

First Year Seminar 172
CINEMATIC PORTRAITS OF AFRICA
Fall Term 2008
Tuesdays/Thursdays 1-2.30pm, Pettengill G50

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Office Hours:	TuWF 2.30-4.00pm		TBA

Most Americans have “seen” Africa only through non-African eyes, coming to “know” about African society through such characters as Tarzan and such genres as the “jungle melodrama” or the “nature show.” In this seminar, films from the North Atlantic are juxtaposed with ethnographic and art films made by Africans in order to examine how to “read” various cinematic texts. Related written texts help to answer central questions about the politics of representation: What are some of the differences in how African societies are depicted; why might particular issues and points of view become privileged?

As with all First Year Seminars, FYS 172 is not only about helping you adjust to college life, it is foremost about building your critical thinking skills. You will learn how to read in a manner distinct from your high school training. Another major purpose of these seminars is to help new students write clear, concise—yet original—prose. Every week, with the assistance of our peer writing tutor Ariane Mandell, an alumna of *Cinematic Portraits of Africa*, you will be either writing or revising a short essay or a longer research paper. Note that you will not pass this course if you miss any peer review sessions or neglect to hand in a minimum of two drafts, in a timely manner, for each of the assigned essays. You will find editing and revising skills essential for all successful college (& career) writing.

Although the bulk of the “texts” for this course are the films themselves, you have regular reading assignments. Three books are available at the bookstore: Hacker’s *The Bedford Handbook*, Kawin’s *How Movies Work* and Pieterse’s *White on Black*. Shorter readings are on your Lyceum account. You should find all assigned films on reserve in the audio library. Film students often arrange for group screenings, you may wish to work that out among yourselves.

A few additional notes: Please do inform your profs of any accommodations mandated for learning differences. Some of each First Year Seminar class time should be spent discussing how to manage your adjustment to your new lives at Bates. Each seminar group is unique, hence, this syllabus is subject to revision.

- 20% = participation* (this is a seminar, hence participation is crucial to your learning process)
- 15% = first drafts of essays and papers (3 x 5% = 15%)
- 20% = final drafts of two shorter (2-3 page) essays (2 x 10% = 20%)
- 20% = final draft of your research paper
- 10% = timely completion of all preliminary steps towards your research paper (details TBA)
- 10% = leading class discussion/in-class presentation
- 5% = completion of shorter in-class and take-home exercises

Extra credit= accrue from your reporting on any relevant extra-curricular events you attend

*high participation grades come with good attendance and active, thoughtful, consistent class participation, revealing thorough preparation and engagement. This means contributing your own ideas as well as providing constructive responses to others’ oral and written comments. B-level work means that your participation is of high quality, but not consistent, or you share your own ideas frequently, but may not pay much attention to others’ comments. You would receive C-level points if your participation were thoughtful but infrequent, or regular but perfunctory, yet still revealed a satisfactory level of preparation and competence when offered. Few points would accrue if your participation were rare and/or revealed poor or careless preparation.

All assignments are listed on the date they are DUE

- Tu 9/2** **Introduction**
- Th 9/4** **“Reading” Film**
- Video: *The Cutting Edge* (view at least first half of this film essay)
Africa Speaks! (FF through some of the animal sequences)
- Reading: Read Bedford Handbook 46c
- Read, take notes and summarize** Lutz & Collins’ article
“...Intersection of Gazes” on Lyceum
- Skim** Pieterse’s *White on Black* Part I, Chapters 1, 2 & 4, then
read Chapter 7. Make **notes** on just the main arguments.
- Writing: Bring your notes and summaries to class
- Tu 9/9** **Wildlife, Wild Death**
- Video: *Tarzan the Ape Man* on reserve
- Reading: **Skim** most of Kawin’s *How Movies Work*, Part I, Chapters 1
& 2, but, **read and take notes** on these sections: Educated
Look, Political Criticism, Feminist Criticism, Filmed World,
Within Frames, Film as a Language.
- Read** Dunn’s article “Lights...Camera...Africa” on Lyceum,
then summarize how you think depression era threats to
white masculinity may relate to *Tarzan* and *Africa Speaks!*
- Writing: Bring notes/summaries to class. Essay #1 topic given out today
- Th 9/11** **European Representations, continued**
- Video: watch *Congo* on reserve
- Reading: Bedford Handbook all of section 46
“Heart of Darkness,” and “An Image of Africa” on Lyceum
How Movies Work Part I, Chapter 3 “The Narrative Film”;
Chapter 4 “Mise-en-scene & Montage”; Part II, Chap. 2
“Composition”; Chap. 5 “Shot Relations,” “Moving Camera”
- Tu 9/16** **The Writing Workshop: We will convene class in the Writing Workshop today**
- Reading: Bedford Handbook sections 47 and 48
- Writing: First public draft of your first paper is due by 5pm
- Th 9/18** **European Representations, continued**
- Video: *Blood Diamond* on reserve
- Reading: Wainaina “How to Write about Africa” on Lyceum
White on Black Part I, Chapter 5
- Tu 9/23** **Re-Thinking Colonial Practice**
- Video: *Constant Gardener* (or *Last King of Scotland*) on reserve
- Reading: *White on Black* Part III, Chapters 14 & 15
How Movies Work Part II, Chapter 6 & 7
- Th 9/25** **Acquiring a Voice: Introduction to African Feature Film**
- Screening: *Wend Kuuni (God’s Gift)*
- Reading: Diawara’s “Oral Literature and African Film” on Lyceum
- Writing: Final draft of your first paper due by 5pm
I hand out second paper assignment today

- Th 9/30 Acquiring a Voice, continued**
 Video: *Yeelen* (or *Sia*) on reserve
 Reading: “In the Midst of Secrets” “Metaphors We Live By” and “The Concept of Time” all on Lyceum
Bedford Handbook Part I, esp. pp. 1-42
- Tu 10/2 Acquiring a Voice, continued**
 Video: *Ezra* on reserve
 Writing: bring to class your notes and outlines
 Reading: *The Bedford Handbook* Part IX, esp. pp. 468-489
- Tu 10/7 Acquiring a Voice, continued**
 Video: *Daratt (Dry Season)* on reserve
 Writing: Paper 2 first draft due
- Th 10/9 First Library Research Session: Convene in the Ladd Library B.I. Lab**
Laura Juraska, Reference Librarian
 Reading: *The Bedford Handbook* Part X, esp. pp. 528-608
- Tu 10/14 African Popular Video Film: The Nollywood Phenomenon**
 Video: *Thunderbolt* on reserve
 Writing: Paper 2 final draft due before break
- Th 10/21 Documentary Film: Technique and Voice**
 Video: *Passing Girl; Riverside* and *Ghanaian Video Tales* on reserve
 Reading: *How Movies Work* Part I, Chapter 3 “The Nonfiction Film”
- Tu 10/23 Issues in Documentary Film Making: P.O.V.**
 Video: *Monday’s Girls* and *Becoming a Woman in Okrika*
 Writing: Paper topic and research paper work plan due
- Tu 10/28 Issues in Documentary Film Making**
 Video: *War/Dance* on reserve
 Writing: First round bibliography due
- Th 10/30 Second Library Session: Convene in Ladd Library B.I. Lab**
Laura Juraska, Reference Librarian
 Reading: Review *The Bedford Handbook*, part X
 Writing: End of term schedule; report on meeting with professor
- Tu 11/4 Individual Consultations about Research and Registration**
 Writing: bring your research notes and your research question
- Th 11/6 Individual Consultations about Research and Registration**
 Writing: bring your research notes and your research question
- Th 11/13 Research Paper Process**
 Writing: Thesis, sentence outline and first annotated bibliography due
- Th 11/20 Research Paper Process**
 Writing: First draft due
- Tu 12/4 Defying Boundaries: Bye-Bye Africa**
 Video: watch *Bye-Bye Africa* on reserve
 In-class viewing: *Simpson’s Safari* (from season 13)

Sat 12/13

First Semester Ends at noon

**Writing: Final revision plus all supporting documents due
(that means plans, drafts, outlines, notes, bibliographies, wish list, etc. etc.)**

N.B.: I depart on the 13th for Fulbright Meeting in NYC—this is the real final deadline!

American Anthropological Association Style Guide: http://www.aaanet.org/pubs/style_guide.htm

The Bates Writing Workshop's website: http://abacus.bates.edu/acad/acad_support/ww/

Colby/Bates/Bowdoin Plagiarism Resource website: <http://leeds.bates.edu/cbb/>