

CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN POPULAR CULTURE

FALL 2019

Professor Xavier Livermon

AFR 340 (30085), WGS 340 (44825), ANT 322C (31065)

T Th: 2 – 3:30pm JGB 2.218

Office Hours T 12-2pm GWB 3.118

email: livermon@utexas.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The aim of this course is to introduce students to some of the most significant aspects of popular culture in contemporary sub-Saharan Africa. Manifestations of popular culture are considered as markers of modern African identities, embedded in complex and varied socio-cultural, historical and political contexts. Within the current era of global, diasporic, and transnational flows, it is neither sufficient any longer to view Africa solely from the perspective of political economies, nor to discuss contemporary African culture within the tradition-versus-modernity debate. Manifestations of popular culture in Africa show that the continent is part and parcel of the postmodern world, with cultural production simultaneously influenced by global trends and specific African contexts.

The course will cover various forms of cultural expression and genres, including popular film, music, literature, dance, comics and cartoons, fashion, sport, street art, theatre, and contemporary visual arts. Attention will be paid to the production modes, audiences and sites of consumption of these different genres and aspects of popular culture. Course instruction will include extensive film and clip viewings, analysis of music, and reading fictional texts such as popular novels and comics.

Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this course, students will be able to:

- 1) Identify major themes of Contemporary African Popular Culture.
- 2) Understand Popular Culture Theory and its relationship to African lives.
- 3) Understand the importance of popular culture in Africa as a site of politics.

Grading Policy

Attendance and Participation 20%

Group Presentation 20%

Quizzes 20%

Popular Culture Report 20%

Group Final Paper 20%

Grading Scale

A 94-100	C 74-76
A- 90-93	C- 70-73
B+ 87-89	D+ 67-69
B 84-86	D 64-66
B- 80-83	D- 60-63
C+ 77-79	F 0- 59

Required Texts :

Aya: Life in Yop City Marguerite About and Clement Oubrierie

East African Hip-Hop: Youth Culture and Globalization Mwenda Ntarangwi

Required Texts are available for purchase at The University Cooperative Bookstore 2246 Guadalupe St. (512) 476-721.

All other required readings will be posted on Canvas.

Course Requirements:

Attendance and Participation: Students are expected to attend class every session. Participation in all aspects of the class is MANDATORY. All readings and assignments should be completed before class meetings and students are responsible for adding to class discussions of material. Please note that attendance and participation is worth 20% of your total grade. Late arrivals are disruptive to class and I will not repeat concepts and assignments given during class. If you miss a class or are late, you are still responsible for any announcements, assignments, lecture material and/or deadlines that are made. Your grade will be affected if you have more than three absences during the semester.

Active Learning Environment: This is a discussion -based course. While I will do some lecturing, it is my expectation that students will come to class having completed the readings and ready to discuss the articles assigned. It is my teaching philosophy that students will learn as much from each other as they will from me. Discussion based courses allow students to be active participants in their learning, giving the student the opportunity to place the reading in the context of his or her lived experience. This does not mean that the student should ignore the scholarly evidence presented or make arguments solely based on their opinion. Rather, it allows students to enrich the scholarly environment in relation to their life experiences. My job as the instructor is to facilitate and guide the discussion, create a safe participatory environment and make sure that we stay on topic. **Merely being present does not count as active engagement.**

Bringing Materials to Class: As part of an active learning environment, students are required to bring all necessary materials to actively engage in the discussion to class each week. These necessary materials include but are not limited to the books/articles/texts assigned

for the day. While students are not required to print out hard copies of the pdf. materials for in class discussions/assignments, they will be expected to have these materials accessible in electronic form.

Group Presentation:

Students will form groups and be responsible for a short (15-20 minute) presentation to the class on a current African popular culture phenomenon (i.e Skateboarding in Ethiopia, Surfing in Guinea-Bissau, Romance Literature in Northern Nigeria) that deals with the issues relevant to the class, but has not necessarily been covered in the readings. If students choose an issue covered in the readings they should be careful to make sure that their presentation adds new insight or covers new ground not discussed in the readings. Students should consult African popular culture websites, twitter, tumblr, and instagram for ideas. On Tuesdays, beginning in the 5th week of class, the group will present their findings to the class and we will have a short discussion about the presentation. Students may use information gleaned from their presentation to complete their final group paper.

Popular Culture Report:

During the class, students should be consulting African popular culture websites and news outlets in order to enhance their knowledge of African popular culture. During Week 13 students should turn in to the professor a short report (5 pages) discussing an aspect of African popular culture not discussed in the readings. The report will introduce the form of popular culture, explain its importance and significance, and connect the popular culture to the themes of the class. This report is due by 5pm on **November 21st**.

African Popular Culture Blogs

The following are a list of continent wide popular culture blogs. I do encourage students to seek out additional popular culture blogs beyond these, but this is a good aggregate list to begin learning more about African Popular Culture. Keep in mind that occasionally mainstream western media outlets such as The New York Times, FADER, and pitchfork will feature articles on African popular culture. Furthermore there are many aggregators of African popular culture content on tumblr and instagram.

1. Africa is a country: africasacountry.com
2. Brittle Paper: brittlepaper.com
3. This is Africa: thisisafrika.me
4. Okay Africa: okayafrica.com
5. Afripop! : afripopmag.com
6. Muse Origins: museorigins.net
7. Dynamic Africa: dynamicafrika.tumblr.com
8. African Hip Hop: Africanhiphop.com

Quizzes:

Each week on Thursday, beginning in the 4th week of class, unless noted, there will be a short (15 minute) quiz on the reading assignments for the previous week. These quizzes are designed to test whether you have understood the main concepts introduced by the authors. 10 of these quizzes will count toward the final grade.

Final Group Paper

Students should complete a group research paper (15 pages) on a topic of their choosing that deals with African Popular Culture. This paper may be an expansion of the work done for their presentation or it may be an entirely new project. The paper should not be simply informational. It should contain some original research. The paper should have a clear thesis statement along with an argument supported by evidence. Blending scholarly articles with popular culture analysis will be key to completing a successful paper. **December 5th** .

Canvas: I will be in contact with you about updates in assignments through Canvas. It is the students' responsibility to make sure that Canvas has your updated email address.

Code of Mutual Respect: In general, this is not a lecture class, but one grounded in dialogue. Feel free to be candid and direct in this class. Your insights are important, and your voice needs to be heard, so look forward to the opportunity to chime in. I will respect you as adults and assume that you will treat others in the class with respect as well. Because we will be sharing many personal ideas which may conflict with your own personal ideas and beliefs, it is important that you strive to be considerate, sensitive, and respectful. Be prepared to offer constructive criticism as well as receive it. We will discuss work that includes lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender themes in this course. Students are expected to approach all class material with maturity and academic rigor.

Code of Academic Conduct: University policy requires that students cite sources they use in their work. THIS INCLUDES PARAPHRASING of materials. Any inclusion of ideas that are not your own will be considered plagiarism. Students who do not properly cite ideas, quotes or paraphrasing of other published or unpublished material will automatically face disciplinary action which will also be reflected in their grade. As a reminder, the honor code of the University is as follows, "As a student of The University of Texas at Austin, I shall abide by the core values of the University and uphold academic integrity." For more information on the Honor Code please see the following link

<http://www.utexas.edu/about-ut/mission-core-purpose-honor-code>

Students with Disabilities: Any student with a documented disability (physical or cognitive) who requires academic accommodations should contact the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Office of the Dean of Students at 471-6259 (voice) or 471-4641 (TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing) as soon as possible to request an official letter outlining authorized accommodations.

Religious Holidays: If you observe a recognized religious holiday that is in conflict with the university schedule, please come talk to me.

Writing Center: I strongly encourage you to use the Undergraduate Writing Center, PCL 2.330 , 471-6222: <http://www.uwc.utexas.edu/>). The UWC offers free, individualized, expert help with writing for any UT undergraduate, by appointment or on a drop-in basis. These services are not just for writing that has "problems": Getting feedback from an informed audience is a normal part of a successful writing project. The UWC's trained consultants work with students from every department on both academic and non-academic writing. Using methods that preserve the integrity of your work, they help you develop strategies to improve your writing and become a more independent writer. Whether you are writing a lab report, a resume, a term paper, a statement for an application, or your own poetry, UWC consultants will be happy to work with you.

COURSE OUTLINE

DATE	Reading Assignment
PART I: INTRODUCTION AND KEY TERMS	
WEEK 1	
8/29	Introduction to Class No Reading In Class Film: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie “The Danger of a Single Story”
WEEK 2	
9/3	In Class Film: Pop Culture in African Cities
9/5	“How to Write About Africa” Binyavanga Wainana “African” Kevin Gaines “Culture” George Yudice
WEEK 3	
9/10	“Ethnicity” Henry Wu “Globalization” Lisa Low “Modern” Chandan Reddy
9/12	“What is Popular Culture” John Storey, Ch.1
WEEK 4	
9/17	Film: Tuko Macho
9/19	“Popular Culture and Public Space in Africa: The Possibilities of Cultural Citizenship” Nadine Dolby
QUIZ 1	
WEEK 5	

PART II: KEY DEBATES IN AFRICAN POPULAR CULTURE	
9/24	<p>“Introduction to Readings in African Popular Culture” Karin Barber</p> <p>GROUP PRESENTATION 1</p>

9/26	<p>“Talking About Tribe, Moving From Stereotypes to Analysis” African Policy Initiative Center</p> <p>QUIZ 2</p>
WEEK 6	
PART III: CASE STUDIES IN AFRICAN POPULAR CULTURE: POPULAR FILM AND TELEVISION	
POPULAR FILM AND TELEVISION	
10/1	<p>FILM: The Wedding Party</p> <p>GROUP PRESENTATION 2</p>
10/3	<p>“Popular Culture and Social Change in Africa: The Case of the Nigerian Video Industry” AL Abah</p> <p>QUIZ 3</p>
WEEK 7	
10/8	<p>TV Show: Shuga</p> <p>GROUP PRESENTATION 3</p>
10/10	<p>“Heavy Sexual Content Versus Safer Sex Content” Booker et. al. “Yizo Yizo: Citizenship, Commodification and Popular Culture”</p>

	QUIZ 4
WEEK 8	
POPULAR MUSIC	
10/15	“East African Hip-Hop” Mwenda Ntarangwi, Ch 1 -2 GROUP PRESENTATION 4

10/17	“East African Hip-Hop” Mwenda Ntarangwi Ch 3-4 QUIZ 5
WEEK 9	
10/22	“East African Hip-Hop” Mwenda Ntarangwi Ch 5-6 GROUP PRESENTATION 5
10/24	“Body Politic: The Emergence of a Kwaito Nation in South Africa” T. Pietela QUIZ 6
WEEK 10	
DANCE	
10/29	“Sound of Kuduro Knocking at My Door” Hershini Bhana Young “Vintage Cru: Challenging the Status Quo in South Africa With Dance” GROUP PRESENTATION 6
10/31	“Transnational Circulation and Digital Fatigue in Ghana’s Azonto Dance Craze” Jesse Shipley QUIZ 7
WEEK 11	
FASHION	

11/5	<p>“Sartorial Ecumenes: African Styles in a Social and Economic Context” Hudita Mustafa</p> <p>GROUP PRESENTATION 7</p>
11/7	<p>“Dream and Drama: The Search For Elegance Among Congolese Youth” Ch. Didier Gondola</p> <p>QUIZ 8</p>
WEEK 12	
COMICS	
11/12	<p>Aya of Yop City Part I “Preface”, “Interview with Author”</p> <p>GROUP PRESENTATION 8</p>
11/14	<p>Aya of Yop City Part II</p> <p>QUIZ 9</p>
WEEK 13	
11/19	<p>Aya of Yop City Part III</p> <p>GROUP PRESENTATION 9</p>
11/21	<p>POPULAR CULTURE REPORT DUE</p> <p>NO CLASS</p>
WEEK 14	
11/26-11/28	NO CLASS THANKSGIVING BREAK
WEEK 15	
MAGAZINES AND PRINT CULTURE	
12/3	<p>“Chimurenga: Communal Yard for Sick Heads” Jamal.</p> <p>GROUP PRESENTATION 10 (if needed)</p>
12/5	GROUP FINAL PAPER DUE

