: Heinrich Böll Stiftung. See especially the chapters by Francis Deng and Jok Madut Jok. (great background pieces!)

http://www.boell.de/downloads/Sudan_after_Separation_kommentierbar.pdf


