

# African Film & Media

Course number: **SSA 4930**, Fall 2019

Venue: **MAT 0006**

**Time:** Tuesday | Periods 5 – 6, (11:45 AM - 1:40 PM),

**Thursday** | Period 6 (12:50 PM - 1:40 PM)

Instructor: Kole Odutola, PhD

Email: [kodutola@ufl.edu](mailto:kodutola@ufl.edu)

Office: 351 Pugh Hall, Office phone #: (352) 273-2959

Office Hours: Tuesdays 9-10 Pugh Hall 351

## Introduction

The media landscape on the African continent harbors a diversity of forms and platforms that make concerted efforts in projecting both national and sub-national identities. Unfortunately, the most visible part of the media landscape is populated by publications and broadcasts in the languages of former colonial masters. The language issue will not be the focus of this course but the content of selected films and print media will help us engage topical issues that can lead to a nuanced understanding of the African continent. Our focus will be on movies produced on the continent. We will also look at publications produced here on campus.

## Course Description

Two issues demand critical attention; films by Africans and films about Africans. Both types of creative expressions project different production values and mode of representation. This course, *African Film & media*, looks at the issue of representation in selected moving images and printed materials. Students will learn the difference between **watching a movie** and **reading a movie**. The media section involves aspects of media literacy especially practical aspects of content analysis. In both aspects (mis)representation of Africans and African-Americans in movies and newspaper articles, news, and pictures will be the center of focus. Students will watch full-length movies during the semester and learn to keep detailed records about content, credits (which appear at the end of the movies), and themes of focus of the films. Apart from watching movies, the class will also focus on examples of representation of Africans (-Americans) in text and images. Newspapers produced and circulated on campus will be consulted.

## Course objectives

- (1). In line with H. A Giroux's 1992 perspectives; this course plans to "unsettle the accepted knowledges [of Africa and its creative expressions and critical perception] promoted through conventional education" and Western scholarship. In its stead, we wish to view creative expressions from the continent along its historical trajectories and socio-economic development.
- (2). "Students [will] recognize that academic knowledges about Africa [films & media] are constructed outcomes of particular power relations"
- (3). Students will learn to interrogate their pre-conception of the continent and at the same time deduce how far films and the media present the reality of Africa.

## Class Text

Africa (2014): Edited by Maria Grosz-Ngaté, John H. Hanson, & Patrick O'Meara. (4<sup>th</sup> edition)

## Recommended Materials

1. Pines, J. and Willermen, P. (1989). *Questions of Third Cinema*. London: BFI
2. Petrie, D. and Boggs, J. (2011). *The Art of Watching Films*. NY: McGraw Hill.
3. Mahir Saul and Ralph A. Austen. (2010). *Viewing African Cinema in the Twenty-first Century: Arts Films and the Nollywood Video Revolution*. Athens: Ohio University Press.

## ATTENDANCE POLICY AND EXPECTATIONS

Each student is encouraged to attend classes regularly and contribute meaningfully to class discussions. Students are, however, allowed two unexcused absences. Beyond that, each additional absence will require a medical note/excuse verifying illness. In case of family emergency, you will need to show proof in accordance with UF policy, failing which; your final grade will be lowered by a one-letter grade. Assignments are to be handed in as at when due. Late papers will be assessed a penalty of one-half letter grade out of fairness to those who hand in their work on time.

**COURSE EVALUATION:** Your final grade in this course will be based on the following:

<i>Class attendance, preparation, and participation</i>	<i>300 points</i>
<i>Weekly learning journals (detailing films watched and news collected)</i>	<i>300 points</i>
<i>One mid-term test</i>	<i>100points</i>
<i>Final project/test</i>	<i>300 points</i>
<i>Total:</i>	<i>1000 points</i>

*Weekly learning journals will have detailed reviews of films watched and news-stories collected from newspapers and online sources. These news items will be analyzed using the themes we discuss in class. )*

## GRADE CORRESPONDENCE

930-1000 = A	900-920=A-	
870-890 = B+	830-860 =B	800- 820 = B-
770-79 = C+	730-760 = C	700-720 = C-
670-690 = D+	630-660 = D	600-620 = D-
Below 600 =E		

### University Policies

*Academic honesty:* Violations of the Student Honor Code (including, but not limited to, copying and plagiarizing) will be reported to the Dean of Students Office for consideration of disciplinary action. For more information, see:

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>.

*Counseling and wellness:* A variety of counseling, mental health and psychiatric services are available through the Counseling and Wellness Center, whose goal is to help students be maximally effective in their academic pursuits by reducing or eliminating emotional, psychological, and interpersonal problems that interfere with academic functioning. For more information, call 392-1575 or visit <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc>.

### *Students with disabilities*

The University of Florida is committed to providing academic accommodations for students with disabilities. Students requesting accommodations should register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, [www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/)) as soon as possible by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students should present me with their accommodation letter.

## Course Evaluations Fall 2019 - Updated Syllabus Statement

After piloting throughout the last three academic semesters, the GatorEvals course evaluation system will implement campus wide this Fall semester. As such, UF course syllabi need to be updated to reflect the implementation of GatorEvals. The text below is an appropriate statement informing students of the online course evaluation process in accordance with the [UF Policy on Course Syllabi](#).

“Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluer.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.”

[Learn more about GatorEvals.](#)

## WEEKLY BREAKDOWN OF THE COURSE

**WEEK 1 Tuesday August 20-** Intro to the course and the connotation of the “African” in the course title. Ref: pages 195 to 198 of *Questions of Third Cinema* (1994). Then we will look at the “Anatomy of a newspaper” (i.e. the different parts of a paper, front page, feature stories, opinion articles, pictures and cartoons, back page news.

[https://www.lssc.edu/faculty/heather\\_j\\_elmatti/Shared%20Documents/MMC%202100/Newspaper%20anatomy.pdf](https://www.lssc.edu/faculty/heather_j_elmatti/Shared%20Documents/MMC%202100/Newspaper%20anatomy.pdf)

(Week 1.1). Reading: <http://bura.brunel.ac.uk/bitstream/2438/579/3/jghe+-+Using+films+in+teaching+about+Africa.pdf..>

**Thursday August 22<sup>nd</sup>**- This link gives an overview of the class and issues to note **\_(Future reading) African Film** by Akin Adesokan pages 233 to 249 in *Africa* (4<sup>th</sup> edition).

**Tuesday---Week 2: August 27<sup>th</sup> ---**We will watch one of Ousmane Sembène movies, **Xala** (Sembene, Senegal 1974).

**Issue for discussion: How to read/study a movie...** Petrie, D. and Boggs, J. (2011). *The Art of Watching Films* and Reading for the week-

**Reading for the week: African Film** by Akin Adesokan pages 233 to 249 in *Africa* (4<sup>th</sup> edition) (Write up your journal from home).

**Thursday August 29** [single period] Introduction to content analysis. We will make use of the free newspapers on the newsstand on campus.

**Class work:** Look through the newspapers and record number of stories, pictures and feature stories.

**(Future Reading).** (Beyond colonial stereotypes: reflections on postcolonial cinema in the African Great Lakes region by Nkunzimana, Obed, 2009, *Journal of African Cinemas*) For **Tuesday Week 3**

**September 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday -Week 3.1 . Watch Tsotsi**, directed by Gavin Hood (2006).

Reading for this week- Nkunzimana, Obed, 2009, *Journal of African Cinemas*. Which of these themes can you identify from *Tsotsi*; immigration, race, socio-economic disparities, politics, religion, environmental issues? What new thing can you learn about Africans in general and about South Africa .....**Write your weekly journal from home**

(Future Reading for the class; see link below): What re-presentation entails; who is in and who is not: <http://racismstillexists.tumblr.com/post/28816737901/representations-of-black-people-in-film> for week 4

**September 5<sup>th</sup> Thursday (week 3.2)** - How to carry out simple content analysis of newspaper articles and images. Look at newspapers from Campus, city & country levels. who is re-presented in the stories you are reading?

**Class work:** Bring free newspapers on the newsstands on campus and continue content analysis.

**Week 4- September 10<sup>th</sup> Tuesday: (Week 4.1). Watch Sola Osofisan's movie. *Missing in America* (2004- a migration narrative).**

**(Week 4.1).** Issues in re-presentation of Africans, Blacks, and African Americans in global media; (1). How do Africans represent others in their media productions; (2). How do others represent Africans in text and images? **Ref link above**

**September 12<sup>th</sup> Thursday** -(Week 4.2) Continuation of the review of newspapers from Campus, city & country levels. **Reading for Tuesday week 5**, "Commentary and orality in African film reception" Chapter 6 of *Viewing African Cinema in the Twenty-first Century: Arts Films and the Nollywood Video Revolution*. (Check your inbox for pages 95 to 106)

**September 17<sup>th</sup> Tuesday** [Double period] ...-(Week 5.1). Watch **Hotel Rwanda (2005)**.

**Issues for discussion:** What is socialized viewing? There is also a book on the making of the film (Ref: *Hotel Rwanda: bringing the true story of an African hero to film* (edited by Terry George; screenplay written by Keir Pearson & Terry George... New York: Newmarket Press, c2005), and what did you learn about Rwanda? What was Rwanda and what is Rwanda now? Respond to these questions and more in your weekly journal from home.

**September 19<sup>th</sup> Thursday**-(Week 5.2). Review of newspapers from Campus, city & country levels. What kinds of stories are reported, who is featured and who is left out?

**Week 6- September 24<sup>th</sup> Tuesday**-(Week 6.1). **Watch:** The Constant Gardener (Kenya, 2005).

**Africa and the issue of poverty.** How should poverty be represented? Respond to these questions and more in your weekly journal from home. Electronic copies will be sent to you.

**Reading for the week:** "Tarzan in the Classroom: How 'Educational' films mythologize Africa and mis-educate Americans" (1993) by Sheila S. Walker & Jennifer Rasamimanana. **Link to this will be provided.**

**September 26<sup>th</sup> Thursday**-(Week 6-2). **Issues for discussion**-In search of good news from the continent. Media audience dynamics (readers & viewers); do they influence content of African media productions? What is trending in the news about Africa? -Continuation of the review of newspapers from Campus, city & country levels. Include online search for positive materials.

**October 1<sup>st</sup> Week 7 Tuesday**- (Week 7.1). **Film to watch:** White wedding (2011- written by Kenneth Nkosi, Rapulana Seiphemo & Jann Turner ; directed by Jann Turner. "White Wedding" humorously engages with the heritage of apartheid. Pay attention, as you watch the comedy, to signs, symbols, the kind of vehicles used in the movie and ideological under-pinning. What do you learn about Africa?

**Issues for discussion** –The economics of film production values on the continent and political ideologies portrayed (what do movies set out to achieve).

**October 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday**-(Week 7.2). Discussion: What is comedy? How does comedy feature in print?

Review of newspapers from Campus, city & country levels.

**Read ahead;** *Viewing African Cinema in the Twenty-first Century: Arts Films and the Nollywood Video Revolution*. Chapter 2: Nollywood and its critics, (pages 26 to 39). Copies will be sent to your email in-box

**October 8<sup>th</sup> Tuesday** - (Week 8.1). **Introduction to Nollywood. Watch** "Nollywood: Just doing it" (Directed & produced by Jane Thorburn). Reading to support the documentary: Chapter 2: Nollywood and its critics, (pages 26 to 39). What can we learn about African intellectuals and their attitude to colonialism and development of African aesthetic values? In addition, how is prosperity reflected in movies made on the continent?

**October 10<sup>th</sup> Thursday**- (week 8.2). Meaning of media text. How to interpret text and images; point of views; mediation of reality (recall that **news** is not what happened but how the institution and the professional framed it. Class exercise: Who is in the **news** on the African Continent? Continuation of the review of newspapers from Campus, city & country levels

**October 15<sup>th</sup> Week 9---Tuesday** (Week 9.1). . **Movie to Watch: Flame** (Zimbabwe 1996, 1hour 27minutes). Collective viewing of this movie and discussion of the women, their social status and power relations .What is gender construction as it relates to the African continent. Also, reflect on representation of females in African Movies in general

**October 17<sup>th</sup> Thursday---**(Week 9.2). Class discussion: How real are **news reports** on campus, the city of Gainesville and the State of Florida? Class work: A peep into Florida TV Channel.

**October 22<sup>nd</sup> Week 10 Tuesday-**(Week 10.1). Seasons of life-by C. Shemu Joyah (Malawi, 2008). Listen to samples of the soundtracks of the movie [http://www.firstdawnarts.com/sound\\_track.html](http://www.firstdawnarts.com/sound_track.html)

**Reading for the week:** Gugler, Josef, Introduction: *African film: re-imagining a continent*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003, (Pages 1 to 11). Parts of Africa not represented so far in the course.

**October 24<sup>th</sup> Thursday (Week 10.2)** - Sports in the news on the African Continent? -Sports review of newspapers from Campus, city & country levels. Continuation of sports review of newspapers from Campus, city & country. (Ref. see google books; Peter Alegi , (2010). African Soccerscapes: How a Continent Changed the World's Game

**October 29<sup>th</sup> Week 11 Tuesday:** (Week 11.1). Cost of film production in Africa (**Skype Interview with African filmmakers**). Collective viewing of one more movie and discussion of emerging themes

**October 31<sup>st</sup> Thursday:** (Week 11.2). Continuation of the review of newspapers from Campus, city & country levels.

**November 4<sup>th</sup> Week 12 Tuesday** (week 12.1). [Double period] Power point presentation on Africa in films

**November 7<sup>th</sup> Thursday** (week 12.2) Tentative results of content analysis of Newspapers around the campus & the city

**November 12<sup>th</sup> Week 13 Tuesday** (week 13.2). Preparation for presentation or review for mid-term exams

**November 14<sup>th</sup> Thursday** (week 13.2). **Mid Term exams** or presentation by students to real stakeholders on Campus

**November 19<sup>th</sup> Tuesday Week 14-Movie to watch,** a female director, Ana Lucia Ramos Lisboa --- Cape Verde My Love, 2007, 81 minutes (compare the language used in the law court in Malawi (week 10 with the one used in the court in Cape Verde) what can we learn about gender relations as represented in the movie. Why is Cape Verde called a *Halffrican* country?

November 21: Thursday- (Watch [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VBoGZ\\_HrtJ4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VBoGZ_HrtJ4) & Geography Now! Cape Verde <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q99tzGgkd4k>

**Thanksgiving holiday no class**

**December 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday** (week 15.1). Movie to watch, ). Representation of gender in newspapers around the campus. Content analysis continues. Review of final project(s) and the semester

Classes end December 3<sup>th</sup> ---

Reading days 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup>      **Final Exam: 12/12/2019 @ 3:00 PM - 5:00 PM**

**Thanksgiving week Wednesday 27<sup>st</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> (week 14)**

## End notes:

### “How we are presented and why media Literacy Matters”

The basics of media literacy and how to change media visibility for Blacks on most campuses is part of the objective of this class

(1). Importance of telling ones story and learning to do something about under-representation.

(2) These will be experience-sharing sessions based on facts or facts from content analysis. The objective is to look at Campus publications and find out how many stories Black people/ minorities write and how many Front Page stories are positive stories about Black/ minority Organizations on campus.

### Points to Note:

“When films are used to introduce students to Africa, critical examination is imperative—audiences that have little factual information about Africa all too readily assume that fiction and fact coincide.” Josef Gugler (2010)

‘Like fish, we “swim” in a sea of images, and these images help shape our perceptions of the world and of ourselves.’

(Berger, 2008)

‘What we watch on the screen could and should be interpreted as bearing a latent, and partly hidden, meaning, reflecting the profound concerns of the culture it emerges from, thus eliciting emotions, pleasure and pain.’ (Sassatelli, 2011)

Sassatelli, R (2011). "Interview with Laura Mulvey: Gender, Gaze and Technology in Film Culture." *Theory, Culture & Society* 28.5: 123-43.

“If you really want to know what is going wrong with Africa, Nollywood shows it” - Odia Ofeimun

<https://soundcloud.com/afropop-worldwide/sets/nollywood>

“When we look at old film (and its 'big brother' still photography for that matter), some basic questions come to mind. Why was it made? By whom was it made and for whom? Who used it, and how? We know that historians are amongst the current most avid consumers of **film, since its academic 'discovery' in the 1970s as a valid historical** primary source. Their most immediate concentration was on the more obviously respectable 'semi-official' sources such as newsreel and documentary. But in recent years, feature films have entered into the reckoning as primary sources for the ideological and social attitudes of their time. Historians have found great value in **studying both the 'texts' of films as well as the 'contexts' of their production.**”- Behind the camera by Douglas Allen