

HIST291.2 / IDIS 291.2: Africa on Film

Spring, 2012 Moravian College

M 1:10-3:45

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Topics:

A close look at the ways Africa is portrayed in films. The course will screen and analyze a variety of film genres including American and European feature film, documentary, and ethnography.

Goals for students:

- *Discuss general trends and themes in African history and culture as illustrated by films we watch in class
- *Compare and contrast African, European, and American themes and approaches regarding Africa as illustrated by films we watch in class
- *Utilize appropriate historical skills to research and write an essay on a specific film that employs some aspect of African history as its theme.
- *Effectively engage in presentation and discussion of readings and films and effectively communicate historical research

Texts:

No text purchases.

Class:

Students must take notes during the screening of films.

Participation in class is an important part of this course and of college education; attendance will be taken regularly and your speaking in class is required.

Students are encouraged to speak to me about academic or other subjects. Office hours will be announced and they are posted on my office door. You may also make an appointment. If you try to call me in my office and there is no answer during weekdays, let my phone ring for voice mail. Or, call me evenings or weekends at home. I check my e-mail often during most weekdays.

Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Mr. Joe Kempfer, Assistant Director of Learning Services for Disability Support, 1307 Main Street (extension 1510). Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the office of Learning Services.

Evaluation:

Evaluation will be based on participation and in-class contributions (25%), screening notes (20%), paper (sources (10%), chunks (15%), complete draft (5%), final paper (15%), and presentation (10%).

Attendance does not receive a grade. You are allowed absence from one full class or two halves of a class. After that, each absence from a half of a class will result in 2 points being subtracted from your final grade. That means that after missing the first full class, missing a second class will cost 4 points. Work missed during unexcused absences cannot be made up, although work related to your papers may still be turned in. Please keep in close communication with me about your absences. Excessive tardiness may result in points being subtracted from your final grade.

Academic dishonesty will be treated consistent with the Student Handbook and may result in failure in the course. As with all courses, you are expected to keep all notes and drafts until the final grade is assigned.

Don't be surprised if:

While I intend to follow the syllabus closely, it is sometimes helpful or necessary to change schedules, assignments, or evaluation procedures. Thus I reserve the right to do so.

I have double-checked the availability of all the films scheduled for the course. However, we must rely on Interlibrary loan, Netflix, the Web, computers, projectors, and PP&L, and any one or all of these could fail. If this happens, we'll have the opportunity to practice patience and flexibility.

Because the course is about attitudes toward Africa and Africans rather than films per se, we may not watch all of each film. Most of the time we'll see most of the films, but you may be disappointed at times by seeing only fragments of good films. Likewise, some films won't be to your liking, even in short segments. If a film is really good and you want to see it all, we might be able to arrange an out-of-class viewing. If a film is bad, it will be interesting to consider what makes it so and whether that relates to the ways Africa is portrayed.

Screening notes:

For each film you'll need the following information: director, name of film, year, country of origin of director, and plot or sequence of action. I'll provide most of this in handouts, but you'll need to make notes on plot/sequence of action. You'll also need to think about historical background, message, perspective on Africa and Africans, and reflective comments.

Paper:

Your task is to write a 10-12 page (at least) research paper that does four things: describes the conditions (general historical and, if possible, specifics about the film) that gave rise to the production of your film, describes the historical situation that informs the African setting of the film, analyses how well your film actually portrays the reality of that situation, and analyzes how the film portrays Africa and Africans.

In preparing your paper it will be tempting to spend a great deal of time describing your film. Don't succumb to the temptation. I'm much more interested in research and analysis than, for instance, in plot or character development. The plot and characters, as well as lighting, camera angles, music, and the like are important, but if you describe

them it should be in the context of discussing how they are used to portray an African situation or Africa itself.

Paper Stages:

Choose a topic:

I want you to work with me to find a film for your paper. Not all films that include Africa will be suitable for the required essay. Moreover, not all good films are available. Some films will be easier to write on than others and I'd like each of you to be successful. The easiest films to discuss will be those about which there is some controversy either in the subject matter or in the portrayal of the subject matter.

You might first ask whether you'd like to study a feature film or a documentary. Then, because films can sometimes be difficult to get, it would be a good idea to browse the collections at the Lafayette College library, Lehigh University library, and the Moravian College library. To do this, go to the library home page and click on Find Resources/Catalogs at Other Libraries. When you get to a library search page click on Advanced Search and find the place where you can limit the search to videos (Lehigh code is Advanced Search/Format/VM; Lafayette is Advanced Keyword/Material type/Video; Moravian is MOSYS/Advanced Search/Material Type/Proj Medium). Then put Africa in the keyword search box. You will produce long lists of films.

Here are links to several filmographies that might also help:

<http://goafrica.about.com/od/peopleandculture/tp/bestfilms.htm>

<http://srufaculty.sru.edu/derrick.pitard/africafilms.htm>

<http://crawfurd.dk/africa/africanfilm.htm#whitehunter>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_African_films

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Films_set_in_Africa

Locate sources:

In the early part of the term we'll spend some time talking about bibliographic searches. It is very important that you quickly settle on a topic and complete an adequate preliminary bibliography. You don't want to be at the end of the term with an impossible topic, with inadequate sources, or with sources that take too long to acquire from other libraries.

The sources for your paper will consist primarily of peer-reviewed books and articles, but information on the production of the film might need to come for less scholarly sources. What you need is a collection of secondary sources that discuss (rather than merely describe) your topic. If, for example, you are discussing *Out of Africa*, a film about Europeans in colonial Kenya, you need to know something about Kenya at the time the film portrays and you should read the original novel. You also need to have several perspectives on the time the film was about and the time it was produced. A sophisticated analysis will require perhaps six or seven substantial peer-reviewed sources on Kenya and ten for the whole paper. Mostly what you need to do is demonstrate you have taken your topic seriously and have come to understand its basic issues.

What if you start researching a topic and don't find a sufficient number or quality of sources? Two possibilities: One is that you aren't looking in the right way or right place; there are tricks to bibliographic searches that you may not know and that the librarians or I can help you with. The other is that you need a different film; some films just don't lend themselves to papers at our level of skill and available time. If your search just doesn't seem to be working, you should contact me as soon as possible so we can figure out what to do.

Write in "chunks":

With each chunk, include your latest version of your outline

Chunk 1: Write an introduction that includes a thesis ("I argue that...") and basic film information (Who, where what why when, plot, and so forth).

Chunk 2: Explain the actual historical situation and how the film relates to it.

Chunk 3: Analyze the film for accuracy, perspective, and competence.

Provide citations and a list of Works Cited:

Historians use a number of citation styles, but the most common is the Chicago style, found in the *Chicago Manual of Style*, and that is the one to use in this course. The whole manual is in the library, but here are simpler versions in the text used for Writing 100 and online at: http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/resdoc5e/RES5e_ch10_s1-0001.html Please use footnotes, not endnotes, and include a Works Cited list at the end of your paper.

Making a presentation:

At the end of the course you will make a 30-minute presentation of your research. The presentation should include screenings of portions of your film as illustrations of your points. We'll have a practice session on April 16. At that time you'll present your plan for your presentation for 10-12 minutes.

Class Schedule:

January			
16	Introduction		Peter Davis and Daniel Riesenfeld, <i>In Darkest Hollywood: Cinema and Apartheid</i> (MoCo, 108 min, 1993) Jack Shaheen, <i>Real Bad Arabs</i> (50 min, 2007) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ko_N4BcaIPY
	Historical Introduction: Precolonial themes	Village themes	Philo Bregstein <i>Jean Rouch and His Camera in the Heart of Africa</i> (LU and LC, 74 min, 1986) John Marshall, <i>N!ai</i> (MoCo, 60 min, 1980) Indiana University, <i>Living Africa</i> (MoCo, 35 min, 1983)
		African kingdoms	David Wilson, et al., <i>Lost Kingdoms of Africa</i> (LC, 216 min, 2010)
		Slave trade	Davidson, <i>The Story of a Continent Africa</i> (MoCo, 52 min, 1984)
23	Historical Introduction: Colonial themes <i>Name of film for project</i>	Conquest	<i>White King, Red Rubber, Black Death</i> (MoCo, 91 min, 2004))
		Rule	Bruce Beresford, <i>Mr. Johnson</i> (MoCo, 98 min, 1990)
30	Historical Introduction: Colonial themes	Independence struggle	Gillo Pontecorvo, <i>The Battle of Algiers</i> (LC, 123 min, 1965)
	Historical Introduction: Post-colonial themes	Governing independent Africa	Ali Mazrui, <i>In Search of Stability</i> (MoCo, 1986)
February			
6	Historical Introduction: Post-colonial themes	Corruption and power	Ousmane Sembene, <i>Xala</i> (LC, 123 min, 1974) and also at (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8W_nTuCchCc)
	Western Views <i>Bibliography</i>	Feature films 1930s	Zoltan Korda, <i>Sanders of the River</i> (MoCo, 85 min, 1935)
13	Western Views	Feature films 1950s	Compton Bennett and Andrew Marton, <i>King Solomon's Mines</i> (MoCo and LC, 103 min, 1950) John Ford, <i>Mogambo</i> (MoCo, 116 min, 1954)
20	Western Views	Feature films 1980s- 1990s	Sydney Pollack, <i>Out of Africa</i> (MoCo, 161 min, 1985) Eddie Murphy, <i>Coming to America</i> (LC, 117 min, 1988) Michael Raeburn, <i>Jit</i> (MoCo, 92 min, 1990)
	<i>Chunk 1</i>		Jamie Uys, <i>The Gods Must be Crazy</i> (MoCo, 109 min, 1980)
27	Western Views	Feature films 2000s	Edward Zwick, <i>Blood Diamond</i> (BPL and LC, 138 min, 2007)

			Kevin Macdonald, <i>The Last King of Scotland</i> (MoCo and LC, 123 min, 2007) Fernando Meirelles, <i>Constant Gardener</i> (Easton PL, 129 min, 2006)
March			
5	Spring Recess		
12	Western views	Documentaries	Hubert Sauper, <i>Darwin's Nightmare</i> (LC, 114 min, 2004) Friends of the Congo, <i>Crisis in the Congo: Uncovering the Truth</i> (26 min, 2011) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rM7bexchwG8&feature=related
		Cartoon	Roger Allers, <i>The Lion King</i> (MoCo, 88 min, 1994)
19	African views <i>Chunk 2</i>	Feature films	Gavin Hood, <i>Tsotsi</i> (LU and LC, 94 min, 2006) Souleymane Cissé, <i>Yeelen</i> (LC, 105 min, 1987) and http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qli5P6kE6oQ&feature=related
26	African Views – Documentaries <i>Chunk 3</i>		Balufu Bakupa-Kanyinda, <i>Afro@digital</i> (MoCo, 52 min, 2003) Soriosis Samura, <i>Cry Freetown</i> (26 min 2000) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8WHl2UmJXYU
April			
2	African Views – Nollywood <i>Complete draft with correct citations and Works Cited page</i>		Dorothee Wenner, <i>Nollywood Lady</i> (LU, 52 min, 2008) YouTube various
9	Easter Recess		
16	Student Presentations	Practice session	
23	Student Presentations		
30	Student Presentations		
May			
1	Final examination <i>Final draft due</i>		