

ANTHROPOLOGY AND AFRICA

African and African American Studies 105x / Fall 2015

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Class meets Wednesdays 10:00am to
noon in Tozzer 203.

Office Hours: Tuesdays 10:00am to
noon (please sign up in advance;
there is a sign-up sheet on my door)
or by appointment.

Africa has occupied a central place in the making of anthropology as a discipline. If early ethnographic studies of African contexts generated leading theories of society, contemporary anthropologists made livelihoods on the continent key sites for understanding the political, economic and cultural dynamics of modernity and global capitalism. And, while anthropological discourses at times have been complicit in the making of dominant ideologies, they have also played a central role in critiquing hegemonic tropes and unraveling their effects. This course explores the relationship between, on the one hand, the discourses, practices, and politics of anthropology as a discipline and, on the other hand, “Africa” as an object of knowledge, an ideological category, a source of identity and collective consciousness, and a geo-political context of life. Students will explore how lives, subjectivities, and intimacies on the continent mediate and are shaped by global historical processes and how anthropologists have inhabited and tried to grasp such contexts. Throughout this course, students will acquire a critical conceptual vocabulary and a set of rigorous analytic skills that will allow them to think deeper about historical and cultural phenomena in Africa and about the political potentials of various forms of knowledge production. We ask: What do ethnographies of Africa offer us by means of understanding the world at large? And what may anthropology offer by way of crafting futures in Africa and beyond?

Course Requirements

Grades will reflect the student’s level of engagement with the readings, lectures, and other assignments of the course as well as the extent to which the student acquired critical knowledge and skills throughout the semester.

- ❑ *Attendance, Participation, and Review Questions (20%).* Students are expected to participate in class discussions by formulating questions, responses, and critiques relevant to the assigned readings. Attendance is mandatory. Please note that you will not earn any points for attending classes without participating. But you will lose points for absences. More than two absences will result in the loss of 5% from the final grade and more than four absences in the loss of 10%. To help you participate actively in class discussions, I would like you to write as you read. For each class, please prepare a short review question concerning one or more of the assigned readings. A good review question should very briefly sum up a selected argument of the reading(s). Then, it should unpack the argument critically, either by treating it on its own terms or by comparing it to issues emerging in discussions, lectures, and other readings covered for this class. Every class, I will call on two students to begin discussion by reading their review questions. I might also ask that you submit all your review questions at the end of the semester.

- ❑ *Book Review (20%)*. Choose one of the following books and write a short book review. These books deal with the making of anthropology (and knowledge, more generally) in/about Africa or with the relation between anthropology, Africanity and the wider world

- Laura Bohannan, *Return to Laughter* (1954)
- Alma Gottlieb and Philip Graham, *Parallel Worlds* (1993)
- Roy Richard Grinker, *In the Arms of Africa: The Life of Colin M. Turnbull* (2000)
- Michael Jackson, *In Sierra Leon* (2004)
- Mwenda Ntarangwi, *The Reversed Gaze* (2010)
- Paul Rabinow, *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco* (1977)
- Jan Vansina, *Living with Africa* (1994),

Book reviews should be 4-5 pages long, double-spaced, in 12 point font. Please submit your book review in class on *November 11*.

- ❑ *Take-home exams: Mid-term (30%) and Final (30%)*. Each exam consists of two types of questions. First, students have to provide short definitions for five key terms encountered in the readings, lectures, and films of the course. These can be both analytical anthropological concepts and vernacular concepts encountered in ethnographic case studies. Second, students are required to respond to one out of a choice of two essay questions. The essay must draw on the readings, lectures, and films of the course exclusively. It must have a clear thesis statement, a well-constructed argument, and sufficient evidence to support the your position. The essay must be no longer than four pages. Students have a week to write each exam. The mid-term will focus on the materials covered in the first half of the semester, while the final exam will emphasize primarily the materials covered in the second half of the course. The mid-term take-home exam is due **October 21** and the final take-home exam is due **December 9**. Note that late submissions will be penalized with 5% from the final grade per day.

Required Texts

The following texts are available for purchase at the Coop Bookstore and for consultation on a three-hour reserve in the Tozzer Anthropology Library.

- ❑ Buchi, Emecheta. *The Bride Price*. New York: George Braziller.
- ❑ Kenyatta, Jomo. *Facing Mt. Kenya: The Tribal Life of the Gikuyu*. New York: Vintage Books.
- ❑ Richards, Audrey. 1956. *Chisungu: A Girl's Initiation Ceremony among the Bemba of Northern Rhodesia*. London: Faber & Faver Ltd.

Class Courtesy

In order to engage most efficiently with the lectures and discussions of this course, to develop active listening skills and to maintain a productive and respectful learning environment for everyone in class, you may not use any electronic communication devices such as laptops, tablets and cell phones for the duration of the class.

Weekly Schedule

WEEK 1
September 9

INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

- ❑ No readings

WEEK 2
September 16

ANTHROPOLOGY & AFRICA: THE POLITICS OF AN “AFFAIR”

- ❑ Comaroff, Jean and John Comaroff. 1991. “Africa Observed: Discourses of the Imperial Imagination.” In J. Comaroff and J. L. Comaroff *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa*. Pp. 86-125. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- ❑ Mbembe, Achille. “Time on the Move.” In A. Mbembe *On the Postcolony*. Pp. 1-23. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- ❑ Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. 1991. Anthropology and the Savage Slot: The Poetics and Politics of Otherness. In Fox, R. (ed.) *Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present*. Pp.17-44. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press.
- ❑ Fabian, Johannes. 2006. “Forgetting Africa?” In Ntarangwi M., D. Mills, and M. Babiker (eds) *African Anthropologies: History, Critique and Practice*. Pp. 139-153. London: Zed Books.

PART I

CLASSIC DEBATES IN AFRICANIST ANTHROPOLOGY

WEEK 3
September 23

KINSHIP, MARRIAGE, AGE & SOCIO-POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

- ❑ Evans-Pritchard, E. E. 1940. “The Nuer of Southern Sudan.” In Fortes, M. and E. E. Evans-Pritchard (eds). *African Political Systems*. Pp. 272-296. London: Oxford University Press.
- ❑ Wilson, Monica. 1949. “Nyakyusa Age-Villages.” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 79: 21-25.
- ❑ Goody, Jack. 1956. “A Comparative Approach to Incest and Adultery.” *British Journal of Sociology*. 7(4): 286-305.
- ❑ Gulliver, Phillip H. 1955. “Marriage and Bridewealth.” In P. H. Gulliver *The Family Herd: A Study of Two Pastoral Tribes in East Africa; The Jie and Turkana*. Pp. 223-243. London: Routledge.

Film: “The Wedding Camels: A Turkana Marriage” (1976) by David & Judith MacDougall [101 min; excerpts]

WEEK 4
September 30

...continued...

- ❑ Spencer, Paul. 1965. *The Samburu: A Study of Gerontocracy*. London: Routledge. (Chapters 1, 3, 4, and 6).

WEEK 5
October 7

RITUAL, SEX, FERTILITY & POWER

- ❑ Richards, Audrey. 1956. *Chisungu: A Girl's Initiation Ceremony among the Bemba of Northern Rhodesia*. London: Faber & Faver Ltd. (Chapters 1, 2 and 3)

PART II

COLONIALISM AND THE DIALECTICS OF MODERNITY

WEEK 6
October 14

MONEY, CATTLE, AND EXCHANGE

- ❑ Bohannan, Paul. 1955. "Some Principles of Exchange and Investment among the Tiv." *American Anthropologist* 57: 60-70.
- ❑ Guyer, Jane. 2004. "Conversions: Asymmetrical Transactions." In J. Guyer *Marginal Gains: Monetary Transactions in Atlantic Africa*. Pp. 27-47. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- ❑ Ferguson, James. 1985. "Bovine Mystic: Power, Property and Livestock in Rural Leshoto." *Man* 20(4): 647-74.
- ❑ Comaroff, Jean and John L. Comaroff. 2006. Beasts, Banknotes and the Colour of Money in Colonial South Africa. *Archeological Dialogues* 12(2):107-32.

WEEK 7
October 21

"INVENTED TRADITION"? ANTHROPOLOGY AND INDIRECT RULE

- ❑ Kenyatta, Jomo. *Facing Mt. Kenya: The Tribal Life of the Gikuyu*. New York: Vintage Books. (Chapters 1, 2, 5, 6 and 7)

Mid-term Take-home Exam Due in Class

WEEK 8
October 28

LABOR MIGRATION, URBAN STYLES, AND URBAN ETHNOGRAPHY

- ❑ Mitchell, Clyde. 1956. *The Kalela Dance: Aspects of Social Relationships among Urban Africans in Northern Rhodesia*. Pp. 1-44. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- ❑ Schumaker, Lyn. 2001. "Atop the Central African Volcano." In L. Schumaker *Africanizing Anthropology: Fieldwork, Networks, and the Making of Cultural Knowledge in Central Africa*. Pp. 152-189. Durham: Duke University Press.

Film: "Les maîtres fous" (1955) by Jean Rouch [36 min]

WEEK 9
November 4

DEVELOPMENT AND THE OCCULT: EMERGINIG IDEOLOGIES

- ❑ Buchi, Emecheta. 1988. *The Bride Price*. New York: George Braziller.

Film: "The Witches of Gambaga" (2010) by Yaba Badoe [55 min]

PART III

POSTCOLONIAL CRITIQUES AND NEW DIRECTIONS IN AFRICANIST ANTHROPOLOGY

WEEK 10
Nov. 11

AFRICANITY, ANTHROPOLOGY AND GLOBAL INEQUALITIES

- ❑ Mudimbe, V. Y. 1988. "Discourse of Power and Knowledge of Otherness." In V. Y. Mudimbe *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge*. Pp. 1-23. London: James Currey.
- ❑ Mafeje, Archie. 1998. "Anthropology and Independent Africans: Suicide or End of an Era?" *African Sociological Review* 2(2): 95-107.
- ❑ Moore, Sally Falk. 1994. "African Independence and Anthropological Specialization, 1960-1990." (Excerpt) In S. F. Moore *Anthropology and Africa: Changing Perspectives on a Changing Scene*. Pp. 74-87. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia.
- ❑ Obbo, Christine. 2006. "But We Know It All! African Perspectives on Anthropological Knowledge." In M. Ntarangwi, D. Mills and M Babiker (eds) *African Anthropologies: History, Critique, and Practice*. Pp. 154-169. London: Zed Books.

Book Review Due in Class

WEEK 11
Nov. 18

RETHINKING SOVEREIGNTY, LAW & POWER FROM AFRICA

- ❑ Roitman, Janet. 2006. "The Ethics of Illegality in the Chad Basin." In J. Comaroff and J. Comaroff (eds) *Law and Disorder in the Postcolony*. Pp. 247-272. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- ❑ Comaroff, Jean and John L. Comaroff. "Figuring Democracy: An Anthropological Take on African Political Modernities." In J. Comaroff and J. L. Comaroff *Theory from the South: Or, How Euro-America Is Evolving Toward Africa*. Pp. 109-131. Boulder: Paradigm Publisher.
- ❑ Mbembe, Achille. 2001. "The Aesthetics of Vulgarly." In A. Mbembe *On the Postcolony*. Pp. 102-133. Berkeley: University of California Press.

November 25 No Class. Thanksgiving Recess Begins.

WEEK 13 AFRICANITY, RACE & KNOWLEDGE IN THE NEW GLOBAL ORDER
December 2

- ❑ Wainaina, Binyavanga. 2008. "How to Write About Africa?" *Granta 92: The View From Africa*. Link: <http://granta.com/how-to-write-about-africa/>
- ❑ Ferguson, James. 2006. "Of Mimicry and Membership: Africans and the 'New World Society.'" In J. Ferguson *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order*. Pp. 155-175. Durham: Duke University Press.
- ❑ Pierre, Jemima. 2013. "Race across the Atlantic... and Back: Theorizing Africa and/in the Diaspora." In J. Pierre *The Predicament of Blackness: Postcolonial Ghana and the Politics of Race*. Pp. 185-216.

December 9 **Final Take-home Exam Due.**

Map of Contemporary Africa



Capital Cities

Algeria - Algiers / Angola - Luanda / Benin - Porto-Novo / Botswana - Gaborone / Burkina Faso - Ouagadougou / Burundi - Bujumbura / Cameroon - Yaounde / Cape Verde - Praia / Central African Republic - Bangui / Chad - N'Djamena / Comoros - Moroni / Congo, Republic of the - Brazzaville / Congo, Democratic Republic of the - Kinshasa / Cote d'Ivoire - Yamoussoukro; Abidjan / Djibouti - Djibouti / Egypt - Cairo / Equatorial Guinea - Malabo / Eritrea - Asmara / Ethiopia - Addis Ababa / Gabon - Libreville / The Gambia - Banjul / Ghana - Accra / Guinea - Conakry / Guinea-Bissau - Bissau / Kenya - Nairobi / Lesotho - Maseru / Liberia - Monrovia / Libya - Tripoli / Madagascar - Antananarivo / Malawi - Lilongwe / Mali - Bamako / Mauritania - Nouakchott / Mauritius - Port Louis / Morocco - Rabat / Mozambique - Maputo / Namibia - Windhoek / Niger - Niamey / Nigeria - Abuja / Rwanda - Kigali / Senegal - Dakar / Seychelles - Victoria / Sierra Leone - Freetown / Somalia - Mogadishu / South Africa - Pretoria; Cape Town; Bloemfontein/Mangaung / Sudan - Khartoum / South Sudan - Juba / Swaziland - Mbabane / Tanzania - Dar es Salaam; Dodoma / Togo - Lome / Tunisia - Tunis / Uganda - Kampala / Zambia - Lusaka / Zimbabwe - Harare