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|  | **LMC-8831 - Technologies of Representation: Special Topics -**  **African Film, Arts, & Digital Media** |

**1. Instructor Name, Contact Information and Office Hours**

Instructor: Fox Harrell

Email: [fox.harrell@lcc.gatech.edu](mailto:fox.harrell@lcc.gatech.edu)

Office: Skiles 16

Office Hours: Tuesdays 1:30-2:30 or by appointment

Co-Instructor: Angela Dalle Vacche

Email: [angela.dallevacche@lcc.gatech.edu](mailto:angela.dallevacche@lcc.gatech.edu)

Office: Skiles 344

Office Hours: Wednesdays 4-6 or by appointment

**2. Course Prerequisites:**(None)

**3. Core Area/Attributes Fulfilled by this Class:** (None)

**4. Course Description**

Tuesday and Thursday, 12-1:30 Room 368; Screenings: Tuesday 7-9 pm Room 368. Punctuality is a requirement. You must always bring all the necessary books for that particular day and relevant readings to class.

This is a seminar style course exploring historical, cultural, and theoretical issues raised by technologies of representation. Particular emphasis will be given to examining the social and historical contexts of particular technologies ranging from film to fractal-based textiles, and uses of technology to represent different configurations of the filmic image, private and public identities. Student work consists of both critical, close audiovisual analyses and the creation of digital artifacts.

**5. Learning Outcomes**

This course should facilitate development of the following skills:

* Analysis and awareness of media aesthetics, identities, and ideologies from the African contexts based on students’ reports, readings and class discussions.
* Design of digital media artifacts including film/video.
* Analysis of image and acoustic configurations and media artifacts from a cross-medial perspective (sculpture, dance, textiles, martial arts, music, masks as depicted in film)

Put another way, you should be able to “create” and “think about” design of technologies of representation in a more skilled, knowledgeable and critical manner that takes cultural history, aesthetic traditions, contemporary social contexts, diaspora, and identities into account. This should further your capabilities as both digital media

scholars and producers.

Two themes will be woven through the course. These are: (1) media do not exist in hierarchical relationships to each other, their histories are interwoven, multivalent, and contextual (2) technologies mediate, replicate, and transform our power relationships and social identities, they are not a unidirectional force influencing stereotypical representations of non-western subjects.

**6. Required Texts**

You are required to purchase the following books. All other texts will be provided to you either as print-outs or pdfs. The books are available from a variety of online booksellers and (1) should be available at the Engineer’s Bookstore. You must order these books immediately as you are responsible for owning them.

1) Frank Ukadike, *Questioning African Cinema*, *Minnesota*, 2002 (QAC)

2) Geoffrey Bowker and Leigh Star, *Sorting Things Out: Classification and Its Consequences*, 1999 (MIT)

3) Electronic reserves (ER) can be accessed through the course number and/or the name of the author

4) Resources: links and/or pdfs will be made available via T-Square

**COURSE READINGS & ASSIGNMENTS:**

**\*Weekly mandatory reading assignments will be available via T-Square, electronic reserves, or via the links below (aside from readings in the required textbooks)\***

The readings and assignments are tentative and subject to change throughout the semester. Please listen to announcements and class and see the announcement sent via T-Square for updates.

**7. Graded Assignments**

**WEEKLY STUDENT PRESENTATIONS (IMPORTANT!)**

Required readings are to be completed by all students before class each Tuesday. Furthermore, we will generally have 3 students present and facilitate discussion of theoretical readings on Tuesdays. Nobody can be sick, late, or missing the day of the group presentation. If you have slides, you should make sure that they work across platforms (submit all necessary files to ensure this, e.g. special fonts) ahead of time and submit them to T-Square before the day of the presentation.

For presentations, students must submit to T-Square a 1-2 page summary of the readings and set of questions/activities for class discussion by 5:00 p.m. on the Thursday preceding the presentation. Each instructor will respond to the summary and questions of each group by Sunday evening and either approve or suggest changes for finalizing the weekly agenda. Sign up for discussion slots is to be done on the week section of the course T-Square page.

**WEEKLY DISCUSSION**

Generally, on Thursdays we shall discuss the films screened in the context of the course theory and close analysis based on film-clips. Comparisons between Hollywood and European models of film-making in dialogue or at odds with African audio-visual configurations will be crucial to grasp the originality and power of African cinema. Additionally, we critique and complicate the notions of holistic cultural traditions or oppositional cultural binaries when performing these analyses.

**GRADING & COURSE WORK**

The total grade for the class will be based upon the following factors and weights:

* 10% Class participation (including presentations and discussions, attendance is mandatory and each two unexcused absences reduce your course grade by one letter grade)
* 10% Exercises (some already indicated in syllabus, others to be announced)
* 30% Group Project (4-5 members required)
* 15% Midterm
* 15% Final Exam
* 20% Final (Group or Individual) Project or Paper

The midterm exam will be based on Readings and Screenings from the start of class to approximately the middle of the semester. It will consist of 3 essay questions to be answered in class on March 12th. The final exam will consist of 3 essay questions based on readings from the midterm until April 16th.

Projects must including write-ups grounded in theory with the contributions by group members clearly indicated. The final paper must be double spaced with two pages of bibliography for a total of 16 pages.

Graduate students will be held to appropriate standards and the final research paper/project should be of publishable/or exhibition quality. Research Paper means footnotes and at least 2 pages of relevant bibliography. For students writing a paper, it is necessary to conduct research at the General Library of Georgia State or use ILLIAD well ahead of time.

**8. General Policies**

**How should I address you?**

“Professor Dalle Vacche” or “Professor Harrell” will certainly do just fine.

**How should I contact you?**

You can contact us during office hours, or over email. When sending email be sure to put “3314” somewhere in the subject header so that we can filter your messages. If you have a long question it is best to discuss it during office hours. If you have a course conflict with office hours then send me an email indicating the conflict and we

can schedule an individual meeting.

**Computer Usage Policy:** Computers should only be used during designated in class work sessions. Laptops may be used for note taking, however web surfing will result in a significant penalty to your participation grade.

**Mobile Phone Policy:** Please turn your mobile phones off, mobile phones ringing in class will result in penalties to your participation grade.

**Drop Deadline: February 27th**

**9. Attendance Policy**

Attendance and Participation to Class meetings is also mandatory. Missing more than three classes (with no medical documentation) will result in a loss of one letter grade.

Attendance to Screenings is absolutely mandatory. These are rare films and students missing more than two screenings with no medical documentation will result in a loss of one letter grade.

Rationale: Participation in class discussion is imperative because it allows you to explore the texts and themes collaboratively, and in the process, discover meanings and issues that you probably would not discover on your own. Participation in class also challenges you to continuously question, refine and articulate your own ideas and interpretations.

In addition, much of this class is based on critical discussion, which requires full participation and cannot be replicated outside of class. For this reason, instructors cannot replicate class dynamics during office hours, but only answer circumscribed questions about specific problems raised by the readings. Extensive teaching and learning also occur through critiques: it is through critiques that you will develop your skills for both creating and discussing media.

**10. Information for Students with Disabilities**

Please notify the instructor if you have any disabilities with which you need special assistance or consideration. The campus disability assistance program can be contacted through ADAPTS: <http://www.adapts.gatech.edu>

**11. Honor Code Statement**

Plagiarizing is defined by Webster’s as “to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one’s own : use (another’s production) without crediting the source.” If caught plagiarizing, you will be dealt with according to the GT Academic Honor Code.

You are allowed (and encouraged) to discuss all coursework with other students, as long as you develop and present your own essay and/or design solutions (aside from group projects). You are also allowed (and encouraged) to ask me questions, although you should try to think about the problems before asking.

Use of any previous semester course materials is allowed for this course; however, we remind you that while they may serve as examples for you, they are not guidelines for any of your own creative design work that may be assigned during the semester.

For any questions involving these or any other Academic Honor Code issues, please consult both instructors or [www.honor.gatech.edu](http://www.honor.gatech.edu).

1**2. Course Schedule**

**Unit 1: Introduction – Complicating Media Hierarchies and Histories**

**Week One:** Jan. 6-8, 2009 (no screening at night during this first week)

Introduction and Organization of the Course

**Exercise 1 Assigned (Due 1/15): Create a small scale “oral” interactive digital story in which no spoken word is used; i.e. use aspects of oral traditions (such as call and response, rhythm, history, rhyme, the body, and/or the setting) to create a small website, micro-game, hypertext, digital video, or related type of work.**

Screening during class time: Isaac Julian, Frantz Fanon: Black Skin, White Mask (1993), 70 m.

* “Biases of the Ear and Eye ‘Great Divide’ Theories, Phonocentrism, Graphocentrism & Logocentrism,” Chandler  
  <http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/litoral/>
* The course syllabus (read it carefully, you are responsible for knowing it!)

**Week Two**: Jan. 13-15, 2009 ORAL STORY-TELLING I

**Exercise 2 Assigned (Due 1/22): Create a cinematic “micronarrative” (concise, poignant causal event between actors and objects in a social situation) that features a single type of interaction that affects how the story is told that is either:**

1. **A screen-based work using Flash or Processing and non-digitally produced visual assets, or**
2. **A physically instantiated work (e.g. a comic, film poster, experimental book, sculpture, or performance) using digitally produced visual assets**

**Exercise 1 Due 1/15**

Screening, Gaston Kaboré, *Wend Kuuni* (1983)

* Manthia Diawara, “Oral Literature and African Film: Narratology in Wend Kuuni,” (hand-out in class)
* Mahir Saul, History as Cultural Redemption In Gaston Kaboré’s “Pre-Colonial Era Films” Black+White in Colour, pp. 11-127 (electronic reserve)
* QAC, pp. 109-120

**Week Three:** Jan. 20-22 ORAL STORY-TELLING II

Screening: Keita, The Griot (1995)

* Ralph A. Austen, “Beyond History: Two Films of the Deep Mande Past,” (Keita/Yeleen) (electronic reserve)
* “Cultural Roots for Computing,” Harrell  
  <http://cse.ucsd.edu/~fharrell/pps/Harrell-DAC-2007.pdf>

**Week Four:** Jan. 27-29, 2009 MAGICAL LEGENDS

Screening: Souleymane Cisse, Yeleen (1987).

**Project 1 Assigned (Due February 19th)**

* QAC, pp. 19-28
* Dudley Andrew, “The Roots of the Nomadic: Gilles Deleuze and The Cinema of West Africa,” in Gregory Flaxman ed. The Brain is The Screen: Deleuze and The Philosophy of the Cinema, University of Minnesota Press, 2000, pp. 215-249. (electronic reserve)
* Guild Wars Nightfall (consider the game and the ways it succeeds and fails in capturing African magic); <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guild_Wars_Nightfall>; http://www.computerandvideogames.com/article.php?id=148222
* Henry Jenkins, “Game Design as Narrative Architecture” <http://web.mit.edu/cms/People/henry3/games&narrative.html>

**Unit 2: Specific Forms of Media Representation**

**Week Five:** Feb. 3-5, 2009 AFRICAN TEXTILES, WRITING SYSTEMS AND DESIGNS

**Project 1 In-Progress Critique February 5th (discussion continued February 10th as necessary)**

Screening: De Kati Lena Ndyaye, Traces of Women (2003)

* Ron Eglash, Toluwalogo B. Odumosu, “Fractals, complexity, and connectivity in Africa”  
  <http://www.rpi.edu/~eglash/eglash.dir/afractal/Eglash_Odumosu.pdf>
* Robert Farris Thompson, “Round Houses and Rhythmized Textiles,” Flash of The Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy, New York: Vintage Books, 1983, pp. 195-222 (electronic reserve);
* Konrad Tuchscherer, “Recording, Communicating, and Making Visible: A History of Writing and Systems of Graphic Symbolism in Africa,” Inscribing Meaning, Smithsonian, 2007, pp. 37-51 (electronic reserve, optional only and useful for research papers);

**Week Six:** Feb. 10-12, 2009 AFRICAN ART

Screening: Idrissa Ouedraogo, Yaaba (1987)

* Robert Farris Thompson, “African Art and Motion,” in African Art in Motion: Icon and Act, University of California Press, 1974, pp. 1-46 (electronic reserve)
* “Motion Capture,” Kodwo Eshun  
  http://www.ccru.net/swarm1/1\_motion.htm
* “The Future of Video Art in the Digital Age,” Cavallo Collins  
  <http://www.chart.ac.uk/chart2000/papers/noframes/cavallo-collins.html> (optional only and useful for research papers)

**GATECH AFRICAN FILM FESTIVAL SCREENINGS ON FEB. 16 Monday, 18 Wednesday, 19 Thursday – EXTRA CREDIT FOR ATTENDANCE**

**Week Seven:** Feb. 17-19, 2009 AFRICAN ANIMATION

**Project 1 Due February 19th**

Screening: Michel Ocelot, Kirikou and The Sorceress, 1998; William Kentridge - Johannesburg (1989)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CXxCknnNPOI&feature=related>

* Brian Goldfarb, “A Pedagogical Cinema: Development Theory. Colonialism, and Post-Liberation African Film,” Iris, n. 18 (electronic reserve)

**Week Eight:** Feb. 24-26, 2009 AFRICAN VIDEO AND DIGITAL MEDIA

Screening: Ayo Chenzira: “HER”; Ingrid Mwangi, Video Art (explore 4 or 5 works):

<http://www.ingridmwangi.de/mh/video_installation_works.html>

* Ron Eglash, “African Influences in Cybernetics”  
  <http://www.haussite.net/haus.0/SCRIPT/txt2001/01/eglash.HTML>
* “Photography, Or the Writing of Light,” Baudrillard  
  <http://www.ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=126>
* “The Paradoxes of Digital Photography,” Manovich
* “Speaking in Djinni,” Harrell  
  <http://www.ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=388>

**Week Nine:** March 3-5, 2009 AFRICAN REMIX CULTURE

Screenings: Abdherradame Sissako, Life on Earth, 2000 (double-feature)

* Find examples of African Remix Culture: e.g. Naija Boyz   
  <http://www.youtube.com/profile?user=AfricanRemix&annotation_id=annotation_720676&feature=iv>; Lee “Scratch” Perry, DJ Spooky (e.g. “Rebirth of a Nation,” Paul D. Miller (DJ Spooky) <http://djspooky.com/articles/rebirth.html>, <http://djspooky.com/art/birth.html>)
* Remix Culture, Chapter 1, “piracy,” Chapter 2, Lessig  
  <http://www.authorama.com/free-culture-2.html>
* wikipedia entry on ‘remix,’ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Remix>

**Unit 3: Political Ideologies & Contested Identities**

**Week Ten:** March 10-12, 2009 FIGHTING COLONIALISM

**Midterm In-Class March 12th**

Screening: Haile Gerima, Adwa (1999)

* Paulos Milkias and Getachew Metaferia, The Battle of Adwa, New York: Algora Publishing, 2005: Chapter 5: Ethiopia: A Bulwark against European Colonialism and Its Role in the Pan-African Movement, pp. 181-216
* Haile Gerima, Triangular Cinema, Breaking Toys, and Dinknesh vs. Lucy (electronic reserve)

**SPRING BREAK March 16 - 20**

**Week Eleven:** March 24-26, 2009 POLITICAL CINEMA

**Final Project/Essay Assigned (Due April 23rd)**

Screening: Ousmane Sembene, Xala (1974)

* Francoise Pfaff, “The Uniqueness of Ousmane Sembene’s Cinema,” Ousmane Sembene: Dialogues with Critics and Writers, University of Massachusetts Press, 1993, pp. 14-21.
* Samba Gadjigo, “Ousmane Sembene and History on the Screen: A Look back to the Future,” Francoise Pfaff, ed. Focus on African Films, Indiana University Press, 2004, pp. 33-47.

**Week Twelve:** March 31-April 2, 2009 POLITICS OF CONTESTED IDENTITY I

**Final Project In-Progress Critique #1 March 31st**

Screening: Abdherradame Sissako, Bamako (2007)

* Rachel Gabara, “A Poetics of Refusals: Neorealism from Italy to Africa,” QRFV 23.3 (July 2006), 201-215. (hand-out in class)
* Molefi Kete Asante, “Afrocentricity: Toward a New Understanding of African Thought in the World” <http://www.asante.net/scholarly/afrocentricity.html>
* Wikipedia entries on Essentialism and Constructionism  
  <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Essentialism>   
  <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_constructionism>

**Week Thirteen:** April 7-9, 2009 POLITICS OF CONTESTED IDENTITY II

Screening: Ian Gabriel, Forgiveness (2004)

**Final Project/Paper In-Progress Workshop #2 April 9th**

* Sorting Things Out, Chapter 6 and 9
* http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/identity-politics/
* http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender\_performativity

**Week Fourteen:** April 14-16 , 2009 AFRICAN DIASPORA I

**Final Exam In Class April 16th**

**Final Project/Paper In-Progress Workshop #2 (cont’d) April 14th**

Screening: Carlos Diegues, Quilombo (1984)

* Coco Fusco, “Choosing Between History and Legend: An Interview with Carlos Diegues,” Cineaste XV, 1, 1986, pp. 12-44 (hand-out in class)
* “THE VIRTUAL BARRIO @ THE OTHER FRONTIER,” Guillermo Gómez-Peña  
  <http://67.43.164.180/magazine/articles/gomezpena/gomezpena.html>

**Week Fifteen:** April 21-23, 2009 AFRICAN DIASPORA II

**Final Project/Paper Due April 23rd**

Screening: Haile Gerima, Sankofa (1993); (possible doubl-feature) Mostefa Djadjam, Borders (Senegal)

* QAC, “Interview with Haile Gerima,” pp. 253-280
* Cornel West, “New Cultural Politics of Difference”