Anthropology 280

Africa: Anthropological Perspectives

Oxford College, Spring 2020
Tuesday, Thursday 10-11:15
Pierce Hall 209

Dr. Jessica Ham,
jessica.ham@emory.edu

Course Description

This course is a survey of anthropology in and of Africa. 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 are consuming media or overhearing conversations that generically speak about the peoples, places and issues of the African continent (i.e. Africa is not a country)
- Be able to articulate how global social, economic, and political processes of past (colonialism) and present (globalization) direct and shape African lived experiences
- Come to see how ethnography (as a method and empirical product) uniquely addresses research questions and analysis relevant to the African continent
- Be competent in selecting primary anthropological resources and translating/synthesizing those resources into a format readily accessible by a more generalized audience
- 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 and feel compelled to purposefully and ethically engage with the issues and people on the continent remotely and/or in-person.

Office Hours

I will hold open office hours on Thursdays from 9-10 AM. 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.
Required Readings/Materials

Ethnographies and Graphic Novels

Note: Books marked with (*) are available online. All books on reserve at library.


Articles, Book Chapters

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


Course Policies

Attendance: Being present in class is essential. But life can be messy. Therefore, you will be granted 2 absences without penalty to your participation grade. These two absences are to be used for days you are not feeling well or days you have a personal conflict that keeps you from class. For every absence beyond 2, your participation will drop one full letter grade. Should you need to be absent from class more than twice for religious observance, please talk with me at the start of the semester. We will then discuss a way to compensate for time lost in the class and you will not be penalized.

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.

Technology: Laptops and tablets are permitted for purposes of notetaking or research during group work. Users of laptops and tablets suspected of using their technology for purposes other than class activities will be questioned in class and will be at risk of losing this privilege. Phones are to be silenced and put out of the sight of vision (in backpacks). Students caught using their phones in class will be asked to put the phone away and will be marked as absent for the day.

Decorum: You are not expected to agree with me or your peers, but you are expected to be respectful in the expression of your ideas and response to others. Disrespect will not be tolerated and will be reported to Academic Affairs.

Academic Honesty: As a student, you are to uphold the Student Honor Code. As a faculty member, it is my duty to report any transgressions https://inside.oxford.emory.edu/academics/oxford-honor-council/student-honor-code/

Late Work: Late work will be accepted, but only to a point and subject to penalty. Students will have up to 48 hours to submit late work and will be subject to a 15% (within 24 hours late submission) or 25% (within 48 hours late submission) penalty deduction.

Grades: You will frustrate yourself if you equate your effort with your grade. To be truly accomplished in this course (at the A level) means that you can work comfortably and fluidly with a broad array of concepts—not only in comprehension but also in application. It is your right and responsibility to discuss dissatisfactory grades with me, but these conversations are not likely to result in a grade change.

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%)
**Student Work and Assignments**

This class makes use of a wide array of assignments to situate grades as a reflection of intellectual growth. You will work toward 200 points in this class.

**Weekly Written Reflections (15%) 30 points**

By Sunday at 10 PM (Beginning January 19th and concluding with a final submission on April 19th) you are responsible for submitting a 250-300 word reflection on the week's readings. Throughout the semester I will randomly grade and provide feedback on 6 of these reflections. These reflections will be graded on a check plus/check/check minus system. Recommendations/guidelines for these reflections will be made available on Canvas.

**Pop Culture Reviews (15%) 30 points (15 points each)**

Twice in the semester you will engage with a piece of popular culture and write an anthropologically informed review of that piece of popular culture.

**Participation (10%) 20 points**

Participation is crucial for this class and engaged and active participation will ensure that we have an excellent collective experience. Engagement means that you are consistently and actively present, listening, and contributing. In addition to coming to class prepared to discuss the materials, at least twice in the semester you need to come to class prepared to share something that you want to connect to our class. You can think of this as “show and tell” and the thing you show and tell us about can be a song, food, a meme, a story, a photo, etc.

**Student Discussion Leadership (10%) 20 points**

10% of your grade will come from group discussion leadership. Student groups (of 2-3 students) will be responsible for leading discussion of an ethnography. Each student will perform this task once. Guidelines for these roles will be available on Canvas.

**Midterm (20%) 40 points**

You will have a take-home mid-term exam. This exam will be based on short essay questions.

**Final Project in Lieu of Final Exam (30%) 60 points**

Instead of a final exam, students will work either independently or in a team of two, on a creative project (either a podcast, video, or graphic novel) that synthesizes their research on a particular topic relevant to anthropological explorations of life in Africa.
# 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 discuss the complicated role of anthropology in these eras.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Period</th>
<th>Materials (To be read day of)</th>
<th>Big Question Addressing</th>
<th>Assignments Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan. 16</td>
<td>Adichie 2009; Wainana 2006;</td>
<td>What do we know about Africa and how do we know those things? What are African tropes? How do we think and write about Africa and why does thinking about that matter?</td>
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<td>Jan. 23</td>
<td>Engelke 2018 (pgs. 1-56); Eriksen (pgs. 9-39)</td>
<td>What is anthropology and how is it done?</td>
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<td>Jan. 28</td>
<td>Herskovits 1926; Pritchard 1940 (pgs. 1-15, 131-191)</td>
<td>How is British anthropology different than North American? What is the relationship between colonialism and the origins of anthropology?</td>
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<td>Jan. 30</td>
<td>Pritchard {1937} 1997; Fortes 1936</td>
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<td>Feb. 4</td>
<td>Owusu {1978} 1997; Kopytoff {1968} 1997; Lowe 1997</td>
<td>What, if anything is valuable about the colonial era of anthropology? How does anthropology build upon its errors?</td>
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<td>Feb. 6</td>
<td>Abouet (2007,or 2008, or 2009)</td>
<td>What does urban, everyday life look like from the artist’s perspective?</td>
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<td>Feb. 11</td>
<td>Keller 1995; Aidoo 2016; Nkrumah 2016 (x2)</td>
<td>Why isn’t independence easy?</td>
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<td>Feb. 13</td>
<td>Gardner and Lewis 1996 (pgs. 1-25, 50-102); <em>The Chairmen and the Lions</em> (in class film)</td>
<td>What is the relationship between “development” and independence?</td>
<td>Pop Culture Review #1</td>
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<td>Feb. 18</td>
<td>Netting 1968; <em>Second Nature</em> (in class film)</td>
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<td>Feb. 20</td>
<td>Rock 2019</td>
<td>Why and how do anthropologists inquire about everyday life in post-colonial Africa?</td>
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<td>Feb. 25</td>
<td>Hutchinson 1997; Shipton 1997</td>
<td>How do these examinations re-shape (or not) our understanding of everyday life in post-colonial Africa?</td>
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<td>Feb. 27</td>
<td>Holtzman 2003;</td>
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<td>Mar. 3</td>
<td>Hodgson 1999; Greenough 2012</td>
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<td>Mar. 5</td>
<td>Falen 2007</td>
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<td>Mid-Term (due March 6)</td>
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**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 contemporary ethnography.

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<tr>
<th>Class Period</th>
<th>Readings (To be Read Day Of)</th>
<th>Course Section</th>
<th>Assignments Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 10</td>
<td>Spring Break</td>
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<td>Mar 12</td>
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<td>Mar. 17</td>
<td>Final project work and start reading ethnographies</td>
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<td>Mar. 19</td>
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<td>Mar. 24</td>
<td>Davidson 2016 Chapters 1-5</td>
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<td>Dr. Ham leads group discussion</td>
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<td>Mar. 26</td>
<td>Davidson 2016 Chapters 6-8</td>
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<td>1st Student Led Group Discussion</td>
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<td>Mar. 31</td>
<td>Ntarangwi 2009 Chapters 1-4</td>
<td>Reading ethnography</td>
<td>2nd Student Led Group Discussion</td>
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<td>Apr. 2</td>
<td>Ntarangwi 2009 Chapters 5-6</td>
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<td>3rd Student Led Group Discussion</td>
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<td>Apr. 7</td>
<td>Reading Break and Film Time! In class viewing of <em>The Burial of Kojo</em></td>
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<td>Apr. 9</td>
<td>Margaretten 2015</td>
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<td>2nd Student Led Group Discussion</td>
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<td>Apr. 14</td>
<td>Margaretten 2015</td>
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<td>Pop Culture Review #2 (Due 4.14)</td>
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<td>Apr. 16</td>
<td>Bjork Chapters 1-3</td>
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<td>Apr. 21</td>
<td>Bjork Chapters 4-6</td>
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<td>Apr. 23</td>
<td>Coffman and Vannier 2018 and student selections</td>
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<td>May 4</td>
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<td>Projects Due and Presentations (9-12PM)</td>
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