SOAN 268: African Popular Culture
Winter 2019
Department of Sociology and Anthropology
Carleton College

Instructor: Dr. Meryl Lauer
Email: mlauer2@carleton.edu
Office Location: 233 Leighton
Office Hours*: W: 3:30-4:30pm; Th: 1-3 pm
*or by appointment

Class Location: Leighton 202
Meeting Times: M/W 11:20am-12:20pm
F 12:00-1:00pm

Mural by ROA in the Maboneng Precinct, Downtown Johannesburg.
Photo by Martha Cooper

COURSE DESCRIPTION
Contrary to popular imaginaries in the Global North that posit African cultural production in the tradition versus modernity debate, contemporary African popular culture is part and parcel of cosmopolitan, transnational, and diasporic exchanges of rhythms, sounds, images, and movement. In this class, we will engage several different forms of popular culture in Africa to ask how social worlds are made and remade in the public sphere. The anthropologists we will read in this class have tackled topics ranging from Egyptian soap operas to Ghanaian rap music to South African rugby to understand how people produce shared forms of meaning-making in their everyday lives.
COURSE GOALS
You will gain an understanding of the stakes of studying popular culture in/emerging from Africa. You will learn the key frames of analysis that anthropologists approach popular culture and engage in debates surrounding cultural transmission, hybridity, and globalization. You will develop skills in anthropological research and writing as well as discussion facilitation and group leadership.

LEARNING OUTCOMES
As part of Carleton’s assessment initiative, the SOAN Department has identified six Student Learning Outcomes for SOAN majors. In this course, you will learn four of these outcomes:

1. **Articulate** the complexity of contemporary socio-cultural phenomenon in their many dimensions (e.g. temporal, structural, spatial and symbolic).

2. **Formulate** appropriate sociological and/or anthropological research questions about socio-cultural phenomena.

3. **Apply** sociological and anthropological theory to analyze socio-cultural phenomena.

GRADING AND ASSIGNMENTS

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Country Quiz</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation and Attendance</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moodle Posts</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<td>Discussion Facilitation</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Project and Presentation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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All assignments and exams will be discussed in class in detail. I will distribute assignment sheets for all projects well in advance of their deadlines.

**YOU MUST COMPLETE ALL CLASS ASSIGNMENTS IN ORDER TO PASS THE CLASS.**

GRADE SCALE

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>97–100%</td>
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<td>A</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>&lt; 60%</td>
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REQUIRED TEXTS


*Books are available at the bookstore for purchase.*

COURSE MATERIALS ASSISTANCE
I recognize the potential financial burden of books and printing. If you need assistance to cover course expenses, please speak with me.

LATE AND MAKE-UP POLICY
Please note that I am very strict about due dates. Unless you have a legitimate excuse for turning in an assignment late or missing an exam, I will either not accept the assignment or deduct points from your grade. Although I am certainly sympathetic to emergencies, I do ask you to try to let me know what is happening before the assignment or exam comes around in order to avoid misunderstandings.
ACADEMIC INTEGRITY
You are expected to adhere to Carleton’s code of academic honesty. Even in the event of participating in team projects, your final work should still reflect your own ideas and other people’s ideas should always be credited. If you have any questions regarding this policy please visit http://apps.carleton.edu/campus/doc/integrity/or come speak to me. Failure to follow Carleton’s expectation will result in a failing grade and formal action with the administration.

PARTICIPATION/ATTENDANCE
At Carleton, we are extraordinarily lucky to have small classes where students and professors can critically engage each other and class material in a substantial manner. This class in particular will be run as a seminar, meaning that students are as But, that can only happen if we come to class, come to class prepared, and contribute to class in an effective manner. We will collaborate to decide what preparedness and effectiveness mean in our classroom at the beginning of the term.

You are expected to be present in class on a regular basis; failure to do so will adversely affect your grade. Attendance will be taken each class. Points will be deducted from your grade after THREE absences. Absences will be considered excused only in the following cases: illness verified by a doctor’s note, religious observance, or participation in scheduled activities of official college student organizations. In all cases, please make every effort to inform me of your impending absence before class. You are expected to arrive to class on time and stay for the duration of class. If you are more than five minutes late or if you leave before the conclusion of class without prior permission, you will be counted absent.

OFFICE HOURS AND COMMUNICATIONS
You can sign up for office hours via my google calendar. I hope you will all come see me during office hours to discuss the course, ideas for projects, or career plans. Interacting with students is one of my favorite parts of my job so please DO NOT BE SHY and take advantage of office hours! If you cannot make office hours, let me know and we can always schedule an alternative time to meet.

Please note that I will try to answer emails within a day and I tend to not answer emails during the weekend. Finally, although I encourage you to contact me via email with questions, if the Question requires a long answer, I may ask you to come see me personally so I can give you a proper response.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
Carleton College is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. The Disability Services office (Henry House, 107 Union Street) is the campus office that collaborates with students who have disabilities to provide and/or arrange reasonable accommodations. If you have, or think you may have, a disability (e.g., mental
health, attentional, learning, autism spectrum disorders, chronic health, traumatic brain injury and concussions, vision, hearing, mobility, or speech impairments), please contact disability@carleton.edu or call Jan Foley, Student Accessibility Specialist (x4464) or Chris Dallager, Director of Disability Services (x5250) to arrange a confidential discussion regarding equitable access and reasonable accommodations.

WRITING ASSISTANCE
The Writing Center, located in 420 4th Libe, has peer writing consultants who can work with you during any stage of the writing process (brainstorming to final proofreading). Hours and more information can be found on the writing center website. You can reserve specific times for conferences in 420 4th Libe by using their online appointment system. Walk-ins are welcome, though writers with appointments have priority.

If you are a second language writer and believe you might benefit from working individually with a writing consultant on a regular basis this term, email Renata Fitzpatrick, Multilingual Writing Coordinator, call her at x5998, or stop by her office in 420D 4th Libe. She can arrange once- or twice-a-week meetings between you and a writing consultant throughout the term.

STUDENT HEALTH
Carleton College urges you to make yourself—your own health and well-being—your priority throughout this ten-week term and your career here. If you are having difficulties maintaining your well-being, feel free to contact me and/or pursue other resources, such as Student Health and Counseling or the Office of Health Promotion.

CREATING AN INCLUSIVE & COMPASSIONATE CLASSROOM

My primary goal as an educator and a scholar is to foster a joy for learning and prepare students for their future professional paths. Although joyful, the process is not necessarily always fun or easy. Learning is a convoluted process that is difficult, as it requires us to push our intellectual limits, take risks, and face our—and others’—legacies straight on. The “reward” that results from this process is not always readily apparent and it may take years to manifest.

I also believe that learning should not be painful or hurtful to those involved in the process. I can assure you that I make a conscious effort to consider the possible consequences or impacts of what happens in my courses. The problem is that even though I try to avoid these situations, it is very difficult for anyone to be error-free. Trying to accommodate or predict the reactions of a diverse and ever-changing group of individuals that venture to take my classes is impossible and overwhelming at times.
For these reasons, a belief in the academic process and a commitment to creating a compassionate learning space, I avoid an explicit policy of providing trigger warnings in my courses. I will give some background of the readings and will certainly give a heads up when certain kinds of difficult material approaches but I will not give trigger warnings. In a nutshell, the fundamental reason is that what might to you merit an obvious trigger warning may not be for others and vice versa. For example, a common occurrence in my courses is that issues of sexual violence depicted in a North American context will elicit multiple requests for trigger warning, yet material that discusses extreme cases of violence and genocide in regions of the world that we refer to as the Global South are consumed by most with a dry analytical stance and almost no consideration or acknowledgement of the emotional implications this may have to others in the room (including the instructor or visitor).

This is a very delicate issue and there is no magic bullet. What I ask you is to engage in this journey with me and trust me (and this may mean giving me or your peers multiple chances). I will definitely address issues that are brought to my attention in a constructive manner. I do my best to teach and model the manner in which difficult material can be engaged within the classroom, but more importantly please know that I am willing to learn with you, but this can only happen in a compassionate and honest environment. I hope you are willing to learn with me as well!

READING SCHEDULE

- Assigned readings are due in class on the day listed.
- Please bring a copy of the readings to class IN HARD COPY.
- Other than the required books (both available at the bookstore), all readings will be posted to moodle.
- This schedule is subject to change. Please check moodle for the most up-to-date readings and assignments. Any changes will also be announced in class or via email.

7-Jan  Introduction

9-Jan  Cultural analysis and ethnography

11-Jan  The tradition vs. modernity debate
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>References</th>
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*Country Quiz* |
| 21-Jan| Guest lecture: Bryan Schmidt                                         |                                                                                               |
| 25-Jan| *Living the Hip Life*                                                | In class: documentary                                                                          |
| 28-Jan| *Living the Hip Life*                                                |                                                                                               |
| 30-Jan| *Living the Hip Life*                                                |                                                                                               |
| 1-Feb | *Living the Hip Life*                                                |                                                                                               |
| 4-Feb | Catch-up day/project reports                                         |                                                                                               |
| 6-Feb | **Movie Magic**                                                      |                                                                                               |

In class: documentary

8-Feb **Movie Magic**

11-Feb **MIDTERM BREAK**

13-Feb **Afrofuturism**
*Black Panther*  
"We are in the Future." 2017. This American Life, August 18.

15-Feb **Afrofuturism**
*Black Panther*

18-Feb **Afrofuturism**
Octavia Butler--TBD

20-Feb **An Afrofuturist anthropology?**

22-Feb Catch-up day/project reports

25-Feb **Dramas of Nationhood**

27-Feb **Dramas of Nationhood**

1-Mar **Dramas of Nationhood**

4-Mar **Social Media, Aesthetics, and Revolution** OR **Sports, Migration, and Movement**
Social Media, Aesthetics, and Revolution OR Sports, Migration, and Movement

6-Mar

8-Mar What does popular culture offer anthropology? Reflections on Nationalism, Pan-Africanism, Globalization, Afropolitanism, and Afrofuturism

11-Mar Project Presentations

13-Mar Project Presentations