AFRI 3100/5100 - African Studies Abroad Course Outline

Topic: Social Media & the Public Sphere in Africa
Summer 2018

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Date: May 7 – May 25, 2018
Class Time: 10:00 am – 12:00pm & 1:30pm – 3:30pm Monday – Friday
Venue: Instruction Room, Library

Karibu!

This is an intensive three-week course that will explore the rise and explosion of social media and its intersections with new media, youth culture, politics, economics, governance, and social issues in Africa. Africa is often described as the continent with the most expansive youth demographic – with more than half her population under the age of thirty. This youth demographic has transformed Africa, literally and metaphorically, into what has been called the cradle of the social media revolution. However, because of the heavy reliance on social media mobilization by the social and political movements that have rocked the continent in the last decade, especially the Arab Spring, social media as a tool, space and site of meaning in Africa has largely been reduced to questions of political radicalism and mobilization. While paying attention to the role of social media in social movements, this seminar will move beyond this limitation by exploring the role of social media in creating new spaces of meaning and culture in Africa. We shall explore social media and the economic revolution in Africa in terms of the emergence of a new demographic of innovators, inventors and entrepreneurs. The course will entail field trips to innovation hubs in Nairobi. Kenyan social media influencers have also been lined up for class visits.

Specific objectives
To examine the contours & dimensions of the public sphere in 21st-century Africa
To account for the role of social media in shaping the character of this public sphere
To explore the connections between social media and new socialites and agency in Africa
To interact with social media influencers and study the ways in which they produce and engage the social in Africa.
Assessment

Students are expected to complete any assigned readings before class, to attend class, and to participate in classroom discussions. All students are expected to contribute to the oral discussion of course topics. Evaluation of your oral participation will be based strictly on the quality of your contributions. Good contributions include the following: providing a useful summary or critique of a reading; asking a good question; making a good connection between a reading and guest presentation/field visit. In addition, the course grade will be assessed on the basis of a group presentation and a final essay. Course requirements are the same for graduate and undergraduate students. However, graduate students are expected to submit slightly longer essays/reviews, and will be held to a relatively higher benchmark. For undergraduates, the final essay shall be 3000 words; for graduate students shall be 4000 words long. The weight of each of these course evaluation components is provided below.

Participation – 10 points
Research & Presentation – 40 points
Final Essay – 50 points

Topics and Readings

This is a hands-on practical course. There are few readings which are available on CULEARN

Week 1: The Public Sphere in Africa: A Survey of Kenya & Nigeria

May 7: Morning Session 10:00 am – 1:00pm
Orientation

May 8: Introduction and General Overview of the Course

Morning Session 10:00 am – 12:00pm

Lead: Wandia
The Public Sphere in Kenya: A Survey

Afternoon Session 1:30pm – 3:30pm

Lead: Pius
The Public Sphere in Nigeria: A Survey

Although the case studies are Kenya and Nigeria, the discussions will reference several other African countries in a Pan-African framework.
May 9: Visit to PAWA 254
    Conversations with Boniface Mwangi (social media activist)
    Each group researches and prepares two questions for the guest
May 10: Social media - The Fourth Estate. Is social media/new media replacing mainstream media in Africa?
    **Morning Session** 10:00 am – 12:00pm
    **Lead: Wandia**
    Guests - Saddique Shaban
    Video link: The Elephant

    **Afternoon Session** 1:30pm – 3:30pm
    **Lead: Pius**
    Guests – Musikilu Mojeed/Dapo Olorunyomi

    Guest - Mark Kaigwa
    Reading:
    “From Cybercafe to Smartphone”

May 12: Blog Awards (evening)

May 13: Black Panther Viewing

**Week 2: Social Movements & Beyond: Social Media & the Rise of Popular Cultures**
May 14: Social Media Humour Genre
    **Morning Session** 10:00 am – 12:00pm
    **Lead: Pius**
    The Rise of Social Media Humour Merchants: Woli Arole

    **Afternoon Session** 1:30pm – 3:30pm
    **Lead: Wandia**
    “This is Ess: Fashion Boggers, Cyprian Nyakundi
May 15: Countercultures & Counterheroes:

**Morning Session** 10:00 am – 12:00pm

*Lead: Wandia*

Slay Queens & Socialites

Class visit by Njoki

**Afternoon Session** 1:30pm – 3:30pm

*Lead: Pius*

Bobrisky: Social Media and Transgressional African Identities

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May 16: Social Media and Student Activism

**Morning Session** 10:00 am – 12:00pm

*Lead: Wandia*

Fees Must Fall

(Readings TBA)

**Afternoon Session** 1:30pm – 3:30pm

*Lead: Pius*

Occupy Nigeria

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May 17: Social Media in/and African Elections

**Morning Session** 10:00 am – 12:00pm

*Lead: Wandia*

Kenyan Election

Class visit by Nyabola

**Afternoon Session** 1:30pm – 3:30pm

*Lead: Pius*

Nigerian Election

Skype in by Cheta Nwanze
May 18 & 19: Road Trip (Wandia) – Conservation Solutions Africa Trip

Week 3: Social Media and ‘An Image of Africa’

May 21

**Morning Session** 10:00 am – 12:00pm

*Lead: Pius*

*Readings:*

Chinua Achebe: An Image of Africa
Pius Adesanmi: The Africa Just Outside Your Hilton Hotel Window

**Afternoon Session** 1:30pm – 3:30pm

*Lead: Wandia:*

Culturalizing Africa (Wandia’s Blog)

May 22: Africa’s Twitter Wars

**Morning Session** 10:00 am – 12:00pm

*Lead: Pius*

*Guests - Omojuwa, Elnathan John*

**Afternoon Session** 1:30pm – 3:30pm

*Lead: Wandia*

#SomeoneTellCNN

May 23:

**Morning Session** 10:00 am – 12:00pm

Presentation Research Time

**Afternoon Session** 1:30pm – 3:30pm

Lunch at Wandia’s

May 24: Presentations

#BBOG

Hashtag wars on the legacy of Winnie Mandela
May 25: **Presentations and Conclusion**

   #LazyNigeriaYouth
   #WakandaForever

May 26: Departures