**Transformations in African Ethnography**

**SOAN 256**

**Spring 2012 Pamela Feldman-Savelsberg**

T/Th 10:10-11:55 **Office**: Leighton 233, x4113

Leighton 305 **Office Hours**: T/Th 3:15-4:15,

Carleton College W 11:00-12:00, and by appointment

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**I. Course Description**

Africa is an immense continent of strikingly rich geographic, political, and cultural diversity. This diversity has developed over time, as Africans created many ways to respond to their environment and organize their beliefs, societies, and political systems. African societies continue to be dynamic, both as living, creative cultures and through their responses to colonial legacies and a changing and challenging global context.

*Transformations in African Ethnography* pairs classics in Africanist anthropology with contemporary re-studies to explore changes in the types of questions anthropologists have posed about African societies as well as transformations in the societies themselves. Thus, we gain a unique and processual perspective on the role Africa has played in the development of anthropological theory.

Issues of representation and self-presentation, in written scholarly genres, have always been central to SOAN 256. This term, “the Spring of African Portraiture,” we have a unique opportunity; Carleton College is hosting several exhibits of African portrait photography. By incorporating into the course an exhibit, “Staging Selves: Cameroonian Portrait Photography” ([https://apps.carleton.edu/campus/library/now/exhibits/staging\_selves/](https://apps.carleton.edu/campus/library/now/exhibits/staging_selves/" \t "_blank)), we extend the discussion of representation and self-presentation beyond the written to the visual. We focus on two in-depth case studies: a set of interrelated Cameroonian peoples, and the Nuer and their neighbors in the newly independent nation of South Sudan.

During the exhibit-linked segment of the class we explore changing modes of the staging of the self (choice given to photographic subjects) and representation of self and client (choices made by the photographer). We contextualize these processes within cultural, economic, and technological (availability of electricity and supplies; invention of digital photography) developments. Some themes and concepts include local Cameroonian idioms of “seeing” as knowledge, seeing into other-worldly realms as a dangerous capacity shared by healers and sorcerers, control of what one sees/doesn’t see/dares not describe or represent, and the relationship of photography to other modes of self-(re)presentation (e.g. the use of royal display cloth and royal insignia). We read works written by both African and Euro-American anthropologists, photographers, art historians, and a playright.

We then use the insights we have gained regarding the role of the visual and of visual metaphors (e.g., the lens) in epistemological and representational debates within anthropology to address an Africanist anthropological classic and its restudies in the second segment of the course. Evans-Pritchard’s *The Nuer* is a hallmark of structural-functional analysis of an acephalous, patrilineal, pastoral society living in the southern Sudan, cur­rently ravaged by civil war and the source of numerous refugees to the US. This ethnographic monograph has led to debates on the nature of the relation of worldviews and cosmologies to the social systems of the people who express them, society as an adaptive response to the environ­ment, and the relationship of structure to function in social systems. Through later ethnographies of the Nuer in both film and written forms, we explore transformations in African societies following the colonial era as well as increasing anthropological attention to history, social change, and indeterminacy. Taken together, these ethnographies address issues affecting the entire continent, including colonialism, gender, relations between local communities and post-colonial states, the role of history, and African debates about war, human/cultural rights, migration, governance, witchcraft, religion, and desire.

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**II. Course Requirements**

**A. Required Reading**

Readings should be completed before the class session for which they are assigned. Readings consist of book length ethnographic monographs (available in the bookstore), and scholarly articles. All articles are available on e-reserves (password SOAN). Required texts (available in the bookstore) are as follows:

E.E. Evans-Pritchard (1940) The Nuer. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

P. Geschiere (2009) The Perils of Belonging. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

S. Hutchinson (1996), Nuer Dilemmas: Coping with Money, War, and the State. Berkeley: U of California Press.

D. Shandy (2007) Nuer-American Passages: Globalizing Sudanese Migration. Tallahassee: U Press of Florida.

H. West (2006) Ethnographic Sorcery. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

**B. Attendance and Participation (5%)**

This class combines lecture and discussion of readings, films or slides, and concepts. Attendance is important because your very presence adds something to class; frequent absences will lower your grade. More importantly, the way you are present and participating makes a difference in how both you and other members of this class learn. It is important that you have read and thought about the readings for the day. There are many ways of participating: questioning, commenting, listening carefully when other students ask questions or propose a new or different way to think about the materials we are studying, eye contact, nodding. We should all honor and encourage these different forms of participation in each other. I hope and expect that everyone will participate verbally by at least the second week of class. Please let me know ***before*** class, if possible, if and why you will be absent. Make friends with classmates to share notes in case of absences, or if you feel you didn’t fully understand some­thing. More importantly, ask questions, call me, or come to my office hours if anything is unclear to you or if you want to discuss something related to this class. In *grading* class participation, I will take into considera­tion class attendance, and most importantly, discussing readings and issues in a thoughtful and prepared way.

**C. Discussion Starters (10%)** Based on your reading of assigned texts and the way you relate these to other readings or issues, prepare a small set of questions to start class discussion for a day. Each student will do this around two times, depending upon the size of the class. A sign-up sheet will be posted on my office door, and passed around on the second day of class. (15% total)

**D. Adopt a Photograph: Observational Exercise (10%)** The first step toward interpreting a visual artifact, and to using it as evidence in an argument, is to look long and carefully.  This exercise prompts students to consider all aspects of their adopted Cameroonian photograph including subject matter, background and accessories, composition, scale, viewpoint.  The one-to-two page paper, translating the image into words, will provide insight into how pictures make meaning, and provide language and concepts for additional more contextual assignments.

**E. Adopt a Photograph: Ethnographic Fiction Exercise (15%)** Write a three to four page play or story, in the style of Athol Fugard’s *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*, incorporating your photo and your knowledge thus far of African ethnography. Here the point is to be creative using what you’ve learned about the photographic experience in Africa—why and how people have photos taken of themselves, how they use these photos, and how others use them. This exercise and the next should also heighten your awareness of writing for different audiences, melding playfulness and seriousness.

**F. Adopt a Photograph: Anthropological Contextualization and Analysis Exercise (15%)** Write a three to four page paper in the style of a (very short) scholarly anthropological article about your photo and its context. The article by Heike Behrend (and later in the syllabus, by David Zeitlyn), as well as Geary’s work on Bamum photos and Fardon’s work on photos of the Lela ceremony in Bali (Cameroon) provide examples of anthropological contextualization and analysis. Again, in combination with the previous assignment, this exercise aims to heighten your awareness of writing for different audiences.

**G. Response Paper: South Sudan (15%)** Write a four-page “think” paper on *one class topic’s set of readings* from the *second* half of the course. This means, you would write your response paper on one of the three books we are reading, or on the two sets of articles on the new South Sudan. It is always more successful to choose one or two issues to discuss in depth rather than to treat each topic in each of the readings in a superficial manner. What do you find most interesting and worthy of deeper reflection in your reading, and why? What is the work’s *theoretical significance* and how does it further anthropological thinking about Africa? If critiquing theoretical significance sounds daunting, it may be helpful to reflect on class discussion and/or to refer to the reading by Sally Falk Moore on “Changing Perspectives on a Changing Africa: The Work of Anthropology,” available on e-reserves. If the reading assignment includes a collection of articles, think about how they relate together and reach for some synthesis in your paper. **Please remember to cite your sources, using anthropological citation style.** Response or “think” papers are always due at 8:30 a.m. on the day following your assigned unit (for example, if we finish discussing the topic on a Thursday, your paper is due 8:30 Friday morning). If you send me your paper as an MS-Word e-mail attachment, ***you must include your name in the document filename*** (e.g. pfeldmanThinkpaper.docx)*.*

**H. News/Media on/from Africa Forum (5%)** On the class Moodle site, we will have an African News Forum. At least once during the term, find and post (with URL, or scanned) a news item (perhaps even including news photography) on and event or issue in Africa. This can be from African or non-African news sources. I am particularly interested in print media, but if it is particularly relevant you may also post radio or television broadcasts. Add a one paragraph explanation about what you find particularly compelling about this news piece, and why you think it is worth sharing with your classmates. If you are a French and Francophone Studies major or concentrator, you should use French-language media for this assignment. *Don’t wait until the last week!!!*

**I. Final Project: Mock Fulbright Proposal (20% of grade)** With guidance from Director of Student Fellowships, Elizabeth Ciner, you will develop a mock Fulbright proposal to conduct ethnographic field research in an African setting. Although the proposal text itself is much shorter than a conventional term paper, it requires a similar amount of library research. In addition to the format prescribed by the Fulbright proposal, you will hand in a bibliography, in *anthropological citation style*, of works you cited or consulted. Writing a good proposal also requires understanding of anthropological methodology and ethics; use what you have learned in this class to develop a doable and ethical project. The research you propose can be on a topic of your choice relating to the ethnography of Africa. Keep in mind your own experiences and interests; I hope the work you do on this project will help you in other endeavors both at Carleton and beyond (e.g. comps, *real* Fulbright and/or Watson applications, graduate school, non-profit work). While using sources from other disciplines is fine, and in many cases desirable, the project ***must*** use contemporary anthropological writing from prominent professional journals and presses. In evaluating the final project, I look for thoroughness and imagination in both topic development and library research skills, synthesis of materials, critical analysis, and use of anthropological concepts.

**J. Oral Presentations: Mock Fulbright Interviews (5%)** During our final class session, you will present your proposal and answer questions from the “Student Fulbright Interviewing Board,” namely your classmates.

**K. Writing Portfolio** If you are a first or second year student, you may find one or more of the writing assignments in this course to be appropriate for your writing portfolio, which is due at the end of your sixth term. For more information on the portfolio, consult the folder you received as a first-year student, talk with your advisor, or read about it on the web at: http://www.acad.carleton.edu/campus/wp/

**L. Assumptions**

I assume and expect:

1. That we will all be enthusiastic and respectful participants in class.
2. That you will let me know (ahead of time whenever possible) if you need to be absent and why.
3. That you will follow rules of academic honesty (i.e. cite correctly and do not plagiarize).
4. That you will follow **anthropological citation style** in any written work.
5. That if you have a disability that affects your ability to participate fully in class or to meet all course requirements that you will tell me at the beginning of the term so that appropriate accommodations can be arranged.
6. That if you have any other concerns needing special consideration (e.g. weak anthropology background, not a native speaker of English, special family circumstances), that you will also bring this to my attention early in term.
7. That you will hand in assignments and be prepared for oral presentations on time. ***Deadlines are deadlines***, including presentations for which you have signed up. Nonetheless, if you talk to me ***before the due date*** about extenuating circumstances, I am not an ogre and will accommodate your needs within the realm of fairness. ***Departmental policy is to subtract one letter grade per assignment for each day an assignment is late****.*

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**III. The Term at a Glance**

1. **Topics**

Part One: Themes in the Anthropology of Africa

Part Two: Anthropology and Photography in Africa: Representation and Self-Presentation

Seen and Unseen

Cameroonian Contexts I and II

Cameroon and Beyond: Portrait Photography, Self-staging and Personhood

Part Three: Classic Ethnographies and their Restudies

The Nuer (Sudan)

“Restudy” of the Nuer I: the *longue durée* and current civil war

“Restudy” of the Nuer II: refugees, globalization, and continuing links to “home”

New work on newly independent South Sudan

Part Four: Contemporary Issues in the Anthropology of Africa: Student Presentations

**B. Due Dates**

Observational Exercise Friday April 6

Ethnographic Fiction Exercise Friday April 20

Anthropological Analysis Exercise Friday April 27

Oral presentation of final project Tuesday May 29

Final project (Fulbright proposal) Wednesday May 30

Response paper, Discussion starters By sign-up

African News Forum Throughout the Term

**C. Grading**

Class participation/attendance 5%

Discussion starters 10%

Observational Exercise 10%

Ethnographic Fiction Exercise 15%

Anthropological Analysis Exercise 15%

Response paper 15%

African News Forum 5%

Final project (Fulbright proposal) 20%

Oral presentation of final project 5%

**IV. Resources**

The following resources can be found in the stacks or in the reference section.

Readers and Collected Essays

Grinker, R.R. and C.B. Steiner, eds. 1997. *Perspectives on Africa: A Reader in Culture, History, and Representation*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Martin, P. and P. O'Meara, eds. 1995. *Africa*. (3rd Edition) Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Mazrui, A.A. 1986. *The Africans*.

Mazrui, A.A. and T.K. Levine, eds. 1986. *The Africans: A Reader*. New York: Praeger.

Moore, S.F. *Anthropology and Africa Changing Perspectives on a Changing Scene*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia.

Encyclopedias, Almanacs, and Bibliographies

Middleton, J. and A. Rassam, eds. 1995. *Encyclopedia of World Cultures, Vol. 9, Africa and the Middle East*. Boston: G.K. Hall. (Ref. [GN550 .E53 1991](http://bridge.carleton.edu/search/cGN550+.E53+1991/cgn++550+e53+1991/-3,-1,,E/browse)  v.9)

Middleton, J., ed. 1997. *Encyclopedia of Sub-Saharan Africa.* (DT 351.E53 1997 v. 1-4)

*Encyclopedia of Sex and Gender* (Ref. HQ16.E53 2003 v. 1-2)

*Europa World Yearbook*. (Ref. JN1 .E85)

*Africa Bibliography*. (International African Institute) (Ref. DT3.A38)

*International African Bibliography* (Ref. DT3.I58)

**V. Anthropological Citation Style and Paper Format**

**Paper Format**

Your papers should be printed double spaced, 12 pt. font, 1 inch margins; include a title page and, if relevant, a “references cited” section in anthropological citation style.

**Anthropological Citation Style**

In papers for this and other anthropology classes, you should use the correct citation style, following the major professional journals, American Anthropologist and American Ethnologist. This means you need to cite, both in the text and in a section titled “References Cited” following the text, works from which you have drawn ideas as well as works you quote.

**In the course of your text**, you should cite authors whose ideas you use with their last name and the date of publication, and can even include more than one citation if you got the idea from more than one source (Ginsburg 1989; Ginsburg and Rapp 1991). If you quote an author, e.g. that "the powers of village women... [do not] provide women with the last word," (Harding 1975:308), you *must* include the page number(s). Note the placement of punctuation, and that the citation and period/comma are outside of the quotation marks.

**References Cited** (not “Bibliography”), placed starting on a new page at the end of your text, does not include any publication not cited in the text. All entries must be listed alphabetically by last name of author, and chronologically arranged for two or more titles by the same author. Nothing, except “in,” is underlined in References Cited. The layout should be as follows:

1) for a **journal article**, showing the volume and issue numbers, and page numbers:

Becker, Gay.

1994 Metaphors in disrupted lives. Medical Anthropology Quarterly 8(4):383-410.

2) for an **article in a book of collected essays** (Except for first words and proper nouns, article title is lower case, book title is capitalized):

Harding, Susan.

1975 Women and words in a Spanish village. In Toward an Anthropology of Women. Rayna R. Reiter, ed. Pp.283-308. New York: Monthly Review Press.

3) for a **book** (title is capitalized; date, place of publication [use the first one listed], and publisher all included):

Riedmann, Agnes.

1993 Science That Colonizes: A Critique of Fertility Studies in Africa. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

4) for articles taken from the internet, cite as closely as you can to a printed publication (including author’s name, date of publication, title, publisher), followed by the URL of the site you are citing:

United Nations.

2011 Revision of the World Population Estimates and Projections.

<Http://www.popin.org>. (Accessed 14 March 2012).

Journal articles that you have obtained through internet search engines, such as JSTOR, do not need URL’s.

***Following this style is a requirement. More details @ SOAN website:*** [***http://apps.carleton.edu/curricular/soan/resources/citation/***](http://apps.carleton.edu/curricular/soan/resources/citation/)***, for American Ethnologist style.***

***An even more complete guide is available from the American Anthropological Association:*** [***http://www.aaanet.org/publications/style\_guide.pdf***](http://www.aaanet.org/publications/style_guide.pdf)***. Reference style is on pp. 10-14 of the AAA document.***

***Ask if you have questions.***

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**Course Schedule**

Part One: Themes in the Anthropology of Africa

WEEK I **Africa and Anthropology: Key Questions and Multiple heritages**

T 3-27 **Introduction**

Th 3-29 S.F. Moore (1993), “Changing Perspectives on a Changing Africa: The Work of

Anthropology” *in* R. Bates, V. Mudimbe, and J. O’Barr, eds. Africa and the Disciplines. Pp. 3-57. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

C.Geary (2002) “A World of Images” *In* In and Out of Focus: Images from Central

Africa, 1885-1960. Pp. 15-21. London: Philip Wilson Publishers.

O. Oguibe (2001) “The Photographic Experience: Toward an Understanding of

Photography in Africa” *In* Flash Afrique: Photography from West Africa. Pp. 9-15. London: Penguin.

F 3-30 Opening of “Malian Portraiture from the Studio to the Street,” Perlman Teaching

Museum, WCC. Attend either the Gallery Tour (4:00 pm, Perlman Teaching Museum) or the Lecture (7:30 pm, Weitz 235), and have a good time at the opening reception and party (8:30-10:00)

Part Two: Anthropology and Photography in Africa: Representation and Self-Presentation

WEEK II **SEEN AND UNSEEN**

T 4-3 **Guest Speaker: Laurel Bradley, Director and Curator, Perlman Teaching Museum**

H.G. West (2007) *Ethnographic Sorcery*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

A. Wilson (2005) “Let’s Go.” *In* Joseph Chila and Samuel Finlak: Two Portrait

Photographers in Cameroon. Pp. 8-15. London: Dexters.

Th 4-5 A. Fugard, J. Kani, and W. Ntshona (1986 [1974]) “Sizwe Bansi is Dead” *in* Statements.

New York: Theatre Communications Group.

H. Behrend (2002) "'I am like a movie star in my street': Photographic Self-Creation in

Postcolonial Kenya." *In* R. Werbner, ed. Postcolonial Subjectivities in Africa. London: Zed Books, pp. 44-62.

F 4-6 Adopt a Photo: Observational Exercise Due (9:00 a.m., electronic submission)

WEEK III **CAmeroonian Contexts I**

T 4-10 C. Geary (1988) *Images from Bamum: German Colonial Photography at the Court of*

*King Njoya, Cameroon, West Africa, 1902-1915*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution. Read Chapters 1 (Bamum before 1900), 2 (Photography in Cameroon), and 3 (Prestigious Images), pp. 15-45.

R. Fardon (2006) *Lela in Bali: History through Ceremony in Cameroon*. New York:

Berghahn. Read Chapter 2 (Lela in 1908: The Photographic Record), pp. 8-26. Skim Chapter 3 (Lela: The Texts, 1890s to 1960s), pp. 27-55 (*skim as well as you can—it’s detailed; I just want you to get a sense for researching with visual vs. with textual sources*).

P. Feldman-Savelsberg (2008) Review of: Richard Fardon. *Lela in Bali: History through*

*Ceremony*. Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies 71(1):161-163.

Th 4-12 P. Geschiere (2009) The Perils of Belonging: Autochthony, Citizenship, and Exclusion in

Africa and Europe. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Read Preface, and Chapters 1 and 2, pp. ix-65.

Film: Funeral Season *(in class)*

WEEK IV **Cameroonian Contexts II**

T 4-17 P. Geschiere (2009) The Perils of Belonging: Autochthony, Citizenship, and Exclusion in

Africa and Europe. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Read Chapters 3, 4, 6, & 7,

pp. 66-129, 169-224

Th 4-19 F. Nyamnjoh (2011) Cameroonian Bushfalling: Negotiation of Identity and Belonging in Fiction

and Ethnography. American Ethnologist 38(4):701-713.

P. Feldman-Savelsberg (2010) Urbanites and Urban Villagers: Comparing ‘home’ among elite and

non-elite Bamiléké women’s hometown associations. Africa80(3):371-396.

B. Wainaina (2005) How to Write About Africa. Granta 92: The View From Africa.

<http://www.granta.com/Archive/92/How-to-Write-about-Africa/Page-1> (accessed 17

March 2012).

F 4-20 Adopt a Photo: Ethnographic Fiction Exercise Due (9:00 a.m., electronic submission)

WEEK V **Cameroon and Beyond: Portrait Photography, Self-Staging, and Personhood**

T 4-24 **Guest Speaker:** **Professor David Zeitlyn, Institute for Social and Cultural**

**Anthropology, University of Oxford**

D. Zeitlyn (2010) Representation/Self-representations: A Tale of Two Portraits; or, Portraits and

Social Science Representations. Visual Anthropology 23(5): 398-426.

D. Zeitlyn (2009) Archiving a Cameroonian Photographic Studio with the Help of The British

Library ‘Endangered Archives Programme’. African Research and Documentation 165:1-

17.

Th 4-26  **Guest Speaker: Elizabeth Ciner, Director of Student Fellowships**

P. Riesman (1986) The Person and the Life Cycle in African Social Life and Thought. African

Studies Revies 29(2):71-138.

O. Enwezor and O. Zaya. “Negritude, Pan-Africanism, and Postcolonial African Identity: African

Portrait Photography” *In* In/sight: African Photographers, 1940 to the Present. Pp. 26-35.

New York: Harry Abrams.

F 4-27 Adopt a Photo: Anthropological Contextualization and Analysis Exercise Due (9:00 a.m., electronic submission)

Part Two: Classics and Their Restudies

WEEK VI **The Nuer, An Anthropological Classic I: Land, Lineage, and Identity**

T 5-1 E.E. Evans-Pritchard (1940), *The Nuer* (through page 138)

Th 5-3 E.E. Evans-Pritchard (1940), *The Nuer* (finish reading)

Film: The Nuer (first half, in class)

WEEK VII **The Nuer Restudied I: Stereotypes, Money, and War**

T 5-8 S. Hutchinson (1996) *Nuer Dilemmas* (through page 102, including Prologue)

Film: The Nuer (second half)

Th 5-10S. Hutchinson (1996) *Nuer Dilemmas* (Chapters 4, 6, and Afterword)

WEEK VIII **The Nuer Restudied II: refugees, globalization, and links to “home”**

T 5-15 D. Shandy (2007) *Nuer-American Passages: Globalizing Sudanese Migration*. University

Press of Florida. (Chapters 1-4, pp. 1-87).

Film: Lost Boys of Sudan (selections)

Th 5-17 D. Shandy (2007) *Nuer-American Passages*. (Chapters 5-9, pp. 88-166).

WEEK IX **The New South Sudan**

T 5-22 **Guest Speaker: Prof. Noah Salomon, Religion Dept., Carleton College**

N. Salomon (n.d.) Interim Research Report

C. Leonardi (2011) Paying ‘buckets of blood’ for the Land: Moral Debates over Economy, War

and State in Southern Sudan. Journal of Modern African Studies 49(2):215-240.

Th 5-24 J. Erickson and C. Faria (2011) ‘We want empowerment for our women’: Transnational

Feminism, Neoliberal Citizenship, and the Gendering of Women’s Political Subjectivity

in Postconflict South Sudan. Signs 36(3):627-652.

S. Hutchinson. (2009) “Perilous Outcomes: International Monitoring and the Perpetuation of

Violence in Sudan.” *In* Genocide:Truth, Memory and Representation. Kevin L. O’Neill

and Alex Hinton, eds. Pp. 54-79. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.

**Part Three: Contemporary Issues in the Anthropology of Africa**

WEEK X

T 5-29 Project presentations

W 5-30 **Final project due! 4:00 p.m.! At my office!**

**☼Have a great summer!! Go visit Africa!!☼**

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