

CAAS 440: African Cinema

University of Michigan, Fall 2010

Wednesdays 3:00-6:00 PM
Mason Hall 2347

Professor: Scott M. Edmondson
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Office Hours: Thursdays, 2:00-4:00 PM, and by appointment
Office Location: TBD

This course takes an interdisciplinary look at the development of African Cinema from its inception in the 1960s, at the height of the sociopolitical upheavals experienced by many nations in the transition from colonialism to independence. It will involve the masters such as Sembène and Cissé, and engage contemporary developments, such as the video film industries of Ghana and Nigeria. To truly demonstrate the vibrancy and diversity of African Cinema, one must engage examples from the winners of Cannes and FESPACO to the hits in the marketplace, from the avant-garde to the popular. Indeed, the course will also critically assess the analytical projects of Third Cinema studies, and discussion will revolve around concerns with (post-/)colonialism, heritage, globalization, representations of culture, the inventions of Africa, political consciousness and the supposedly apolitical, popular media. We will cinematically juxtapose *La Noire de...* and *Les Maitres Fous*, meanwhile developing historical consciousness that does not place colonial impact as the fulcrum on which African history and expressive cultures are balanced. Attempts will also be made, for example, to connect African cinema with other genres of African audio-visual arts, storytelling, theater and performance.

To drive discussion, we will be watching many films (including documentaries on these industries), as well as reading tailored selections (uploaded to CTools) from scholars such as Moradewun Adejunmobi, Karin Barber, Catherine Cole, Manthia Diawara, Frieda Ekotto, Brian Larkin, John McCall, Birgit Meyer, Onookome Okome, Victoria Pasley, N. Frank Ukadike, Tobias Wendl, and more. To view all that we can will involve in-class screenings conjoined with discussion, as well as out of class reserve screenings. Bi-weekly response papers and class participation will form a large part of the grade, as will a final paper/project that could range from: an audio-visual remix of these materials with news footage and advertisements that speaks to the dynamics explored in the course, to an essay comparing horror film genres in W. Africa with those in the US.

Required Readings, available at Ulrich's:

--Frieda Ekotto, Adeline Koh, eds. *Rethinking Third Cinema: The Role of Anti-Colonial Media and Aesthetics in Postmodernity* (2009)

--Ukadike, *Black African Cinema* (1994)

Additional readings, culled from book chapters and other articles, will be uploaded to CTools.

Required Screenings will be placed on reserve—with a sign-in sheet—at the Askwith Media Library (Room 2002, Shapiro Library). For those films we will watch online, the url will be uploaded to CTools. Also, depending on student input, we will schedule a weekly session in the Shapiro Screening Room so you can know for sure that the film will be available to watch when you go.

Grading rubric: Class Participation/Attendance (25%), In-Class Presentation (10%), Bi-Weekly Response Papers (30%), Final Paper/Project (35%)

Class Participation/Attendance is a necessary part of this course. *You* are key to breathing life into what we do here. So not only does that mean coming to class, you should be prepared to discuss the readings. The readings are listed below for the class in which we will be discussing them; i.e., the readings listed for September 15th

should be read *before* coming to the September 15th class.** Absences without proper documentation and/or legitimate cause will affect your grade in a negative way. Any concerns about these requirements are better brought to me sooner rather than later. In fact, attending office hours to discuss any questions or concerns about the course in general can also count as participation.

In-Class Presentation. Beginning on the September 22nd class, each of you will take a turn presenting one of the readings or films. We will sign up for these slots in class. In addition to a summary of the materials, identify some of the key issues in the piece and the author's and/or auteur's arguments and/or perspectives. Present your findings to us to help generate discussion.

Bi-Weekly Response Papers will become further fuel for the fire of our class discussions. The response papers will help you organize your thoughts and document your "take" on the readings and/or films (to be) discussed, so bring them to class and turn them in as a hard copy. Typically, I will also post on CTools some potential questions/concepts to consider in your response papers. The first response paper will be due on September 22nd, and should respond to the readings and films for both the September 15th and 22nd classes. The next response paper will be due on October 6th (on the materials for September 29th and October 6th), and then they will be due every two weeks until December 1st. In terms of length, generally I am expecting around 3 pages, or 750 words, standard font, double-spaced. But more important than the length, font, spacing, margins, etc. is that the response papers should not only summarize the materials, which they should with some concision, but they should also identify some important issues and/or questions these materials raise.

Final Paper/Project: This can be a final research paper of 10 pages, wherein you synthesize many of the ideas discussed in class and in these films, and also incorporate other outside readings and/or films. Or it can be a comparison piece, exploring the relationship between Nigerian and Indian cinema; or between Sembène's books and films, for example. You may also do some form of film or multimedia project of your own, perhaps even with a group, with some written context. It can be about whatever you like (gender, politics, religion, etc.), but you will have to propose it first and turn in that **proposal on November 10th**. Then the final paper/project will be **due by December 15th**.

**The schedule is subject to change as the course progresses, but you will be notified via CTools, email, and/or in class—so stay nimble, and come to class.

September 8:	<p>Introduction to the Stories, Signs, Poetics, Politics, Morals, Aesthetics, Industries, and Key Debates</p> <p><u>In-Class Screening:</u> Boughedir, <i>Caméra d'Afrique: Twenty Years of African Cinema</i> (1983); Meltzer, <i>Welcome to Nollywood</i> (2007)</p>
September 15:	<p>THE BIRTH OF NATIONS AND OTHER REVOLUTIONS</p> <p><u>Reading:</u> Koh and Ekotto (2009), "Introduction" to <i>Rethinking Third Cinema</i> Baratieri (2009), "Terrorists and Veils: The Battle of Algiers Four Decades Later" Pasley (2009), "<i>Kuxa Kanema: Third Cinema and its Transatlantic Crossings</i>"</p> <p><u>Watch on Reserve:</u> <i>The Battle of Algiers, Kuxa Kanema</i></p>
September 22:	<p>LES MAITRES</p> <p><u>Reading:</u> Ukadike (1994), <i>Black African Cinema</i>, pp. 166-201; 246-88</p> <p><u>Watch on Reserve:</u> <i>Yeelen; Touki Bouki</i></p> <p>*RESPONSE PAPER #1 DUE</p>

September 29:	<p>LES MAITRES, DEUXIEME PARTIE</p> <p><u>Reading:</u> Philip Rosen (1993), "Making a Nation in Sembene's Ceddo" Pfaff, "Ousmane Sembène," "Black Girl" (Selections from <i>Ousmane Sembène: Interviews</i>, by Busch & Annas)</p> <p><u>Watch on Reserve:</u> <i>Ceddo; La Noire de...</i></p>
October 6:	<p>JEAN ROUCH, Que Faire?</p> <p><u>Reading:</u> Diawara (1992), <i>African Cinema: Politics and Culture</i>, pp. 51-87</p> <p><u>In-Class Screening:</u> <i>Rouch in Reverse</i></p> <p><u>Watch on Reserve:</u> <i>Les Maitres Fous; Jaguar</i></p> <p>*RESPONSE PAPER #2 DUE</p>
October 13:	<p>VISIONS FROM THE DIASPORA</p> <p><u>Reading:</u> Ella Shohat and Robert Stam (1994), "From Eurocentrism to Polycentrism"</p> <p><u>Watch on Reserve:</u> <i>Killer of Sheep; Daughters of the Dust; and/or Sankofa</i></p>
October 20:	<p>NIGERIAN FILM AKA "NOLLYWOOD"</p> <p><u>Reading:</u> Karin Barber (1987), "Popular Arts in Africa"</p> <p><u>Watch on Reserve:</u> <i>This is Nollywood; Nollywood Lady</i></p> <p>*RESPONSE PAPER #3 DUE</p>
October 27:	<p>GHANAIAN VIDEO TALES</p> <p><u>Reading:</u> Birgit Meyer (2003), "Chapter 8. Ghanaian Popular Cinema and the Magic in and of Film"</p> <p><u>Watch Online:</u> <i>Ghanaian Video Tales</i></p>
November 3:	<p>TAKYIWA/KYEIWAA: FOLKLORE, CONCERT PARTIES, AND VIDEO FILMS</p> <p><u>Reading:</u> Catherine Cole (2001), "Chapter 6. 'This is Actually a Good Interpretation of Modern Civilization': Staging the Social Imaginary, 1946-1966" and other, shorter passages from the book, <i>Ghana's Concert Party Theatre</i></p> <p><u>Watch on Reserve:</u> <i>Kumasi Yonko</i></p> <p>*RESPONSE PAPER #4 DUE</p>
November 10:	<p>JESU AND JUJU, SIKI YE MOGYA: MONEY MATTERS, PENTECOSTALISM, STOLEN WOMBS AND HEAVENLY BLESSINGS</p> <p><u>Reading:</u> Birgit Meyer (2006), "Religious Revelation, Secrecy and the Limits of Visual Representation"; John C. McCall (2002), "Madness, Money, and Movies: Watching a Nigerian Popular Video with the Guidance of a Native Doctor"</p> <p><u>Watch on Reserve:</u> <i>Hot Money</i></p> <p>**Turn in the proposal for your final paper/project.**</p>

<p><i>November 17:</i> **OUT** AAA/VRC</p>	<p><i>ROMANCE, GLAMOUR, CELEBRITY, FEMMES FATALES, AND BOLLYWOOD RESONANCE (NO CLASS)</i> <u>Reading:</u> <i>Brian Larkin (2008), "Chapter 6. Extravagant Aesthetics: Instability and the Excessive World of Nigerian Film"</i> <u>Watch on Reserve:</u> <i>Glamour Girls; Princess Tyra; Celebrity; Wasila</i></p>
<p>November 23:</p>	<p>**SPECIAL SCREENING: Global Lens Series 2010: <i>SHIRLEY ADAMS</i>, by director Oliver Hermanus (2009, South Africa). http://www.globalfilm.org/lens10/shirley_adams.htm</p> <p>Please meet at the International Institute, Room 1636 (in the School of Social Work Building, 1080 South University). The film will be shown at both 3:00 & 5:00pm, and you can attend either screening. Attendance will be taken, and you will respond to this film as part of Response Paper #6, due December 1.</p> <p><u>*RESPONSE PAPER #5 DUE</u></p>
<p><i>November 24:</i></p>	<p><i>WATCH FILMS ONLINE AND/OR ON RESERVE (NO CLASS; GIVE THANKS)</i> <i>Contribute to CTools Discussion. Your instructor will post some topics, and so can you.</i> <u>Watch on Reserve:</u> <i>[continue from above]</i></p>
<p>December 1:</p>	<p>TO GAUGE AND ENGAGE AUDIENCES <u>Reading:</u> Moradewun Adejunmobi (2007), "Nigerian Video Film As Minor Transnational Practice" Onookome Okome (2007), "Nollywood: Spectatorship, Audience and the Sites of Consumption" <u>Watch on Reserve:</u> <i>[selected sequels and/or other surprises]</i> <u>*RESPONSE PAPER #6 DUE</u></p>
<p>December 8:</p>	<p>SOUTH AFRICAN OFFERINGS; AND/OR OVERFLOWS AND VIEWERS' CHOICES <u>Reading:</u> Ukadike, <i>Black African Cinema</i>, pp. 304-11 <u>Watch on Reserve:</u> <i>Fools (1997); Zulu Love Letter (2004) [+Viewers' Choice! Bamako? Who Will Tell the President? Sitanda? Kasarmu Ce? So many films, so little time...]</i></p>

****FINAL PAPER/PROJECT DUE BY December 15****

Suggestions for Further Reading

Diawara, *African Cinema: Politics and Culture* (1992)

Harrow, *African Cinema: From the Political to the Postmodern* (2007)

Harrow, ed., *African Cinema: Postcolonial and Feminist Readings* (2000)

Larkin, *Signal and Noise* (2008)

Mahir Saul and Ralph Austen, eds. *Viewing African Cinema in the Twenty-First Century: Art Films and the Nollywood Video Revolution* (2010)

Ukadike, *Questioning African cinema: conversations with filmmakers* (2002)