

Syllabus

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Office hours: Thursday 2:00pm to 4:00 pm

ANT 5354 (138F)/AFS 6930 (19E8) “Anthropology of Modern Africa”

Tuesday, Period 6-8,

MAT 0007

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This seminar examines the recent essays and ethnographies written by Anthropologist on what has been presented as alternative African modernity. Africa has been early on in the historical trajectory of Anthropology as a discipline the perfect object of analysis for western scholars interested in understanding human evolution and progress. Africa was not just presented by early anthropologists as a different space or place; it was more fundamentally replaced in a cyclical historical time. What the African were experiencing was viewed as a thing of the past in the Western historical progressive trajectory. To put it bluntly the present of Africa was seen and presented as being the past of Western societies. The logical conclusion drawn by modernizing theorists was that Africans and the tiers World society in general could follow in the steps of the Western world to achieve the same level of material, technological, and scientific advancement. But with the obvious failure of modernization policies it has been quite clear that the differences between the West and rest could not be reduce to their economic and material dimensions. Anthropologists - whose discipline was first to label African societies as primitive – were first to think of African alternative modernity. Africa and Africans were modern in their own terms and should not be evaluated with a Western centered concept of modernity.

The discipline of Anthropology has been also the first one to engage in critical evaluation of western scholarship on Africa. Most of the postcolonial ethnographies have been invested in proving and defending what Johannes Fabian called the co-evalness of African societies vis-à-vis the western societies. The attitude is to claim modernity for African societies without systematically taking the West as the model of reference. This seminar will, through the use of essays, ethnographies, journal articles, and films, focus on the major debates and discussions among Anthropologists and Africanists at large regarding the representation of “modern Africa” in western scholarship.

OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of this course are:

- To expose students to anthropological perspective in the representation of Africa and African societies and cultures by examining the wider historical processes that has set the stage for the transformation of the anthropological views on the African object/subject.
- To help students cultivate a greater command over current trends in social analysis and theorization about modernity, postcolonial subject, and the changing perspective on African realities.
- To enhance students’ critical thinking and analytical writing skills.

READING MATERIAL

Required Reading

James Ferguson (2006). *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order*. Durham: Duke University Press.
James Howard Smith (2008). *Bewitching Development: Witchcraft and the Reinvention of Development in Neoliberal Kenya*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
Bob White (2008). *Rumba Rules: The Politics of Dance Music in Mobutu's Zaire*. Durham: Duke University Press.
Sasha Newell (2012). *The Modernity Bluff: Crime, Consumption, and Citizenship in Côte d'Ivoire*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
Charles Piot (). *Nostalgia for the Future*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press

These books are available for purchase at the UF bookstore. Additional reading material is available at Library West in the course reserve section of this class. Please consult them at the library or make copies of relevant chapters ahead of time.

REQUIREMENTS

Readings and Participation (10 points)

Each student will be expected to participate in class discussion. Students will be evaluated for their familiarity with required readings and their productive contributions to class debate. Attendance is compulsory. Any absence has to be justified to the satisfaction of the instructor. Any unjustified absence will seriously undermine your final grade. An attendance sheet will be distributed at the end of each session and students are required to sign it.

Précis's of Reading: (25 points)

Each student is required to write a précis for seven sessions. A précis is a relatively brief (300 words) summary of critical thought that arise during your reading. It should include: (1) the primary argument of the text (s); (2) note on the object of analysis and kinds of evidence; (3) the intellectual, disciplinary, and /or political context of the work. These should be sent to me by e-mail at the latest on Monday by noon.

Oral Presentation: (25 points)

Students are expected to make an oral presentation on the reading material covered in class. The presentation should summarize the reading material as well as evaluate critically strength and weakness of the author major arguments and findings (in the case of ethnography). The student is also expected to lead the class discussion around his own questions and those formulated by class-mates.

Questions on readings: (15 points)

Each student will be expected to write 3 questions that he or she found important about the required readings. The questions have to be asked in class and turned in to the instructor at the end of each class.

Anthropology of Modern Africa Project (25 points)

Students are to follow the news on publications related to the topics covered in class. Students are expected to explore the major anthropological journals with a focus on Africa to find new publications of relevance to this seminar. Student should summarize the articles in a two pages while explaining why and how they are related to topics covered in class. A long the semester each student should have reviewed four articles. A brief presentation of the articles in class is also expected (25 to 30 minutes) on December 4. I will be happy to help in the exploration of new articles.

Final Paper: (25 points)

Each student will be expected to write a research paper of 15 pages. The paper should be double-spaced, in 12 pt font, with 1" margins on all sides. This paper may review some substantive matter of interest to the student, or directly address a theoretical issue of relevance to African modernity. Please talk to me about your topic and focus by the end of September. This paper will be due on the last day of class. You can send your paper by e-mail or place it in my mailbox in the Anthropology Office by 4 pm on that day. There will be no extensions.

Grading Scale: The following scale will be used for grades on all assignments and exams: 94-100=A; 90-93=A-; 87-89=B+; 83-86=B; 79-82=B-; 76-78=C+; 72-75=C; 69-71=C-; 66-68=D+; 62-65=D; 59-61=D-; 58 and below=E (failing). Regarding university grading policies, be advised that a grade of C- is not valid for major, minor, Gen Ed, Gordon Rule, or for college basic distribution credit. For questions about minus grades, please see <http://www.isis.ufl.edu/minusgrades.html>. You may consult current UF policy on how grade point averages are calculated at <http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationgrades.html>.

UF Policies and Resources

Academic Honesty:

All work submitted by a student for a grade must be completed by that student and free from unauthorized assistance or deliberate misrepresentations. The penalty for plagiarism or cheating is a grade of zero points on the assignment in question; in such cases an incident form will also be sent to the Office of the Dean of Students. If you have questions about what constitutes academic misconduct, please consult the UF Honor Code as well as the UF Policies on Academic Honesty, Student Rights and Responsibilities. These are available online at: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/studentguide/studentrights.php-academichonestyguidelines>.

ADA Statement: "Students with disabilities, who need reasonable modifications to complete assignments successfully and otherwise satisfy course criteria, are encouraged to meet with the instructor as early in the course as possible to identify and plan specific accommodations. Students will be asked to supply a letter from the Disability Resource Center to assist in planning accommodations."

Health and Counseling: The University offers the following health and counseling services for students in the event personal problems threaten to hinder academic performance: University Counseling Center (301 Peabody Hall, 392-1575), Student Mental Health (Student Health Care Center, 392-1171), and Sexual Assault Recovery Services (Student Health Care Center, 392-1161).

Please note: The Instructor may make minor adjustments to class readings or assignments during the course of the semester. Any and all modifications will be announced ahead of time.

Course Schedule (I reserve the right to add films and documentaries in the Schedule)

Week 1

Tu, Aug 26: Course Overview

Week 2

Tu, Sep 2: Representing Africa over time: History of Anthropology in Africa

Lecture: Sally Falk Moore on the relationship between Anthropology and its African object.

Week 3

Tu, Sep 9: Does the Economic and Material determine the cultural?

Reading: James Ferguson: Global Shadows. Chapter 1, 2, and 3

Week 4

Tu, Sep 16

Reading: James Ferguson: Global Shadows. Chap 4 to end

Week 5

Tu, Sep 23: Neoliberalism and African Belief Systems

Reading: James H. Smith: Bewitching Development. Chap 1 to 3.

Week 6

Tu, Sep 30

Reading: James H. Smith: Bewitching Development. Chap 4 to 8.

Week 7

Tu, Oct 7: The use of tradition in postcolonial identity politics

Reading: Bob White: Rumba Rules. Chap 1 to 4.

Week 8

Tu, Oct 14

Reading: Bob White: Rumba Rules. Chap 5 to 8.

Week 9

Tu, Oct 21: The African Youth and Performance of Modernity

Sasha Newell: The Modernity Bluff. Chap 1 to 3.

Week 10

Tu, Oct 28

Reading: Sasha Newell: The Modernity Bluff. Chap 4 to conclusion.

Week 11

Tu, Nov 4: Prospect of the past and nostalgia of the future

Reading: Charles Piot: Nostalgia of the future. Chap. 1 to 3

Week 12

Tu, Nov 11

Reading: Charles Piot: Nostalgia of the future. Chap 4 to end.

Week 13

Tu, Nov 18:

Reading: Brad Weiss: Street Dreams and Hip Hop Barbershops. Chap 1 and 2

Week 14

Tu, Nov 25

Kristin Peterson: Speculative Markets. Chap. 1 and 2

Week 15

Tu, Dec 2

Anthropology of Modern Africa project's presentation by graduate students.