Meetings, Consultations and Office Hours:

The colloquium will meet weekly, on Tuesdays from 2:00 to 4:30. Office hours will be held in suite 710, at 53 Washington Square South (Juan Carlos Building) on Tuesdays 1:00 to 2:00 P.M. Other hours can be arranged by special appointment. I may be reached at 998-8649 or richard.hull@nyu.edu. Messages may also be left in my office door box.

Course Description:

The course will explore the origins and evolution of Western, primarily American, images and notions of Africans and their civilizations, from classical antiquity to the present. However, the emphasis will fall on the construction of white and black American perceptions in the 19th and 20th centuries. Through popular culture (film, music, travelogues, novels, magazines, comics, fashion design and the fine arts) students will identify and critically assess the subtle and sometimes not-so-subtle images and ideas that have contributed to our enduring stereotypes of Africans and their civilizations. We will endeavor to determine why Westerners, after centuries of exposure to African civilizations, continue to cling to a constellation of stereotypes first developed by writers and artists in classical antiquity. What efforts were made by subsequent observers to change or to re-appraise those images and to what extent did they succeed? What forces, within Africa and beyond, motivated these perceptions and how did they contribute to the complicated relationship between Africa and the West?

Core Readings (required)

Robert J. Allison (ed) *Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*.

Joseph Conrad. *Heart of Darkness*.


Jan Nederveen Pieterse. White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture.
**Course Requirements**

This is a colloquium which places emphasis on class discussion of issues, ideas, readings and films. There will be five short response papers. During the semester, students will take at least one popular author and will critically examine the author’s early background and ultimate African experiences and how they may have shaped, or conditioned, the author’s feelings towards Africans and their culture. You will examine their creative work(s) and how it contributed to (a) the reinforcement or destruction of prevailing images or perceptions that Westerners have of Africa and Africans or (b) to the creation of entirely new (positive or negative) images or stereotypes. You need not limit yourself to a non-African in making your selection. This essay should be approximately eight pages in length. Your second assignment will take an African civilization or culture (anywhere at any time in history) and examine how it has been interpreted by (a) an indigenous African and (b) by external researchers from the West. Alternatively, you may choose to examine an African personality (political or cultural) who has been interpreted by various scholars using different modes and methods of inquiry and with differing biases and conclusions. Or, you may consider an example of how indigenous Africans viewed Westerners through the lens of visual images of the ‘Other’. In any case, this essay should also be approximately eight pages in length. Neither of the two papers should be treated as a major research project. Your third assignment is to write short critiques of about four pages each of three books (one of them could be a film). Each critique should discuss the narrative or storyline, the author’s main thesis, the sources used, the quality of his/her analysis, and your estimation of the book’s relevance to any of the themes or issues covered in the colloquium. You will make three brief (20-minute) oral presentations to the colloquium on any three of the five assignments.

Course grade will be determined by the papers (collectively 70%) and class participation (30%). Attendance is mandatory and absences will obviously affect the extent of your involvement in the course. Participation will consist of our weekly roundtable discussion of the core readings and your own oral presentations.

**Course Structure by Week**

**Week I (January 17)**

*Introduction-Images and Stereotypes of Africa and Africans*
Assign: Pieterse. White on Black. Intro+chaps. 1 thru 7)

**Week II (January 24)**

*Images & Stereotypes continued*
*Video: Africa and Africans in American Film Animation 1930s/40s*
Discussion: Pieterse thru chap. 7

Week III: (January 31)

Images of Africa and Africans in Antiquity
Video: Black Athena
Discussion: Pieterse. Chaps 8-15
Presentation: (students choose a work to present to the class, my suggestion for this week might be: Anthony Birley. Septimius Severus: The African Emperor.

Week IV: (February 7)
Images of Africa and Africans in Antiquity continued
Presentation: Jacques Berlinerblau. Heresy in the University: Black Athena Controversy.
Video: Clip from ‘Amistad’
Discussion: Ancient Egypt: Stolen Legacy?

Week V (February 14)

Images of Africa & Africans in the Era of the Slave Trade: Hottentot Venus
Video: Life & Times of Sara Baartman: The Hottentot Venus.
Discussion: Equiano

Week VI (February 21)

Images of Africa/Africans in the Era of Imperial Conquest: The Myth of the Dark Continent
Assign: Carolyn Hamilton. Terrific Majesty.
Video: Boma-Tervuren.
Discussion: Conrad
Week VII (February 28)

The Image of Africa in the Age of Colonialism
Assign: Hickey/Wylie. Chaps. 3&6 plus Tarzan articles
Discuss: The Creation of Shaka Zulu and the Warrior image

Week VIII (March 7)

Wild Africa: Images of Africa/Africans in the Age of Cinema
Assign: Hickey/Wylie. Chaps 3 & 7
Video: Tarzan the Ape Man (1932)
Discussion: The Construction and Deconstruction of Tarzan

Week IX (March 21)

Travel Writing: Searching for Lost Cities and Lost Treasure
Discussion: Lost and Found?

Week X (March 28)

Encounters
Assign: t.b.a
Discussion: Encounters

Week XI (April 4)

Images of Africa & Africans in the Era of Hollywood


Week XII (April 11)

The Image of Nature Untamed

Assign: t.b.a.
Video: Born Free (1966)
Discussion: Africa in the Western Novel

Week XIII (April 18)

Saving Nature and’ Primitive’ African Art

Assign: t.b.a.
Discussion: Primitive Art/Modern Art?

Week XIV (April 25)

The Image of Africa as a Place of Danger and Terror/Inventing Africa

No assignment
Select Bibliography
(you may use this in selecting your critiques)

Chinua Achebe. Things Fall Apart.
Mark Twain. King Leopold’s Soliloquy. (1905)
Henry Morton Stanley. Through the Dark Continent.
Richard Hall. Stanley: An Adventurer Explored.
David Livingstone. Travels and Researches in South Africa.
Alex Haley. Roots.
Philip D. Curtin. The Image of Africa.
V.Y. Mudimbe. The Invention of Africa.
O. Mannoni. Prospero and Caliban.
Francis Duncan Barker et al. Cannibalism and the Colonial World.
Mungo Park, Travels in Africa.
Carl Jung. Memories, Dreams, Reflections.
Eastman, George. Chronicles of a Second African Trip.

Graham Greene, The Heart of the Matter. (1948)

John Gunther. Inside Africa (1955)

Alexander Crummell, The Future of Africa. (1862)


Herodotus. The Histories (transl. Aubery de Selincourt (1972)


Edmund Morel. Red Rubber. (1906)


George W. Williams. History of the Negro Race. (1883)