

ANTH 4620/ ANTH 5209/ AFRI 4000

Special Topics in Ethnography of Contemporary Africa

Winter 2027 (Wednesday, 2:30-5:30 pm, in person seminar)

Professor Blair Rutherford (blair.rutherford@carleton.ca)

Ethnographic approaches this century (those influenced by dominant anglophone North American scholarship, at least) tend to attend to how sociocultural and, at times, material distinctions and divisions constitute social life, economic practices and forms of exploitation, political and authority arrangements, and cultural practices themselves at overlapping and at times contesting scales of action (e.g., localized, national, regional, global). Such attention to the historical and performative productions of differences for varied political, economic and other projects that are seeped in and constitutive of power relations is particularly relevant for anthropological engagements in and of Africa, given the overdetermining distinctions that have continued to “other” the continent and its peoples inside and beyond its geographical borders (including historically by the discipline of anthropology itself). We will critically explore this work of boundaries, their enforcements, crossings and queering, in recent ethnographic research in different parts of Africa, particularly by African anthropologists, that examine epistemological, racialized and gendered, political (including state and international organizations), economic (including capitalist practices), religious, and environmental dynamics.