

NYU SUMMER JOURNALISM COURSE
(MAY 26 to JULY 6, 2019)
JOURNALISM AND SOCIETY:
CULTURAL CONTEXT OF AFRICAN MEDIA

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores how the media interrelate with and impact African societies, especially through the practices of journalism. Informed by the history and political economy of Ghana and other exemplar African countries, the course discusses the socio-cultural and philosophical context of media in Africa. It examines the broader issues that impinge on how the media function, including media policies and laws as well as cultural, religious and gendered beliefs.

DESIRED OUTCOMES

At the end of the course students will:

- Be able to demonstrate background knowledge of African media in general, and the Ghanaian media in particular.
- Gain a better understanding of the role and function of media within Ghanaian society and their complicity in how people experience the world around them.
- Be familiar with various theoretical approaches to be able to critically examine the norms and practices of journalism in Africa
- Be able to critique media texts and enhance their critical thinking and understanding of the interplay between media and the social world.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSESSMENT COMPONENTS

- All assignments must be typewritten and presented on time. The lecturer reserves the right to either reject any late assignment or to deduct marks for lateness. Assignments will be evaluated for content as well as writing technique. Mechanical errors will always adversely affect the final score.

- **Assignments**

1. Class participation (10%)
2. Book Review: Gettleman, Jeffrey (2018). *Love, Africa: A Memoir of Romance, War and Survival* (700-800 words) (20%).
3. Watch and Review Nollywood Movie 'Lion Heart' Season 1 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jerSLhMGT-I>) (20%)
4. Term Paper (30%).
5. End of Semester Exam (Take Home) - (20%)

Term Paper (2000 words)

Compare Western media and Ghanaian media coverage of politics. Your paper must be predicated on at least a month's worth of reading, watching or listening to how the news media in your selected countries are covering political issues. Your analysis must draw concrete examples from the media you have analyzed to underpin the points you make and reflect the readings on the subject. Your paper should be properly referenced with citations of literature and sources of information properly attributed.

COURSE OUTLINE (Six Weeks)

1. Friday May 31: General Overview of Media in the context of Ghana and Africa (12:00 – 3:00 pm)

In this introductory lecture students will be introduced to the nature and structure of the course and given a historical overview of media in Africa generally and Ghana in particular. We will also contend with debates on Western coverage of Africa.

Class Structure

- a. Lecturer introduces course, and goes through course outline and student expectations (12- 12:20)
- b. Lecturer delivers lecture and shows videos on the subject followed by questions and comments (12:20-1:00)
- c. Break (1:00-1:30)
- d. Lecturer delivers lecture and shows videos on subject followed by questions and comments (1:30-2:00)
- e. Group discussions and reactions to examples of Western coverage of Africa from selected readings (2:00-3:00).

Readings:

1. Allimadi, Milton (2003). *The Hearts of Darkness: How European Writers Created the Racist image of Africa. Black Star Books (Extract)*
2. Wainaina, Binyavanga (2005). *How to write about Africa. Granta 92. (Extract)*

3. Toussaint Nothias (2018) How Western Journalists Actually Write About Africa, *Journalism Studies*, 19:8, 1138-1159, DOI: 10.1080/1461670X.2016.1262748

2. Tues, June 4: The media, socio-political transformations and elections in Ghana (10:30-12:30)

We will discuss the state of democracy in Ghana and the enabling and disabling factors that shape how journalists hold political leaders accountability, report on elections and promote good governance.

Class Structure

- a. Lecturer delivers lecture on the subject followed by questions and comments (10:30-11:30)
- b. Watch and discuss extracts from film: An African Election (11:30-12:30)

Readings

1. Willems, Wendy (2012) The Ballot Vote as Embedded Ritual: A Radical Critique of Liberal-Democratic Approaches to Media and Elections in Africa, *African Studies*, 71:1, 91-107, DOI: 10.1080/00020184.2012.668295
2. Visit website of Reporters Without Borders for World Press Freedom indices (<https://rsf.org/en/ranking>)

3. Tues. June 11: Community Radio in Africa (All Day)

We will explore the role of community radio in the lives of deprived communities by visiting Radio Ada, a community radio station outside Accra.

Class Structure

Day Trip to Radio Ada:

- a. Lecturer will discuss community radio on site in Ada.
- b. Community radio practitioner will explain how community radio functions within the Ada community and give a guided tour of radio operations in the newsroom and within the community.

Readings

1. Diedong, Africanus & Naaikur, Lawrence. (2013). Ghana's Experience in Participatory Community Radio. *Global Media Journal African Edition*. 6. 10.5789/6-2-106.

4. Monday, June 17: Media and Religion

Historically, the media have been used as tools for both propagating and challenging religion. In contemporary Ghana, religious media is converging across mediums—in traditional media, popular culture, news, internet, and social media. We will discuss how media is used in spreading religious messages and how media cover religion. We will place particular focus on the growing influence of Pentecostal media ministries.

Class Structure

- a. Lecturer delivers lecture on the subject of religious propagation through media and media coverage of various religions. This includes questions/discussions arising out of readings and viewing of a tele-evangelist DVD (10:30-11:30).
- b. Group exercise searching for Islam (11:30-12:00).
- c. Final discussions on media and religion (12:00-12:30)

Readings

- a. Asamoah-Gyadu, Kwabena (2015). “We Are on the Internet”: Contemporary Pentecostalism in Africa and the New Culture of Online Religion. In *New Media and Religious Transformations in Africa* (eds. Hackett, R. & Soares, B.). Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press; 157-170.
- b. de Witte, Marleen (2011). Fans and Followers: Marketing Charisma, Making Religious Celebrity in Ghana. *Australian Religion Studies Review*, Volume 24.3 December 2011

5. **Tuesday June 25: Cinematic Representations of the Social World:** The 1934 Laval Decree in French colonies forbade Africans from making their own films but today Nollywood, the Nigerian film industry, is considered the second largest movie industry in the world. We will discuss the evolution of African cinema and the role of film in representations of Africa.

Class Structure

- a. Lecturer delivers lecture, including a historical overview of film in Africa. This includes questions/discussions arising out of readings (10:30-11:30).
- b. Watch a Ghanaian Documentary (11:30-11:45).
- c. Final discussions (11:45-12:30)

Readings

1. Ayisi, Florence and Brylla, Catalin. (2013). The Politics of Representation and Audience Reception: Alternative Visions of Africa. *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 44, No. 2.

2. Haynes, Jonathan “New Nollywood”: Kunle Afolayan. *Black Camera* , Vol. 5, No. 2 (Spring 2014), pp. 53-73

6. Tuesday July 2 : Media and Conflict

The media play a powerful role in the unfolding drama of peace and conflict in Africa and shape the way people perceive conflict both within, and outside of the affected location. We will explore the role of journalism in conflicts and reconciliation, and the inherent tensions arising out of conventional journalism practice and journalists’ peacebuilding role.

Class Structure

- a. Lecturer delivers lecture on the subject including questions and answers (10:30-11:30)
- b. Class watches and discusses documentary ‘Cry Freetown’ (11:30-12:30)

Readings

1. Kellow, Christine and Steeves, Leslie (1998). The Role of Radio in the Rwandan Genocide. *Journal of Communication*, 107-128
2. Krabill, Ron (2001) Symbiosis: mass media and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa. *Media, Culture and Society*. 23 (5) 567-585
3. McGoldrick, Annabel and Lynch, Jake. Peace Journalism: What is it? How to Do it. Published by Reporting the World.

***Electronic Versions of most of the readings will be provided. A few hard copy readings will be provided onsite in Accra.**