

UCINTHON32 – Spring 2018

**Honours Course Outline**

***Postcolonialism in Independent Africa***

**A critical approach to African studies of development, culture and politics**

**Students involved:**

Emma Carson  
Nichole Wanjiru  
Lea Corsetti

**Supervisors:**

Corey Wright  
Rhoda Woets

This course, despite its broad nature, has given all three of us a lot to think about. Each of us comes from a different cultural background, which led to a lot of amazing discussion on the examples of how postcolonial hegemonies work in a variety of ways. Though the course topics were all very different, we managed to find some level of overlap between each of them through our discussions. The independent discussions were extremely beneficial towards the ways in which these postcolonial ideas worked, and gave us a lot of freedom to reflect and challenge each other (without the pressures of the professors being there).

Designing and presenting lectures was a bit difficult for all of us. None of us had ever had to lead a class for such a long time, individually, and so this course gave us a lot of valuable skills in terms of presenting and confidence in leading classes; as well as working under pressure, considering the supervisors were often present! It also gave each of us the chance to dive deeply into topics we are passionate about. For example, Emma, who is writing her thesis in gender studies within anthropology, got to research and give a lecture on gender & sexuality structures. This allowed her to incorporate her own passions and interests into the course as well.

The key focus during this course was the struggles in independent Africa. We raised a lot of questions about the manner in which postcolonial discourse not only perpetuates colonial ideologies today in Africa, but also throughout the world. We not only engaged with this on the academic level: but also on the level of the media and personal interactions, which allowed us to truly reflect on how we also have colonization in our minds. Within this recognition was no judgement, meaning we had the space and safety to have our own assumptions and ideas challenged by each other.

We spoke a lot about the representation of 'Africa' in the media, but also in everyday discourse. By referring to our own experiences and reflecting on them, we were much more capable of finding nuanced hegemonies and lingering effects of colonialism. We also spent a great deal of time examining the activities of the West on the continent, and how those may or may not lead to positive outcomes. The main goal was to be critical, and especially through our discussions were we able to do this.

Learning about cultural structures and concepts that are different from those that we grew up with (excluding Nichole) was also very beneficial, and having Nichole in our group stimulated a lot of conversation. She passed on a lot of her knowledge to the rest of us, and her contribution in terms of firsthand experience was very useful. Additionally, I think the focus on the discourse surrounding Africa in this course really made us realize how neglected it is in academics and education, which made the creation of this course that much more special.

We had extremely good luck considering the movie 'Black Panther' came out during the course, and we had the opportunity to go see it and discuss it in terms of what we had learned. This was perfect timing, especially considering a lot of this course focused on issues of representation, which obviously is less than satisfactory (in general). Additionally, we had the opportunity to attend an event in the Tropenmuseum which was also a part of the re-conceptualizing Africa initiative. We also continuously recommended each other movies, television shows and books, and often had the opportunity to discuss them within our sessions.

This class has opened all of our eyes tremendously, and was especially useful for Lea and Emma because it ran parallel to the Development Theory course taught by Corey. The ability to develop and carry out a course that we could completely put together ourselves taught us valuable skills on planning, initiative and communication. Altogether, the course was an amazing experience for each of us, even though it was an insane amount of work, and we're immensely happy that we had the opportunity to be a part of it.