



Anthropology 280
Africa: Anthropological
Perspectives

Oxford College, Spring 2019
Dr. Jessica Ham

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Tuesday, Thursday 11:30-12:45 Language Hall 101

Course Description

This course is a survey of anthropology in and of Africa. Owing to the regional origins during the colonial era, we pay particular attention to Africa below the Sahara. At its most fundamental level, this is a course where we are unlearning in order to learn. We will collectively think through certain “truths” about the peoples, places, and issues of the African continent. To do this we will examine anthropology of past and present to assess how the tools and interests of this discipline either create, reaffirm, or refute tropes about African lived experiences.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course it is my hope that you will.....

- Be more aware when you (or others) are speaking generically about the peoples, places and issues of the African continent (i.e. Africa is not a country)
- Come to see how the economic, environmental, social and cultural issues of the African continent are intricately intertwined, resulting in lived human experiences that are both unique and ordinary
- Articulate how the Western Civilization approach to worldly progress diminishes or discredits African modes of thought and practice.
- Understand how ethnography as a practice and product of empiricism anchors anthropology in different methodologies and scholarly goals
- Feel prepared to use your African ethnography framework in ways that aid your sensitivity to issues of social justice and power both on and off the continent. Furthermore, feel compelled to construct a plan for purposefully and ethically contributing to the field of study via future coursework, research projects, professional opportunities or travel.

Office Hours

I will hold open office hours on Fridays from 3:00-4:00. No appointments necessary! If you can't make it to this time slot, please email me to schedule another time to meet. While I'm happy to see you smile and wave while you walk past my office door, unscheduled student drop in visits are discouraged.

Student Accommodations

If you have a documented disability and have anticipated barriers related to the format or requirements of this course, or presume having a disability (e.g. mental health, attention, learning, vision, hearing, physical or systemic), and are in need of accommodations for this please contact the Office of Accessibility Services (OAS) to learn more about the registration process and steps for requesting accommodations at oas_oxford@emory.edu. Students who have accommodations in place are encouraged to coordinate with the instructor within the first week to discuss your specific needs for the course. Accommodations are not implemented until the instructor is provided an accommodation letter and discusses the accommodation plan for this course face to face with the OAS student. All discussions with OAS and faculty concerning the nature of your disability remain confidential.

Required Readings/Materials

Ethnographies

Note: All of these are on reserve at the library, but If you don't want to rely on the reserved copy, I'd recommend you organize yourselves so that just a few of you are purchasing the book and sharing. Buy used copies online!

Cliggett, Lisa. (2005). *Grains from Grass: Aging, Gender, and Famine in Rural Africa*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Ntarangwi, Mwenda. (2009). *East African Hip Hop: Youth Culture and Globalization*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Walsh, Andrew. (2012). *Made in Madagascar: Sapphires, Ecotourism, and the Global Bazaar*. North York: University of Toronto Press.

Graphic Novels

Note: All of these are on reserve at the library and you are only to read 1 of the three. It is not likely that you will need to purchase one of these.

Abouet, Marguerite. 2007. *Aya*. Montreal: Drawn & Quarterly.

Abouet, Marguerite. 2008. *Aya of Yop City*. Montreal: Drawn & Quarterly.

Abouet, Marguerite. 2009. *Aya: The Secret's Come Out*. Montreal: Drawn & Quarterly.

Articles and Book Chapters

Note: All of these articles/book chapters will be made available on Canvas.

Aidoo, Ama Ata. (2016). Everything counts. In Kwasi Konadu and Clifford C. Campbell (Eds.) *The Ghana Reader: History, Culture, Politics*. (pp. 322-325). Durham: Duke University Press.

Alexander, Isabella. (2017). For African asylum-seekers, a treacherous journey is only the beginning. *Sapiens*. <https://www.sapiens.org/culture/african-asylum-seekers-treacherous-journey/>

Appiah, Kwame Anthony. (1997). Europe upside down: Fallacies of the new Afrocentrism. In R.R. Grinker and C.B. Steiner (Eds.), *Perspectives on Africa: A Reader in Culture, History, and Representation* (pp. 728-731). London: Blackwell Publishing.

Geller, Sydney. (1995). The colonial era. In Phyllis M. Martin and Patrick O'Meara (Eds.), *Africa* (pp. 135-155). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Bohannon, Paul (1997). Some principles of exchange and investment among the Tiv. In R.R. Grinker and C.B. Steiner (Eds.), *Perspectives on Africa: A Reader in Culture, History, and Representation* (pp. 119-128). London: Blackwell Publishing.

Collins, E.J. (2016). Ghanaian highlife. In Kwasi Konadu and Clifford C. Campbell (Eds.) *The Ghana Reader: History, Culture, Politics*. (pp. 406-409). Durham: Duke University Press.

Comaroff, John. L. (1997). Of totemism and ethnicity: Consciousness, practice and the signs of Inequality. In R.R. Grinker and C.B. Steiner (Eds.), *Perspectives on Africa: A Reader in Culture, History, and Representation* (pp.69-85). London: Blackwell Publishing.

Fortes, Meyer. (1936). Culture contact as a dynamic process: An investigation in the northern Territories of the Gold Coast. *Africa* 9(1): 24-55).

Garfield, Gail and Zora Neil Hurston. (1991). "I shall wrasse me up a future or die trying." *Dialectical Anthropology* 16(2): 139-151

Gibbs, James L. (1963). The Kpelle moot: A therapeutic model for the informal settlement of disputes. *Africa* 33(1): 1-11.

Herskovits, Melville. (1926). The cattle complex in East Africa. *American Anthropologist* 28(1): 230-272.

Hirsch, Afua. (2012). Ghana expatriates return home to seize opportunities from booming economy. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/dec/19/ghana-expatriates-return-home-economy>

Hodgson, Dorothy. (1999). "Once intrepid warriors": Modernity and the production of Maasai masculinities. *Ethnology* 38(2): 121-150.

Holsey, Bayo. (2013). Black Atlantic visions: History, race, and transnationalism in Ghana. *Cultural Anthropology* 28(3): 504-518.

Holtzman, Jon. (2003). In a cup of tea: Commodities and history among Samburu pastoralists in northern Kenya. *American Ethnologist* 30(1): 136-155.

Keller, Edmond J. (1995). Decolonization, independence, and the failure of politics. In Phyllis M. Martin and Patrick O'Meara (Eds.), *Africa* (pp. 156-171). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Lowe, Chris, T. Brimah, P.A. Marsh, W. Minter and M. Muyangwa. (1997). Talking about “tribe.” Washington DC: Africa Policy Information Center.

Manuh, Takyiwa. (2016). Citizenship and identity among Ghanaian migrants in Toronto. In Kwasi Konadu and Clifford C. Campbell (Eds.) *The Ghana Reader: History, Culture, Politics*. (pp. 384-389). Durham: Duke University Press.

Masquelier, Adeline. (2013). Teatime: Boredom and the temporalities of young men in Niger. *Africa* 83(3): 470-491.

Nkrumah, Kwame (2016). Independence speech. In Kwasi Konadu and Clifford C. Campbell (Eds.) *The Ghana Reader: History, Culture, Politics*. (pp. 301-302). Durham: Duke University Press.

Nkrumah, Kwame (2016). Africa’s resources. In Kwasi Konadu and Clifford C. Campbell (Eds.) *The Ghana Reader: History, Culture, Politics*. (pp. 307-310). Durham: Duke University Press.

Owusu, Maxwell. (1997). Ethnography of Africa: The usefulness of the useless. In R.R. Grinker and C.B. Steiner (Eds.), *Perspectives on Africa: A Reader in Culture, History, and Representation* (pp.704-723). London: Blackwell Publishing.

Pritchard-E. Evans. (1940). The age set system. In *The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People*. (pp. 249-266). New York: Oxford University Press.

Rodney, Walter. (1997). How Europe underdeveloped Africa. In R.R. Grinker and C.B. Steiner (Eds.), *Perspectives on Africa: A Reader in Culture, History, and Representation* (pp. 585-596). London: Blackwell Publishing.

Shipton, Parker. (1997). Bitter money: Forbidden exchange in East Africa. In R.R. Grinker and C.B. Steiner (Eds.), *Perspectives on Africa: A Reader in Culture, History, and Representation* (pp.163-189). London: Blackwell Publishing.

Stoller, Paul. Spaces, places and fields. The politics of West African trading in New York City’s informal economy. *American Anthropologist* 98(4): 776-788.

Van Allen, Judith. (1997). “Sitting on a man”: Colonialism and the lost political institutions of Igbo women. In R.R. Grinker and C.B. Steiner (Eds.), *Perspectives on Africa: A Reader in Culture, History, and Representation* (pp.536-549). London: Blackwell Publishing.

Wainaina, Binyavanga. (2006). How to write about Africa. *Granta* 92. <https://granta.com/how-to-write-about-africa/>;

Womack, Autumn. (2018). Contraband Flesh. On Zora Neale Hurston’s *Barracoon*. *The Paris Review* <https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2018/05/07/contraband-flesh-on-zora-neale-hurstons-barracoon/#more-124966>

Detailed notes on our readings/viewings schedule are detailed later in the syllabus.

“THERE ARE THREE WAYS TO ULTIMATE SUCCESS: THE FIRST WAY IS TO BE KIND. THE SECOND WAY IS TO BE KIND. THE THIRD WAY IS TO BE KIND.” *FRED ROGERS****

Course Policies

Attendance: Attendance is essential for successful completion of this course. You will be granted 2 absences without penalty to your participation grade. For every absence beyond 2, your participation grade will drop ½ a letter grade. Should you need to be absent from class more than twice for religious observance, we will then discuss a way to compensate for time lost in the class and there will be no penalty. Please look to Emory’s official list of religious holidays for more information:

https://www.religiouslife.emory.edu/faith_traditions/holidays.html

Technology: Electronic usage in this class is flexible, but entails certain standards. If you use your laptop for taking notes on readings, you may use your laptop for accessing your notes during discussion. You will be asked to disconnect from the internet. No laptops are to be used for taking notes in class during lecture. Notetaking during lecture requires paper and a writing utensil. Please **turn off or silence all phones and store out of sight** at the start of class. Phone usage will not be tolerated. Students disregarding this policy will be asked to address the transgression and participation grades will suffer.

Decorum: The classroom is space where ideas are respectfully shared. You are not expected to agree with me or your peers, but you are expected to be tactful in the expression of your ideas and response to others. As Mr. Rogers reminds us above, kindness to ourselves and to others is the ultimate route to success.

Academic Honesty: As a member of the Oxford College community you are to uphold the Student Honor Code. As a faculty member, it is my duty to report any transgressions. Need a refresher? Visit:

<https://inside.oxford.emory.edu/academics/oxford-honor-council/student-honor-code/>

Late Work: All assignments are due on the date listed in this syllabus. Late work will be accepted, but will be subject to penalties. For the first day that an assignment is late, grading will begin at a B (85%). For each subsequent day the assignment is late, an additional 2% points will be taken off. Please do not email me that you are going to turn in an assignment late. Instead, once you have completed the assignment you may email it to me. Extensions without penalty may be granted on a case by case basis and with documented support (i.e. Student Health Center or your academic adviser).

Grades: Grades will be assigned thusly: A (93% and above) A- (90-92.99%) B+ (87-89.99%) B (83-86.99%) B- (80-82.99%) C+ (77-79.99%) C (73-76.99%) C- (70-72.99%) D+ (67-69.99%) D (60-66.99%) F (0-59.99%)

I will consider curving grades on content assessments (quizzes and the final exam) when the class median is a B- or less. If consistent curving (or consistent extra credit) occurs in this course, I will not curve (or round up) final grades. That means you could very well have a 92.6% and receive an A-. If, however, I do not curve or provide substantial extra credit, I will consider rounding final grades for students who have adhered to course policies. It is your right and responsibility to discuss dissatisfactory grades with me, but do not expect such discussions to result in a grade change. Approach discussions about grades with an objective that indicates commitment to future improvement. While I acknowledge that grades are an important aspect of your career at Oxford College, it is important to not let grades be the sole currency by which you value your progress as a student. Grades are a metric. Learning is a process. If you aren’t already, start becoming comfortable with the fact that both success and failure are part of the ongoing process of learning. **Effort is expected of you in this and all classes. Do not equate your effort in this class with the automatic achievement of an A.**

Student Work and Assignments

Written Reflections (20%)

By Sunday at 10 PM (beginning January 27 and ending April 14) you are responsible for submitting a 250-300 word reflection on the week's readings. **Throughout the semester I will spot grade (i.e. you won't be made aware of when I am grading) 5 of your written reflections, but grading will be distributed across the term.** These reflections will be graded on a check plus/check/check minus system. Guidelines for this grading will be available on Canvas.

Pop Culture Reviews (20%)

Three times throughout the semester I will ask you to anthropologically review a piece of popular culture that includes representations of Africa or Africans.

Participation (15%)

10% of your participation grade will be based on your attendance and engagement in class. Engagement means that you are consistently and actively present. Present means you are paying attention and actively listening and asking questions. You cannot come to class and sleep and expect a good participation grade. You cannot come to class and use your phone, tablet, or laptop and expect a good participation grade. These are not behaviors indicative of active participation. These are processes of passive engagement. Don't be passive. You can expect at least an A- for this portion of your grade if you do not exhibit passive participation or break course policies. You can expect an A for this portion of your grade if you routinely make substantive contributions to class discussions.

The remaining 5% of your participation grade will come from a mandated group discussion leadership role. Student groups (5) will be responsible for leading discussion of one of the three ethnographies. Each student will perform this task once. Guidelines for these roles will be available on Canvas.

Midterm (15%) The midterm will be take home exam composed of short essay questions.

Final Project in Lieu of Final Exam (30%) Details forthcoming!

Reading and Assignment Schedule Part I.

In Part 1 of the course we get our footing in anthropology and look at the origins of anthropology in and of Africa. We look at the theoretical trends in colonial and post-colonial anthropology as well as the role of anthropology in the colonial era and the kind of research produced.

Class Period	Readings (<i>To be Read For Day Of</i>)	Course Section	Topic	Assignments Given	Assignments Due
Jan. 15	Adichie 2009; Wainana 2006	Colonialism & anthropology	Tropes		
Jan. 17			Lecture: Anthropology & overcoming tropes		
Jan. 22.	Geller 1995		Film on colonialism		
Jan. 24	Pritchard 1940		Lecture: Colonial anthropology	Reviewing Pop Culture #1	
Jan. 29	Herskovits 1926		Colonial anth (culture areas)		
Jan. 31	Owusu 1997		Critiques of colonial anthropology		Reviewing Pop Culture #1
Feb. 5	Fortes 1936		Colonial anth (culture contact)		
Feb. 7	Keller 1995; Aidoo 2016; Nkrumah 2016 (x2)	The post-colonial anthropological project	Lecture on independence		
Feb. 12	Abouet 2007 or 2008 or 2009		Daily life	Reviewing Pop Culture #2	
Feb. 14	Lowe et al. 1997; Comaroff 1997		Collective identities		
Feb. 19	Holtzman 2003; Shipton 1997		Economics of culture		Reviewing Pop Culture #2
Feb. 21	Gibbs 1963		Political organization		
Feb. 26	Richards 1983		Environment		
Feb. 28	Mesquelier or Peters and Richards 1998		Age	Take home mid-term	
Mar. 5	Hodgson 1999; Van Allen 1997		Gender		
Mar. 7	Rodney 1997	Ethnographies of globalization	Lecture: Global Capitalism	Final Project	Mid-Term

Reading and Assignment Schedule Part II

In Part 2 of the course we dive into ethnographies. These readings will allow us to examine how the theoretical trends and conceptual foci of the post-colonial era are used in ethnography of our current global era. We conclude the course by challenging constructs of time and space in the anthropological examination of Africa.

Class Period	Readings (<i>To be Read Day Off</i>)	Course Section	Topic	Assignments Given	Assignments Due
Mar. 12	Spring Break!!				
Mar. 14					
Mar. 19	No Class (Dr. Ham at Conference) Work on final project and start reading <i>Grains from Grass</i>				
Mar. 21					
Mar. 26	Cliggett 2005 Chapters 1-5	Ethnographies of globalization	Gender/ Aging Economy		Final Project Contract
Mar. 28	Cliggett 2005 Chapters 6-8				
Apr. 2	Walsh 2012 Chapters 1-2		Ecology Economy		
Apr. 4	Walsh 2012 Chapters 3-4				
Apr. 9	Ntarangwi 2009 Chapters 1-4		Music/Youth Economy		
Apr. 11	Ntarangwi 2009 Chapters 5-6				
Apr. 16	Garfield and Hurston 1991; Holsey 2013	African anthropology beyond borders of time and space	Race		
Apr. 18	Alexander 2017		Migration		
Apr. 23	Stoller 1996; Hirsch 2012; Manuh 2016		Migration		
Apr. 25	Appiah 2016		Afrocentric Futures	Reviewing Pop Culture #3	