

# **HIS 350L: Between Nollywood and Hollywood: Historical Imaginations of Africa in Film**

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## **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 by the low-budget, direct to video films commonly referred to as *Nollywood*. While these films have drawn criticism 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, sweeping across the continent and throughout the global diaspora. This course examines the rise of Nollywood and the genesis of a popular African art form. Through a combination of films and readings, students will explore how Nollywood, in comparison to Hollywood, depicts the society and culture of Nigeria and Africa as a whole. Each week addresses a different 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 product of Hollywood and European films, this course will introduce Nollywood as an African alternative to how films depict, and people understand, their history.

## **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.
3. To help students understand the social, cultural, political, and economic agents that have affected African history.
4. To assess the viability film as a historical source.
5. To understand popular perceptions about Africa depicted in films and how they lead to misunderstandings of the past.

## **READING LIST:**

Books and Package on Culture.

Haynes, Jonathan, ed. *Nigerian Video Films*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000.

**\*There will also be several journal articles assigned throughout the semester. These will be available through the university library's online databases.**

### **ASSIGNMENTS:**

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Due</b>	<b>Points</b>
<b>Attendance</b>	<b>Every class session</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Public Lecture Report</b>	<b>Week 5</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Film Review</b>	<b>Week 8</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Book Review</b>	<b>Week 11</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Final Paper</b>	<b>Week 15</b>	<b>30</b>

### **CLASS SCHEDULE:**

#### **Week 1 (August 30<sup>th</sup>)**

Course Introduction/Introduction to Nollywood

Reading: Shaka, Femi Okiremuette. "Nollywood: Reconstructing the Historical and Socio Cultural Contexts of the Nigerian Video Film Industry."

AVAILABLE AT

<http://www.supplemagazine.org/nollywood-reconstructing-the-historical-and-socio-cultural-contexts-of-the-nigerian-video-film-industry.html>

Films: *This is Nollywood* and *Nollywood Babylon*

#### **Week 2 (September 6<sup>th</sup>)**

Colonialism

Reading: *Visions of the Past* Pgs. 1-45 (Handout)

Film: *Mister Johnson* (1990)

#### **Week 3 (September 13<sup>th</sup>)**

Cultural Heritage

Reading: *Cultures and Customs of Nigeria* Pgs. 1-28  
*Nigerian Video Films* Pgs. 1-36

Film: *Ede Mi* (2004)

\*\*\* Tuesday September 18, 2012 Distinguished Africa Lecture, Speaker: Dr. Joni Jones  
Omi Osun. Venue: Belmont 328

#### **Week 4 (September 20<sup>th</sup>)**

Western Perceptions of "Primitive Africa"

Reading: *Cultures and Customs of Nigeria*, Pgs. 29-54  
*Nigerian Video Films* Pgs. 37-50

Film: *Heart of Darkness* (1994)

**LECTURE REPORT DUE**

#### **Week 5 (September 27<sup>th</sup>)**

Traditionalism vs. Modernity

Reading: *Cultures and Customs of Nigeria* Pgs. 55-76  
*Nigerian Video Films* Pgs. 51-88

Film: *The Narrow Path*

#### **Week 6 (October 4<sup>th</sup>)**

**Guest Speaker and Moderator: Ms Ogechukwu Ezekwem**

Gender Conflict

Reading: *Cultures and Customs of Nigeria* Pgs. 77-115

Ogunleye, Foluke. "A Male-Centric Modification of History: "Efunsetan Aniwura" Revisited."  
In *History in Africa*, 31 (2004): 303-318.  
[AVAILABLE ON JSTOR]

Film: *Efusetan Aniwura*

#### **Week 7 (October 11<sup>th</sup>)**

Social and Cultural Ills

Reading: *Cultures and Customs of Nigeria* Pgs. 116-136

Film: *Ayo Ni Mo Fe* (1994)

### **Week 8 (October 18<sup>th</sup>)**

Western Perceptions of “Isolated Africa”

Reading: *Cultures and Customs of Nigeria* Pgs. 137-158

Film: *The Gods Must Be Crazy* (1981)

### **FILM REVIEW DUE**

### **Week 9 (October 25<sup>th</sup>)**

Social Conflict and Issues of Class

Reading: *Cultures and Customs of Nigeria* Pgs. 159-180

Film: *Abèni* (2006)

### **Week 10 (November 1<sup>st</sup>)**

Rebellion Against Authority

Reading: *Nigerian Video Films* Pgs. 162-191

Film: *Abèni 2* (2006)

### **Week 11 (November 8<sup>th</sup>)**

Western Perceptions of “Savage Africa”

Reading: Evans, Martha and Ian Glenn. “TIA-This is Africa: Afropessimism in Twenty-First Century Narrative Film.” *Black Camera* Vol. 2, No. 1 (Winter 2010): 14-35.  
[AVAILABLE ON PROJECT MUSE]

Film: *Blood Diamond* (2006)

### **BOOK REVIEW DUE**

**Week 12 (November 15<sup>th</sup>)**

Corruption

\*\*Submit a one page introduction of your research paper

**IN PLACE OF READINGS STUDENTS NEED TO BRING A ONE PAGE INTRODUCTION OF THEIR RESEARCH PAPER.**

Film: *Campus Queen*

**Week 13 (November 22<sup>nd</sup>)**

Political Instability

Reading: *Visions of the Past* Pgs. 169-197 (Handout)

Film: *Somewhere in Africa*

**Week 14 (November 29<sup>th</sup>)**

Commentators: Sylvester Gundona and Ogechukwu Ezekwem  
Final Paper Presentations

**Week 15 (December 6<sup>th</sup>)**

**FINAL PAPER DUE**

### **Attendance Guidelines:**

Students must be present to view each film and 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. Attendance will be worth 30 points of your final grade. **Each unexcused absence will result in an automatic 5 point deduction from your attendance grade.**

### **Public Lecture Review Guidelines:**

All students must attend the African Distinguished Lecture. Specific information will be announced in class.

During the lecture, students should take notes and will be allowed to ask the speaker questions pertaining to the topic.

For the review, students will be expected to fulfill a two-fold task. First, summarize the lecture in **no more** than one page; second, give your opinion of the lecture in **no less** than one page.

Proofread your review before submitting it. See the format guidelines section of this syllabus for further information.

The report will be due one week after the lecture. Turn your review in on time (that means at the beginning of class) because late reviews will be penalized half a letter grade for each day late. Emailed submissions will not be accepted. Your book review is worth 10 points of your final grade.

### **Film Review Guidelines:**

Each student is required to write a review of one of the first 8 films we watch in the class.

Reviews should be between 1000 and 1500 words, typed, double-spaced and stapled.

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

- Watch the film.
- Give your opinion of the film.

- What were 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 was the film’s structure? Did the plot flow? Were there continuity gaps?
- How did the film use music? How did 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 did the film bring to light aspects in the readings, or vice versa?

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 at the beginning of class) because late reviews will be penalized half a letter grade for each day late. Emailed submissions will not be accepted. Your book review is worth 15 points of your final grade.

### **Book Review Guidelines:**

Each student is required to write a review of the assigned book.

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 own opinion, but do so in a clear statement. 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 at the beginning of class) because late reviews will be penalized half a letter grade for each day late. Emailed submissions will not be accepted. 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 one or more of the key themes of the class (i.e. colonialism, traditionalism vs. modernity, gender dynamics, corruption, etc.) through the use of films and written texts. Examples: Nollywood and Women; Nollywood and Magic; Nollywood and Globalization, etc. 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. 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 and stapled. 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 paper. 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 (that means at the beginning of class) because late papers will be penalized half a letter grade for each day late. Emailed submissions will not be accepted. Your research paper is worth 30 points of your final grade.

### **FORMAT GUIDELINES:**

All assignments must be stapled, 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.

## **PLAGARISM:**

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).

## 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