

Representing Africa

How has Africa been represented to the rest of the world, from colonial times to the present? In what ways have literature and film contributed to its "invention" and what are some of the clichés and tropes continent that still persist about the continent as a whole? The purpose of this class is to provide students with some basic tools with which to evaluate past and contemporary representations of Africa.

Focusing on Francophone Africa, the course will interrogate the circulation of these images using a wide range of sources, including travel accounts, autobiography, fiction, film, visual arts and contemporary media.

We will examine various ways in which knowledge on "Africa" has been produced by the West, and by Africans themselves.



We will pay particular attention to how these multiple images compete with or echo each other, all the while emphasizing, beyond monolithic representations, the diverse histories, nations, regions, geographies and peoples that make up this vast continent.

The format of the class will entail both formal presentation of class material by the professor and active participation from the students. Most class sessions will take the form of group activities and collaborative exchanges based on assigned readings. This exploration of past and present representations of Africa and Africans will culminate in a final research paper on the topic of your choice, which you will have many opportunities to discuss and refine throughout the semester.

Primary readings and class discussion are in French.

Texts:

L.F. Céline, *Voyage au bout de la nuit* (exerpts)
Georges Simenon, *L'heure du nègre*
Ferdinand Oyono, *Une Vie de boy*
Ken Bugul, *Le Baobab fou*
Henri Lopes, *Ma grand-mère Bantoue et mes ancêtres les Gaulois*
Gaston-Paul Effa, *Nous, enfants de la tradition*
Veronique Tadjou, *L'ombre d'Imana*
Marie Darrieussecq, *Il faut beaucoup aimer les hommes*

Films:

Zola Maseko, *The life and times of Sara Baartman*
Bassek Ba Khobbio, *Le Grand Blanc de Lambaréné*
Claire Denis, *White material*
Olivier Nakache et E. Toledano, *Samba*