HU 3326 Topics in World Cinema: African Film (Summer 2015) (Online)

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Office hours: By appointment (online)

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES:

This interdisciplinary course seeks to explore the history and the cultures of the African continent with attention to the way images (film, documentary, etc.) have complemented other forms of narratives (academic, official, fiction, travel notes, etc.) in the representations of Africa. The main argument that is explored in this course is that due to the preeminence of the audiovisual medium over other forms of representations, the production of images about the continent is central in the way Africa is perceived around the world. Awareness on the continent about this reality has constituted the driving force behind the emergence of an authentic African cinema, resulting in a sharp contrast between mainstream and independent films. The course seeks to foster knowledge and understanding of the cultures of the African continent through film, and emphasizes the importance of historical and sociocultural contexts in analyzing films about Africa.

REQUIRED RESOURCES:
Canvas<http://www.courses.mtu.edu>

Students are required to have Internet access, and to secure access to Amazon Prime Instant videos. Attendants will also be required to read /explore additional materials/sources that will be made available on Canvas. Weekly assigned secondary readings are organized into folders in “Files”, while web links may be found in “Pages”.

Learning Objectives:

- Students will develop an in-depth awareness of the historical relationships between Western countries and their former African colonies.
- Students will gain a deeper understanding of the current issues that the African continent is faced with.
- Students will learn to use proper terminology to analyze and discuss film techniques and filmic narratives.
- Students will understand genres, trends and styles in African cinema.
• Students will demonstrate ability to work independently as well as in group using films, the Internet, journals, etc., to prepare and present oral and written reports on assigned texts or films, and to actively participate in class.

**Policy & Participation:**

This class is taught online. Because success in this course is based on active engagement with the films and interaction between class participants in an online forum, you are expected to watch each film and complete readings and assignments in a timely manner, in order to effectively participate in the class, and contribute to the mutually beneficial virtual learning community that the instructors seek to foster. Please note that late submissions and other participations will affect your performance and your overall grade. If you anticipate not having access to the Internet at some point, plan ahead of time, and contact me to discuss possible arrangements to insure continued participation in the class.

**Homework**

Homework is assigned weekly, and will include films viewing, additional reading as well as materials from other sources relevant to the topics explored. Homework will include quizzes, essays and short written assignments, interactive assignments such as discussion board, and viewing/listening and comprehension activities, etc. Some of these assignments will be P/N while others will be graded. Always save electronic copies of your works for future reference, or in case you need to resubmit something. Check Canvas regularly for information and updates about the readings and assignments.

**Discussion Board**

I expect you to watch the movies critically and read the texts reflectively, and demonstrate ability to comprehend or analyze them beyond merely summarizing. In your reflections, avoid simplistic and superficial statements limited to expressing likes/dislikes. This means when appropriate, your response must demonstrate an attentive watching/reading, a clear awareness of the issues/questions explored, and of their complexities. Students’ output should show a control of the topic explored, significance, depth and coherence of arguments in their responses.

When participating in the class forum, participants must demonstrate a critical engagement in the course, and are expected to respond to their peers’ posts. Needless to say, such interactions should be respectful and conducted in a spirit of collaboration.
Communication with class
I will read all submitted works, and provide feedback in a timely manner. I will monitor discussions, and provide feedback or intervene when necessary. I will either respond to the class, or send individual feedback.

Recommendations
Show some enthusiasm and be patient, because films from other parts of the world, especially the non-Western world, don’t lend themselves to our intellect the same way as other artifacts do. Also, you are expected to watch films about Africa with totally new lenses. Don’t be concerned about sounding stupid. Contact me immediately if you are experiencing difficulties. Appointments may be made to chat or skype with me. Allow a 24-hour response time.

Course Requirements:
Introduction and Feedback P/N 10 pts.
4 multiple-choice short-quiz every other week 40 pts.
4 film reviews (12.5 x 4) 50 pts.
Discussion forum P/N (x4) 50 pts.
1 Final essay 50 pts.
Note: Late submissions are discouraged. Contact instructor if you anticipate a late submission

Film reviews: 2 pages, double-spaced. A review is NOT the summary of the plot. It is a brief commentary on a film or text and it comprises two parts: (1) identification and a few lines on what the text or film is about; and (2) a thoughtful reflection on any aspects of the film. This could be an assessment of a character or the relationship between characters; an analysis of some notable elements of the film’s technique, etc. Students should pay attention to such details as the date when the movie was released, the director’s name and cinematography, and the cinematic genre to which the film belongs. Why are such details important in the interpretation of a film? What is the significance of the film for audiences in and beyond Africa? You can review any 4 films you wish. But reviews must be submitted by the due date in the syllabus, and be based only on films we have watched.

Term paper: 4 pages, double-spaced. The final paper provides an opportunity to assess what you have learned in this class, and outline some key themes/features that you view as critical to understanding Africa and films about the continent. Your argument should be rigorously organized, and your essay must demonstrate your ability to reflect critically on the importance and
the complexity of images in the making of knowledge about Africa. The paper will include content and techniques analysis, and draw from at least four essays from the course readings and no less than two films.

**Grading scale:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Minimum Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>AB</td>
<td>88-93%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>84-87%</td>
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<tr>
<td>BC</td>
<td>78-83%</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>74-77%</td>
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<td>CD</td>
<td>68-73%</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>60-68%</td>
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<td>F</td>
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**Academic Integrity**

Taking the work of others and passing it off as your own is academic theft and will be punishable by failing the assignment/course or dismissal from school. Cases of plagiarism will be turned over to the Dean of Students’ Office. See details about Michigan Tech’s Academic Integrity definitions, policies, and enforcement procedures at [http://www.sa.mtu.edu/dean/judicial/airc/](http://www.sa.mtu.edu/dean/judicial/airc/) and [http://www.studentaffairs.mtu.edu/dean/judicial/policies/academic_integrity.html](http://www.studentaffairs.mtu.edu/dean/judicial/policies/academic_integrity.html).

**University Policies**

Student work products (exams, essays, projects, etc.) may be used for purposes of university, program, or course assessment. All work used for assessment purposes will not include any individual student identification. Michigan Tech has standard policies on academic misconduct and complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. For more information about reasonable accommodation for or equal access to education or services at Michigan Tech, please call the Dean of Students Office, at (906) 487-2212 or go to [http://www.mtu.edu/ctl/instructional-resources/syllabus/syllabus-policies](http://www.mtu.edu/ctl/instructional-resources/syllabus/syllabus-policies).
**Synopsis of course**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Themes and Primary texts</th>
<th>Films &amp; Videos</th>
<th>Works Due</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 June 30</td>
<td>The making of Africa</td>
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<td>Individual Introduction</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Jul 6</td>
<td><em>Themes and Genres in African Film</em></td>
<td><em>Life is Rosy Identity Papers</em></td>
<td>Mini-quiz 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Jul 13</td>
<td>Travels, colonialism and knowledge</td>
<td><em>Out of Africa Chocolat</em></td>
<td>Mini-quiz 2 Film Review 1 Discussion Board 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Jul 20</td>
<td>Films on Africa</td>
<td><em>Sometime in April The Gods must be crazy</em></td>
<td>Film Review 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Jul 27</td>
<td>Africans behind the camera</td>
<td><em>Africa I will Fleece you Africa Paradis</em></td>
<td>Discussion Board 3 Mini-quiz 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Aug 3</td>
<td>Africanist film making New Media and New Direction</td>
<td><em>The Battle of Algiers Congo: White King, Red Rubber, Black Death</em></td>
<td>Film Review 3 Discussion Board 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 Aug 10</td>
<td>Women film making</td>
<td><em>FaatKiné</em></td>
<td>Feedback Term Paper</td>
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**Conclusion**

**Note:** Assigned readings and other activities are to be covered by dates indicated. All materials pertaining to the course will be made available online. Verify accessibility ahead of time and notify me about any difficulty.

*Links are provided for short online videos. See Files, Announcements, Pages and Assignments on Canvas for additional course materials*

**This syllabus is subject to change at any time for pedagogical and/or unexpected circumstances. You will be notified of such changes if they take place.**