

University of Wisconsin-Madison  
 Department of History  
 Spring 2009

Florence Bernault  
 4131 Humanities / phone 263-5424  
 Off. Hours: Tuesday 2:00-2:30 pm  
 Thursdays 3:45-5:15 pm

bernault@wisc.edu  
[Hist.600: Learn@UW](#)

### History 600-17 : Imagining Africa (19<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> centuries)

Thursdays. 4:00 pm-6:00 pm, 4013 Vilas Hall

Since the publication of Edward Said's seminal book, *Orientalism* (1978), historians and cultural critics have accumulated studies on Western images, stereotypes and representations of Africa as the 'Other'. More recently, historians have probed how such images came into action and shaped the conquest of Africa. Colonial narratives about tribes, diseases, race and gender helped to formulate powerful native policies, and transform African societies. Since independence, stereotypes have changed, but not disappeared. How do they continue to work? Anthropologists such as Paulla Ebron and Christopher Steiner reflect on consumerism culture and Africa: music, international tourism to the continent, or the global market for African art. More importantly, they explore how Africans themselves negotiate and manipulate the circulation of such ideas and commodities. Thus the seminar offers you, besides inroads into canonical works on the Western imaginary of Africa from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, critical insights on Africans' representations of themselves, and of Africa. Moreover, it will encourage you to reflect on the history of the relation between imagination and practice, representation and social engineering.

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#### Grading:

##### ORAL

An important core of our work will be intensive weekly discussions of assigned readings. Discussion are based on a careful analysis of the assigned readings for the week. They also depend on your willingness **to share** the ideas, questions and comments that the readings suggest to you. Taking the time and energy **to contribute** to class discussion, and **move it forward** in a **collegial** way (i.e. not monopolizing the floor but helping a collective conversation to flow) whether with a comment, question, doubt or criticism, is a crucial component of this. Active participation in the discussions will be evaluated on a weekly basis according to the criteria just outlined.

On week 10 (03/26) each student will prepare a short presentation of an artist of her choice, and one of his/her art work. The list of artists, and websites/information will be handed out in class early on.

##### WRITTEN

###### Two Short Essays (40%)

- Week 3: Chose either Conrad or Kingsley, and write a three-page paper (min. 600 words-max. 900 words) analyzing one aspect of her/his writing and picturing of Africa. You may use other critical readings in your essay (i.e., references from Pratt, Achebe, Gikandi, or McClintock). Due in class on 02/05.
- Week 7: Using the readings from week 1 to week 5, write a four-page paper (min. 800 words-max. 1,200 words) on the following question: \*From the late 18<sup>th</sup> century to the early 20th century, Western and African commentators argued for bringing change and

“progress” to Africa. At the same time many feared that such outside influence would lead to the degeneration of African life and values. Discuss this contradiction, and how different authors articulated it in different contexts and in different times (use examples, but keep quotes short). Explain how these views contributed to “Othering” and victimizing Africa and Africans in the minds of outside observers.\*

Essay due in my mailbox (dated, timed and stamped) on 03/05 before 4:30 pm.

- One Main Essay (60%)-- After choosing a topic related to the seminar theme, and clearing your choice with me no later than week 5, you will write a 10-12 page research paper. A tentative outline and bibliography for your paper is due on week 8, 03/12. A complete draft of your paper is due Tuesday 04/23 of week 14 (in my mailbox). You will present your work orally in class on week 15 (04/15). Final version of research paper due 05/07 in instructor’s mailbox before 5:00 pm.

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#### Writings tips and Course regulations

##### An excellent paper

- contains arguments based on specific examples from the readings and lecture materials.
- has original ideas and is thought-provoking.
- has a clear one-sentence thesis statement in the introductory paragraph. This statement of the paper’s argument is systematically developed in the body of the paper, and summarized in a concluding paragraph.
- is nuanced and complex (using expressions such as: according to XXX...this suggests...probably...)
- uses active voice, and avoids contractions and informal language.
- notes all references to sources consistently following any standard form of citation.
- uses normal police for characters (max. 12) and reasonable margins.

##### Course regulations

- Absences affect the final grade. Two unexcused absences mean a failed course (graded F).
- Late written assignments will be marked down a grade (e.g.: from a “B” to a “C”) for each school day missed, and will not be accepted after three school days after the due date (thus marked “F”). Papers put under instructors’ office door will not be graded. Papers turned late can be put in my mailbox ONLY if signed, dated and timed by administrator at History Department front desk.

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#### **Readings:**

I have collected articles and book chapters and made them available in a reading packet, for purchase at the Humanities Copy Center, Hum. 1650.

The following books are required and available at the University Book Store. They are also on reserve at Helen C. White.

Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes* (1992)  
Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (1990, orig. pub. 1902)

Jomo Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya* (1965, orig. pub. 1938)  
 Christopher Steiner, *African Art in Transit* (1994)

\*\*\*\*\* SCHEDULE \*\*\*\*\*

**01/22 Week 1. Introduction—**

Reading: Pratt, chap. 3, 38-68 [41 pp]

**01/29 Week 2. Eros and Science**

Reading: Pratt, chaps. 2 & 5, 15-37 & 86-107  
 E-Reading: Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, chap. 1, 22-74 [e-book on MadCat, read online] [93pp]

**02/05 Week 3. On the Ground: Explorer-Writers in Africa**

**\*\*\*SHORT ESSAY 1 DUE IN CLASS\*\*\***

Reading: Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, all book  
 Pratt, chap. 9, especially 213-216  
 Chinua Achebe, "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*" [link online at Learn@UW]  
 Kingsley, *Travels in West Africa*, chaps. V & XI: 100-122 & 192-230  
 Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness* [reading packet], 143-156 [160 pp]

**02/12 Week 4. Another Africa? The View From African-Americans and Creole Elites**

Reading Packet: Fairhead, *The Liberia of the Journeys*, 7-47  
 Seymour, *Journal to the Interior of Liberia*, 124-155  
 Zachernuk, *Colonial Subjects*, 47-79 [101 pp]

\*\*\*CLEAR YOUR ESSAY TOPIC WITH INSTRUCTOR\*\*\*

**02/19 Week 5. Encoding Tribes and Ethnicity During Colonialism**

Reading: Jomo Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya*, all book  
 Iliffe, *The Creation of Tribes*, 318-340 [reading packet] [300+ pp]

\*\*\*LAST WEEK TO CLEAR YOUR ESSAY TOPIC WITH INSTRUCTOR\*\*\*

**02/26 Week 6. NO CLASS –Working on your essay**

**03/05 Week 7. NO CLASS –Working on your outline and bibliography\*\*\*SHORT ESSAY 2 DUE IN MY MAILBOX ON 03/05, TIMED, DATED & STAMPED, BEFORE 4:30 PM\*\*\***

**\*\*\*TENTATIVE OUTLINE AND BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE IN MY MAILBOX ON TUESDAY 03/10 BEFORE 5:00 pm\*\*\***

**03/12 Week 8. Female Circumcision Then and Now**

Reading Packet: J. Kenyatta, Facing Mount Kenya, 130-154  
 Sandgren, Christianity and the Kikuyu, 49-85  
 Davidson, Voices from Mutira , 20-31, 40-45, 64-69, 95-98, 199-209  
 Thomas, Imperial Concerns and Women's Affairs, 121-145  
 Kratz, Affecting Performance, 341-47 [120 pp]

**03/19 Week 9. Spring break (no class)**

**03/26 Week 10 Seeing Themselves: Women, Gender, and Race**

Reading Packet: Gondola, Popular Music, Urban Society, 65-84  
 Thomas: Modern Girl and Racial Respectability, 461-490 [60pp]

**\*\*\*PRESENTATION OF YOUR CHOSEN ARTIST AND ART WORK\*\*\***

**04/02 Week 11. African Art and Authenticity**

Reading: Steiner, African Art in Transit, all book [165 pp]

**04/09 Week 12. Working on Paper**

**04/16 Week 13. Working on Paper**

**04/23 Week 14. Working on Paper**

**04/30 Week 15. Oral Presentations in Class**

**05/07 Week 16. Working on Paper**

**\*\*\*FINAL PAPER DUE ON 05/07 BEFORE 5:00 pm IN MY MAILBOX—Also include the draft with my handwritten comments\*\*\***