

HIS 350L | AFR 374F | WGS 340

Between Nollywood and Hollywood: Historical Imagining of Africa in Films

Flags:	Writing; Independent Inquiry
Course Time:	Tuesday 3:30—6:30 PM
Class Location:	GAR 0.120
Instructor:	Toyin Falola
Office:	Gar. Hall, 2.142
Office hours:	Tuesday and Thursday: 2-3 PM
E-mail:	toyinfalola@austin.utexas.edu



COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Since the late 1980s, the African film industry has undergone radical changes that reflect increased globalization, the availability of new production and distribution methods, and the rise of a new generation of African filmmakers. This revolution is characterized, for example, by the relatively young industry of low budget, direct to video films produced in Nigeria, an industry commonly referred to as Nollywood. While these films have drawn criticisms for their low production values and popularization of negative cultural stereotypes, the Nigerian video industry has become the third largest film industry in the world, following Hollywood and Bollywood, sweeping across the continent and throughout the global diaspora. This course examines the genesis of a popular African art form and the rise of Nollywood in particular. Through a combination of films and readings, students will explore how Nollywood, in comparison to other

major popular film industries, depicts the society and culture of Nigeria, Africa and the African Diaspora as a whole. Each week addresses a different facet of a general theme in an attempt to introduce students to the various dynamics that shape African cultures, societies and governments. Additionally, this course seeks to engage students in a debate about how popular films affect historical imaginations and memory. While these images have previously been the exclusive product of primarily Hollywood and European films, this course will introduce Nollywood as an African alternative to how films depict, and people understand, their history.



READING LIST:

Matthew M. Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, Cambridge University Press, 2008.
Historical Grounding: Weeks 1-3.

Jeff Haynes, *Nollywood: The Creation of Nigerian Film Genres* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016)

Nollywood Grounding: Weeks 7 to 9.

Adeshina Afolayan, ed., *Auteuring Nollywood: Critical Perspectives on The Figurine* (Ibadan: University Press, 2014) to be supplied by the Instructor.

Production Grounding: Weeks 9 to 13.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. To increase the knowledge and understanding of African history, culture, and society.

2. To identify key themes in African history that transcend national boundaries, particularly in the diaspora.
3. To help students understand the social, cultural, political, and economic agents that shape African history.
4. To assess the viability of films as a historical source.
5. To understand popular perceptions about Africa depicted in films and how they lead to misunderstandings of the past.
6. To teach the art of writing and critical thinking.

ASSIGNMENTS:

Assignment		Portion of grade
Attendance and ten short weekly reports See Evaluation Worksheet	2.5 points per week with the report	30
Media Project USA-Africa Dialogue (Intellectual engagements with other students and scholars)		20
Book Review (Analytical Writing)		15
Final Research Paper (Evidence-Based Paper)		35

*Assignments to be submitted by hardcopy on due days, at the beginning of class.

CLASS SCHEDULE

- Week One: September 3
Context and History of Nollywood as an Industry. Artistic Production in Nigeria. African Identities.
Reading: Femi Okiremuette Shaka. "Nollywood: Reconstructing the Historical and Socio-Cultural Contexts of the Nigerian Video Film Industry." —
<http://www.supplemagazine.org/nollywood-reconstructing-the-historical-and-socio-cultural-contexts-of-the-nigerian-video-film-industry.html>

Films:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/aljazeeraworld/2015/07/nollywood-150719092553566.html>

you can watch later: i. *Nollywood Babylon* (2008) ii. *This is Nollywood* (2007)



Week Two: September 10, *The Wedding Party. 1* (Netflix)

Negotiating social complexities

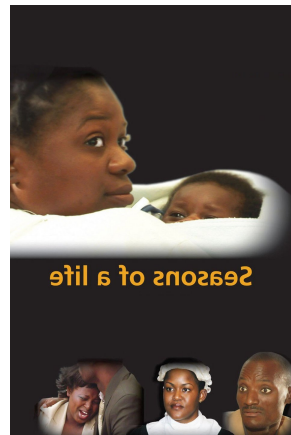


As their big day arrives, a couple's lavish wedding plans turn into a nightmare that includes exes, fighting parents and uninvited guests. When Dunni (Adesua Etomi) decides to marry Dozie (Banky Wellington), her newly wealthy family decides to throw the wedding of the century. However, Dozie's family believes he's marrying beneath his status, so they elect to leave all the wedding planning to Dozie's parents. Almost.

Reading: *A History of Nigeria*, Introduction & Chapters 1-3.

Week Three: September 17, *Seasons of a Life*. (amazon prime)

Patriarchy and Society.



A housemaid, who is sexually abused by her boss and impregnated is forced to give up her son in order to go on with her education. Six years later she comes back to claim her son. A moving story about sexual abuse, women's rights and the legal system in Malawi that tackles universal themes in an African setting, helping understand modernization and democratization process.

Reading: *A History of Nigeria*, Chapters 4-6.

- Week Four, September 24, Maami Motherhood



A 2011 Nigerian drama film produced and directed by Tunde Kelani. It is based on a novel of the same name, written by Femi Osofisan. Single parent, Maami, and her young son are desperately poor. Gifted with a living heart, enterprising spirit and brave soul, she is the center of her son's world, until he longs for the father he has never known -- a man with a terrible secret.

Reading: *A History of Nigeria*, 7-10, plus Concluding remarks.

Week Five: October 1, *October 1* (2014; Kunle Afolayan)
Colonial Legacies



October 1 is a 2014 Nigerian dark psychological thriller film written by Tunde Babalola, produced and directed by Kunle Afolayan. The film, which is set in Colonial Nigeria, narrates the story of a police officer who is

Reading: *A Mouth Sweeter Than Salt*, Chapters 1-3.

Week Six: October 8, *The Figurine* (2009; Kunle Afolayan)
Social Fractures



The movie narrates the story of two friends who find a mystical sculpture in an abandoned shrine in the forest and one of them decides to take the artwork home. Unknown to them, the sculpture is from the goddess 'Araromire' which bestows seven years of good luck on anyone who encounters it, and after the seven years have expired, seven years of bad luck follow. The lives of the two friends begin to change for good, as they become successful and wealthy businessmen. However, after seven years, things start to change for the worse.

Reading:
A Mouth Sweeter than Salt 4-6

Week Seven: October 15 *Lion Heart* (Netflix)
Capitalism and a new Elite



Lionheart tells the story of Adaeze Obiagu who wants to substitute for her father, Chief Ernest Obiagu when he can no longer run his company due to health issues. Her father, however, asks his brother Godswill to take his place, and Godswill and Adaeze have to work hard together to save the company from debt and to not lose it to the businessman Igwe Pascal

Reading:

A Mouth Sweeter Than Salt, 7-10

Week Eight: October 22: Couple of Days (Netflix)
Social Contradictions



Three couples, each in different phases of romance, head to Ibadan for a fun and frisky holiday. But secrets soon spill, causing trouble in paradise.

Reading: Haynes, *Nollywood*, Part 1.

Week Nine: October 29: Chief Daddy

Family and wealth

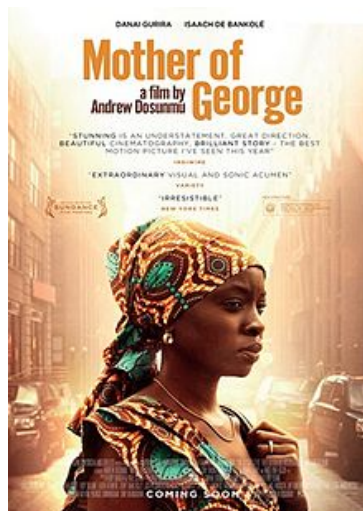


"Chief Daddy" tells the story of billionaire industrialist Chief Beecroft, a flamboyant benefactor to a large extended family of relatives, household staff and assorted mistresses. Chief lives large, like there's no tomorrow, until the day he dies suddenly and the 'bullion van' stops.

Reading, Haynes, *Nollywood*, Part 2

Group A presentation

Week Ten: November 5, Mother of George Representations of experience of diaspora



Ayodele and Adenike marry and start a new life. As months pass without a pregnancy, Adenike feels torn between her Yoruba culture and her new life in America, struggling to save her marriage. The film tells the story of a newly married Nigerian couple in Brooklyn who own and manage a small restaurant while struggling with fertility issues.

Reading: Haynes, *Nollywood*, Part 3.

Week Eleven: November 12, *Gone Too Far!* (2013; Destiny Ekaragha) Interactions with Africa

Reading: *Auteuring Nollywood*, Chapters 9 and 10.



‘Gone Too Far is a British-Nigerian comedy that follows two estranged teenage brothers over the course of a single day as they meet for the first time, and struggle to accept each other for who they are.

Week Twelve: November 19, The Price
Corruption and relationships



Seyi, a 24-year-old Nigerian-American working on Wall Street, is caught engaging in insider trading. When his entire world comes crashing down, he is forced to finally confront his tumultuous relationships.

Reading: *Auteuring Nollywood*, Chapters 11 and 12.

Week Thirteen: November 26, Funke (amazon prime)
Sports and feminism



The story of Funke, a young Nigerian girl, who wants to play football for the country. A personal story of struggle and inspiration as she tries to convince her family and friends to allow her to achieve her dream.

Reading: *Auteuring Nollywood*, Chapters 13 and 14.

Week Fourteen: December 3
Research findings and short presentations of papers



Attendance Guidelines:

Students must be present to view each film, and to engage in discussions. Therefore, attendance is mandatory. Late attendance will disturb the class. You must arrive on time. Make-ups will be granted only in the case of medical illness or university-related conflict. Such conflicts will require signed documentation explaining the reason for your absence. Students who miss class must arrange to view the film on their own time. Each unexcused absence will result in an automatic 5 points deduction from your cumulative grade.

USA/Africa Dialogue Assignment Guidelines

Total points = 20

Join the Dialogue

<http://groups.google.com/group/USAAfricaDialogue>

or ask the Instructor to subscribe you

Assignment rules:

- Students must read articles that are posted during the semester, and not use articles from the archives.
- Students can read articles based on a certain theme, or by a specific contributor.
- Students are to make at least 1 comment on every post they read. Send the post to the Instructor
- Write a minimum of three pages on your reflections on the Dialogue—its contributions to public information, and to your knowledge of Africa.

Film Review Guidelines:

A good way to write a film review is as follows:

Watch the film. Give your opinion of the film. What are your overall impressions? Likes and dislikes? Make sure to provide impartial details that support your assessments of the film. Understand that you are writing to an academic audience. Facts and specifics are mandatory, as is objective prose. Saying something “sucks” or “stinks” is unacceptable unless you can back up your opinions with facts. Give an outline of the film without excessive details. Too much detail will result in summarization, which you want to avoid. Make sure to analyze the acting performances. How is the film’s structure? Does the plot flow? Are there continuity gaps? How does the film use music? How does the music add or distract from the story and your connection with the film? Remember that this is a history class and that readings go along with the films. How does the film bring to light aspects in the readings, or vice versa?

Book Review Guidelines:

Each student is required to write a review of *Nollywood*. Reviews should be between 1000 and 1500 words, typed, double-spaced and stapled. The book is not part of your weekly assigned readings. Therefore, you are responsible for reading the book apart from your weekly assignments.

Reviews should be analytical, and not just a retelling of the book’s chapters. The best way to do this is by synthesizing the different aspects of the book in your own mind and then critically examining such things as the content, style and the overall impression these had on you. Additionally, you will need to incorporate examples and evidence from the reading that either support or contradict your statements. Feel free to express your ideas in clear and analytical statements. Organize and develop the main points you wish to make and re-emphasize them in your conclusion.

A summarization of the book and its chapters is acceptable in your introduction, but this can be no more than one page. Do not simply retell the book's chapters, but discuss the context, style and perspective of the book.

A good way to learn how to write book reviews is to look up reviews written by others. You can find these on the university libraries webpage. Go to the "Research Tools" tab at the top of the library homepage. In the drop-down menu select "Find Articles Using Databases." Warning: review the plagiarism guidelines. Reviews are intellectual property, too.

Proofread your review before submitting it. See the format guidelines section of this syllabus for further information. Turn your review in on time (that means by the beginning of class) because late reviews will be penalized half a letter grade for each day late. Your book review is worth 15 points of your final grade.

Final Paper: Contextualizing Nollywood

Each student is required to write a research paper that addresses the key theme of the class, namely the meaning of Nollywood as a local, African form and style and its impact in the African Diaspora and, more generally, abroad. While other themes are apparent in these films (i.e., colonialism, traditionalism vs. modernity, relationship, affect, sexuality, love, gender dynamics, corruption, the diaspora, etc.), the research must be inflected with the interactions between Africa and the Diaspora, carried out through the use of films and written texts. The professor may also suggest research topics. While students are allowed to use films and texts from class, they are also required to explore the growing body of literature about African cinema as well as the increasing number of African films becoming available, produced in Africa and abroad. The Fine Arts Library and online databases has a wealth of material available.

Research papers must have a clear thesis statement and organizational structure. Research papers should be between 2400-3000 words, typed, double spaced, with size 12 Times New Roman font. Proofread your research paper before submitting it. See the format guidelines section of this syllabus for further information.

During the next to last week of class, students will present their papers. Presentations should be between 5-7 minutes long followed by several minutes of questions from the class. You are allowed to include a power point presentation.

Turn your research paper in on time, because late papers will be penalized half a letter grade for each day late. Your research paper is worth 35 points of your final grade.

FORMAT GUIDELINES:

All assignments must be typed, double spaced, have 1" margins and size 12 Times New Roman font. Assignments that do not follow these guidelines will not be accepted.

A part of writing history includes clearly communicating your ideas. As such, written assignments must conform to standard rules of written English including the organization of essays, grammar

and punctuation. Students who require assistance can use the undergraduate writing center in the FAC free of charge.

PLAGIARISM:

How do you avoid committing plagiarism? Here are some basic tips:

1. Historians use a variety of citation formats, including footnotes, endnotes, and indicating their source directly in their text within parentheses. Within those formats, they use a variety of styles. Ask your instructor for guidance on a uniform system of citations—and follow that advice.
2. Take notes carefully. Whenever you copy a direct quotation, protect yourself by putting quotation marks around it. Attach a full, accurate citation to any borrowed passage, whether quoted or paraphrased, and keep it attached as you write.
3. Although borrowed ideas must be fully acknowledged in a citation, you do not need to provide a citation for information that your reader can reasonably be expected to know. When in doubt, include a citation.
4. You can avoid plagiarism by learning how to paraphrase. It is much easier to avoid plagiarism that involves verbatim copying or handing in the same paper twice than it is to avoid plagiarism that involves paraphrase, probably the trickiest area of all. Certainly it is the area where most instances of plagiarism occur. Plagiarism includes taking direct quotes or ideas from a source without giving the original author credit through citation.

CLASS POLICIES:

Make-Ups: Make-ups will be granted only in the case of medical illness or university-related conflict. Make-ups will only be given when a request is made prior to the date of the exam or assignment except for documented medical emergencies.

Assignments: All assignments must be submitted on due dates. Half a letter grade per day is deducted thereafter. Failure to read the assigned materials will incur negative grading and treated as an evidence of cheating. Answers to questions will be used to reveal the failure to read.

University of Texas Honor Code: The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community. Any student found guilty of scholastic dishonesty may receive an “F” in the course and be remanded to the appropriate University of Texas authorities for disciplinary action. For more information, view Student Judicial Services at <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs>.

Use of Class Materials: No material presented in lecture may be directly or indirectly published, posted to the Internet, or rewritten for publication or distribution in any medium. Neither these materials nor any portion thereof may be stored in a computer except for personal and non-commercial use. All information derived from the internet must be adequately cited.

Student Privacy: The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) require that student privacy be preserved. Thus the posting of grades, even by the last four digits of the social security number, is forbidden. All communication will remain between the instructor and the student, and the instructor will not be able to share details of the student's performance with parents, spouses, or any others.

Documented Disability Statement: The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 (voice) or 232-2937 (video phone).

Grades: Course grades will be evaluated on a +/- scale. Refer to grading scale below for the letter grade that will be given for the original numerical grade.

GRADING SCALE:

93-100: A 90-92: A-

87-89: B+ 83-86: B 80-82: B-

77-79: C+ 73-76: C 70-72: C-

67-69: D+ 63-66: D 60-62: D-

0-59: F

**HISTORY 350L/AFR 372G/WGS340 Historical Images
EVALUATION WORK SHEET**

Name: _____

Date: _____

PART A: READING FOR THIS WEEK

Materials Read:

Major highlights:

Major Arguments:

Short Review:

PART B: FILM

Movie Title: _____

Main Characters:

Short Synopsis:

During the movie write down any interesting moments, comments, or questions you have regarding the plot, characters, cultural confusions, or geographical inquiries:

Write down a moment in the movie that you were familiar with and/or connect with:

Write down a moment in the movie that relates to our readings. Did the readings help you understand that scene?

Did you enjoy the movie? If yes, explain why it interested you. If not, explain why and give a suggestion on a movie that could better supplement your readings:

Did the movie make any historical references? Which historical moments were present and how were they used in the movie? (May relate to wars, political movements, gender reforms, government powers, etc.)

Write down a brief paragraph explaining what you learned about Nigerian culture from this film: (May include attitudes, beliefs, traditions, and practices.)

How would you personally compare and contrast the values displayed in the film to what you are accustomed to in your own lives? How would you respond to cultures totally unfamiliar to you?
