

HSME W3916.001:
Africa, Empire and the Twentieth Century World
Spring 2009

Instructor: Jinny Prais
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Office hours: TBA
Office: Institute for African Studies, IAB, 11th floor

Class meets every Tuesday from 4:00pm to 6:00pm in Hamilton Hall, room 306

Description:

During the early twentieth century African men and women from the French and British empires traveled to metropolitan and colonial cities as workers, political activists, students, and tourists. Their time spent in these cities brought them into dialogue with a variety of people and ideas, and led to the formation of international networks and spaces in which they discussed and modified concepts critical to political modernity long associated with Europe, including universalism, notions of citizenship and subjecthood, civil society, and legal equality and justice. These concepts have often been viewed as European inventions, and as critical political tools used by Europe to colonize the non-western world. While it cannot be denied that they carry the burden of colonial history, colonized peoples were active participants in the development and elaboration of these concepts, not simply in their exclusion from them, but as contributors to their varied articulations in their encounters with Europe and with each other.

In this seminar, we will learn about African engagement and experimentation with these concepts in the context of debates on civilization, imperial reform, national self-determination, race, citizenship, modernity, feminism, and the development of a new world order during the first half of the twentieth century. Our exploration begins with the “civilizing mission” in Africa, both as it was defined by Europe and re-defined by western-educated Africans, and ends with the *Joys of Motherhood*, a postcolonial feminist novel.

We will read secondary and primary sources, novels, and short stories by Africans and people of African descent. Through these texts, we will learn about the ways that African writers and activists used imperial and international resources to improve their political and social situations, and to participate in a diversity of political movements, including pan-Africanism, communism, feminism, black internationalism, and anti-imperialism. We will also become familiar with current debates and theoretical developments in African, imperial, transnational, international and global scholarship that seeks to understand the complex flows of people and ideas across national and imperial boundaries.

Novels and short stories add another dimension to our understanding of this period, and occupy an important role in the seminar. Fiction offers insight into areas of the past typically omitted from the historical record, most critically, the day-to-day experience of gender, race, class, and sexuality. At the same time, fiction functions as a powerful political tool; it enables historical actors to create encounters and conversations that never took place, and by doing so, introduce new political and social possibilities.

Course requirements:

- Careful and critical reading of course materials.
- Active and consistent participation in class discussions and activities.
- Completion of weekly writing assignments (2-3 pages in length, in response to a prompt or series of questions provided by the instructor).
- Completion of final paper.

Grading:

Weekly response papers: 50%

Final paper: 25%

Class Participation: 25%

Reading materials not available through Courseworks:

Buchi Emecheta. *The Joys of Motherhood: A Novel*, 1979

Richard Wright. *The Color Curtain: A Report on the Bandung Conference*, 1956

Cheikh Hamadou Kane. *Ambiguous Adventure*, 1961

Claude McKay. *Banjo: A Story without a Plot*, 1929

These texts are available at:

Book Culture

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Telephone: (212) 865-1588

Fax: (212) 865-2749

Web: www.bookculture.com

Hours: Monday–Friday: 9 am–10 pm, Saturday: 10 am–8 pm, Sunday: 11 am–7 pm.

Week 1, January 20: Introduction

Week 2, January 27: “Civilizing” Missions and Colonial Modernity

Conklin, Alice. “The idea of the Civilizing Mission in 1895 and the Creation of the Government General.” *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930*. Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1997.

Diouf, Mamadou. “Modernity, Africa, Colonial Modernity,”
<http://science.jrank.org/pages/10264/Modernity-Africa-Colonial-Modernities.html>

Week 3, February 3: African Engagement with Colonial Modernity and Imperial Politics before the First World War: Casely Hayford’s *Ethiopia Unbound*

Casely Hayford, J.E. *Ethiopia Unbound*. London: Frank Cass & Company Limited, 1911.
Fletcher, Ian Christopher. “Double Meanings: Nation and Empire in the Edwardian Era.” In *After the Imperial Turn, Thinking With and Through the Nation*, edited by Antoinette Burton, 246-259. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.

Week 4, February 10: Situating Africa and African History: Colonial, Imperial, International, World and Global Frameworks

Boehmer, Elleke. *Empire, the National, and the Post-colonial, 1890-1920*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, 1-33.

Edwards, Brent. “Inventing the Black International: George Padmore and Tiemoko Garan Kouyate,” in *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003, 241-305.

Lonsdale, John. “Globalization, Ethnicity, and Democracy: A View from ‘the Hopeless Continent,’” in *Globalization in World History*, ed. Anthony G. Hopkins. New York: Norton, 2002, 196-220.

Du Bois, W.E.B., “The African Roots of War,” *Atlantic Monthly*, May 1915, 360-71.
<http://www.webdubois.org/dbAfricanRWar.html>

You may also find a non-circulating copy of the original at the Burke Library, MRL pamphlets, call no. 0027.

Week 5, February 17: The Interwar Period, the “Wilsonian Moment”

- Manela, Erez. *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism*. Oxford UP, 2007. 1-53.
- Callahan, Michael. *Mandates and Empire: The League of Nations and Africa, 1914-1931*. Sussex Academic Press, 2008. selections, TBA
- Casely Hayford, J. E. “Nationalism as a West African Ideal,” *Wasu*, n. 2, December 1926.

Week 6, February 24: The Interwar Period, Internationalism and Imperialism

- Sinha, Mrinalini. *Specters of Mother India: The Global Restructuring of an Empire*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006, 23-65.
- Wilder, Gary. “Framing Greater France between the Wars,” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 14, 2, June 2001, 198-225.
- Akiwumi, Abiola. “West Africa and the World,” *Wasu*, n. 2, December 1926, 14-16.
- “Liverpool Youth Movement for Peace and the West African Students’ Union,” *Wasu* n. 6 & 7, August 1928, 30-1.
- Cooper, Frederick. **TBA**

Week 7, March 3: Empire Cities, African Travelers: the Anglophone Context

- Boderick, Modupe. “Merchant of Light.” *Wasu* 8 (January 1929).
- Gikandi, Simon. “Pan-Africanism and Cosmopolitanism: The case of Jomo Kenyatta,” *English Studies in Africa* 43, 1, 2000, 3-27.
- Robinson, Cedric. “Black Intellectuals at the British Core: 1920s-1940s,” in *Essays on the History of Black Britain*, eds. Jagdish Gundara and Ian Duffield. Aldershot: Avebury, 1992, 173-201.
- McLeod, John. “A Night at the ‘Cosmopolitan’: Axes of Transnational Encounter in the 1930s and 1940s,” *Interventions* 4, 1, 2002, 53-67.
- Abrahams, Peter. “The Dream” from the novel *A Wreath for Udomo*. London: Farber, 1956, 1-81.

Week 8, March 10: Empire Cities, African Travelers: the Francophone Context

- McKay, Claude. *Banjo: A Story without a Plot*. New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1970.
- Edwards, Brent. “Vagabond Internationalism: Claude McKay’s *Banjo*,” in *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003, 187-240.

Week 9, March 17: Spring Recess.

Week 10, March 24: The “Woman Question” and Imperial Inclusion

Weinbaum, Alys, Lynn Thomas, Priti Ramamurthy, Uta Poiger, Madeline Dong, and Tani Barlow. “The Modern Girl as Heuristic Device: Collaboration, Connective Comparison, Multidirectional Citation,” in *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008, 1-54.

“A Student Romance,” *Wasu*, 1928. ***Part I & II.**

Ngugi wa Thiong’o. “A Meeting in the Dark,” *Secret Lives*. New York: Lawrence Hill & Co., 1975, 55-70.

Week 11, March 31: The “Global Color Line” and Imperial Exclusion

Tabili, Laura. “The Construction of Racial Difference in Twentieth Century Britain: the Special Restriction (Coloured Alien Seamen) Order, 1925,” *Journal of British Studies* 33, 1, (January 1994).

Lake, Marilyn and Henry Reynolds. *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men’s Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Inequality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. 241-262; 284-309.

“The Italo-Ethiopian War and the Pan-African Response.” In *From the Marcus Garvey and the United Negro Improvement Association Papers. Africa for the Africans, 1923-1945*, V. X, edited by Robert Hill, 1-4, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.

Week 12, April 7: Responding to Racism as a World Problem: The Afro-Asian Conference, Bandung, 1955

Wright, Richard. *The Color Curtain: A Report on the Bandung Conference*. Cleveland: World Pub. Co, 1956.

Diawara, Manthia. “Richard Wright and Modern Africa,” *In Search of Africa*, 59-76.

Fabre, Michel. “Wright, Negritude, and African Writing,” *The World of Richard Wright*. University Press of Mississippi, 1985. 192-213.

Week 13, April 14: Defining an African Past and Future: First International Congress of Black Writers and Artists, Paris, 1956

Special 1956 issue of *Présence Africaine: Revue culturelle du monde noir* on the First International Congress of Black Writers and Artists: Opening remarks, 1-28; **Frantz Fanon**, “Racism and Culture,” 122-131; **Aime Césaire**, “Culture and Colonisation,” 193-229; **Leopold Senghor**, “The Spirit of Civilisation or the Laws of African Negro Culture,” 51-64; **Richard Wright**, “Tradition and Industrialization; The Plight of the Tragic Elite in Africa,” 355-369.

Baldwin, James. “Princes and Power,” *Encounter*, January 1957.

Julien, Eileen. "Terrains de Rencontre: Césaire, Fanon, and Wright on Culture and Decolonization," *Yale French Studies*, 98, The French Fifties (2000), 149-166.

Week 14, April 21: Colonial Modernity and African Modernities

Chiekh Hamadou Kane. *Ambiguous Adventure*, 1961.

Week 15, April 28: African Women and the "Woman Question"

Emecheta, Buchi. *The Joys of Motherhood: A Novel*. New York: G. Braziller, 1979.

Robolin, Stephanie. "Gendered Hauntings: *The Joys of Motherhood*, Interpretive Acts, and Postcolonial Theory," *Research in African Literatures* 35, 3 (Fall 2004), 76-92.

Derrickson, Teresa. "Class, Culture, and the Colonial Context: The Status of Women in Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood*." *International Fiction Review* 29, nos.1&2 (2002): 40-51.