AFS 3332 (formerly AFA 3353)
GENDER AND SEXUALITIES IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN CONTEXTS

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LC 304
MMC
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COURSE DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES
This course examines gender and sexuality in contemporary Sub-Saharan Africa, using a critique of Western conventional categories and a critical approach to the AIDS epidemic as frames for thinking about changes in African societies over the last few decades. Drawing primarily on ethnographic work and theoretical literature from the social sciences, the course examines notions of gendered and sexualized identifications in sub-Saharan Africa. Theoretically, the course asks how Sub-Saharan African contexts challenge Western or Global North conventional conceptualizations of gender and sexualities. More empirically, the course explores key aspects of personhood in Sub-Saharan African societies, including the consideration of the impact of the colonial legacy, conceptions and practices of reproduction, women’s rights, homosexuality and trans-sexual practices, constructions of masculinities and femininities, etc.

The course assumes that enrolled students will have some background—at the introductory level—in gender and sexuality studies.

OVERVIEW OF COURSE ASSIGNMENTS
Students will submit short responses to readings posted to Moodle before class sessions; write a mid-term essay (4-5 pages) in response to one of two questions asked that will be made available one week prior to the actual due date; keep a media log/journal (in Moodle) with at least one entry a week related to the final paper project; and write a 10-12 page final paper on a specific country and/or topic related to gender and sexualities in Sub-Saharan African contexts. The final paper will require some outside research as well as integrating insights from relevant class materials.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES
By the end of this course students will be able to:
-theorize gender and sexuality in African contexts.
-critically examine and assess the applicability or lack thereof of Western conventional theoretical approaches to gender and sexuality in African societies.
-demonstrate an understanding of how Sub-Saharan African contexts challenge the ways gendered identities, personhood, “love,” and intimacy are conceptualized (and sometimes universalized) in the West or Global North.
-demonstrate an expansion of their understanding of African contemporary issues.
-feel more engaged with African concerns related to gender and sexualities.

GLOBAL LEARNING STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES
By the end of this course:
- Students will be able to demonstrate knowledge of how much local African gender constructs and sexualities are interrelated with global, international, and intercultural issues, movements, trends, and systems. (GLOBAL AWARENESS)
- Students will be able to take into consideration both African and Western feminist, queer studies, and other theoretical perspectives in their analyses of African sexualities and gender constructs as they are performed locally, and are influenced by global and international forces and laws, in ever growing intercultural contexts. (GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE)
- Students will be able to propose solutions to specific cases of gender intolerance and rigid heteronormativity in given local, global and intercultural African contexts. (GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT)

COURSE READINGS
Required Readings are indicated for each week of class. They can be found in pdf on the Moodle site associated with this course.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ACTIVE LEARNING STRATEGIES
It is the professor’s understanding that the required and active learning strategies described below in this section of the syllabus are necessary for the students to reach the global learning outcomes listed in the previous section of this syllabus and that relate to global awareness, global perspective, and global engagement.

Participation (10%)
Participation is a crucial part of this course. Your thoughts, ideas, and critiques help to animate the learning process within and outside the classroom. Questions you may raise or ideas you have about given topics will challenge us all to think actively and critically. I’ve highlighted some ideas about what makes for the most successful class sessions (and especially those focused on discussion).

Reading. A strong classroom discussion is based on your careful reading of the assigned texts for the session. I suggest taking brief, scholarly notes on readings. Write down the key argument made by a given author, keywords or concepts that are important to consider, what sorts of examples or evidence the author uses to support her/his case, and questions or critiques you may have. Write all of these points in clearly separated sections. As you reflect on sets of readings, think about connections between authors’ arguments, points of convergence or difference, etc. This will also assist you in preparing your E-posts.

Listening. This is one of the most important aspects of discussion. You must be able to re-state classmates’ contributions so that they would recognize and accept your reformulation of their ideas. Listening allows you to build on or challenge others’ ideas respectfully within the flow of ideas under discussion.

Speaking. Address your remarks to the class and not solely to the instructor. Be aware of how often you are contributing to discussions and how this contributes to the tone of the class.

Bring the key texts under consideration for the session(s) to class.

Reflecting. During and after class, reflect on how your ideas have been challenged and/or confirmed by classmates, readings, videos, or the instructor.
If you are not accustomed to voicing your opinion in large groups, please talk to me in person in the first two weeks to identify ways in which you might begin to actively participate during class sessions.

**Moodle Reading Response E-Posts (20%)**

During the semester students must contribute eight 3/4 - 1 page (approximately 300-400 words) reading response e-posts under the “discussion” section of the Moodle site. E-posts are aimed at encouraging inquiry, analysis and discussion among students, both in class and on-line. E-posts are due by 10:00 am the day of class. Students are encouraged, but not required, to read one another’s e-posts. These responses are evaluated on the basis of the quality of students’ engagement with the core themes of the readings and the coherence and clarity of the writing.

As you read for the week, consider the following questions. These will also help you to write your reading response.

1) What is the main argument(s) Why did the author(s) write the article or chapter?
2) What are the data used as evidence by the author to support the claims he/she makes in his/her argument?
3) What is useful about the reading(s)?
4) Were any of the points made questionable? If so, why?
5) What points, issues, or terms would you like to discuss or have clarified?
6) How do the various readings assigned inform each other? Contradict? Raise new questions?

**Write a Report on the Africa-focused AADS Event Organized this Semester (10%)**

Attend the AADS Africa-focused event organized this semester. More details will be given in class at the beginning of the semester.

Even if the presentation you attend doesn’t tackle the question of gender and sexualities directly, consider how the issue or issues is (are) gendered or denote a particular sexualization and may intersect with gender constructions and sexualities in your analysis/critique. In your response outline what the key point(s) was (were) in the presentation, discuss how it intersected with other themes we have been learning about in class, and offer your opinion about the usefulness of the event for expanding your understanding of human rights. Turn in your paper within two weeks from the date of the event that you analyze.

Make sure you proofread your essay and provide appropriate citations when referencing readings from our class. Papers will be evaluated based upon the following criteria:

- **A**: outstanding analysis; solid examples and reasons are given to support your views; clearly written.
- **B**: fulfilled the assignment adequately; few if any grammatical problems or unclear sentences.
- **C**: fulfilled the assignment but either the analysis is insufficient or superficial and/or there were a number of grammatical mistakes.
- **D**: the assignment was not adequately fulfilled and/or there were a substantial amount of grammatical errors and awkward and confusing sentences.
- **F**: the assignment was not turned in within two weeks of the due date, or was not completed according to the criteria listed above.

**Mid-Term Essay (25%)**

A take-home mid-term exam will be given. You will be given one week to respond to a question or questions (4-5 double-spaced, typed pages), documenting your answers with references to
appropriate readings and other class materials. **No late exams will be accepted,** but for exceptional medical or emergency circumstances that can be clearly documented to the Professor in writing.

**Final Paper (35%)**
You will write a 10-15 double-spaced page paper on gender and sexualities in Sub-Saharan African contexts, focusing on a particular topic, theoretical question, or a specific country of interest to you. By the end of the third week of class, you will turn in a one page proposal, including a list of five scholarly sources (not including class sources) that you intend to examine in order to write your paper. The professor will approve the topics. In addition to the five outside sources, students will be required to integrate insights from at least 3 other class sources when writing their paper. Students will all give a short class presentation during one of the last two class sessions. You **must** attend the last two class sessions.
With this paper, you will demonstrate your mastery of the GL student learning outcomes listed above. You will need to share the content of your paper with the other students in a public in-class presentation. Every student will have to listen and learn from every other student presentations.
**Papers must be uploaded on Moodle.**

**SCHEDULE OF CLASSES**

**Week 1**
I What is Gender? What are Sexualities? What is love? Is “Romantic Love” universal? Exercise on defining those terms and answering that question.
Introduction to the course’s objectives, assignments, and other details.

**Week 2**
II Introduction: Reflecting Upon Understandings of, and Theorizings about Gender and Sexualities in Sub-Saharan African Contexts (1)

Critical Reading of:
Comaroff, John
Comaroff, John and Jean Comaroff
diLeonardo, Micaela

**Week 3**
II Introduction: Reflecting Upon Understandings of, and Theorizings about Gender and Sexualities in Sub-Saharan African Contexts (2)

Critical Reading of:
Ratele, Kopano

Oyewumi, Oyeronke

Oyewumi, Oyeronke

Bakare- Yusuf, Bibi

**Week 4**

**III Debating “African Sexuality” (1)**

Critical Reading of:
Caldwell, John

Le Blanc, Marie Nathalie et al.

Ahlberg, Beth

Caldwell, John

**Week 5**

**III Debating “African Sexuality” (2)**

Critical Reading of:
Heald, Suzette

Arnfred, Signe

Watch the video documentary “The life and times of Sara Baartman: ‘The Hottentot Venus’”

**Week 6**
IV Exploring Same-Sex Practices and Discourses on Homosexuality (1)

Critical Reading of:
Murray, Stephen
2000 selections on Africa from *Homosexualities.*
Murray, Stephen and Will Roscoe
Kendall, L.
1999 Chapter 7 "Women in Lesotho and the (Western) Construction of Homophobia" in Evelyn Blackwood and Saskia Wieringa (eds), *Female desires: same-sex relations and transgender practices across cultures.*


Week 7
V Exploring Recent Publications on Same-Sex Practices and Discourses on Homosexuality

Critical Reading of:
Gunkel, Henriette
Prinsloo, Jeanne Source
Alexander, Jonathan
Spurlin, William
Stobie, Cheryl

Watch the video: “Dakan” or “Woubi Cheri”

Week 8
VI Further Discussing Femininity, Feminism and Women’s Movements

Critical Reading of:
Mills, David and Richard Ssewakiryanga
Gunkel, Henriette
2010 “I myself had a sweetie &hellip;’: re-thinking female same-sex intimacy beyond the institution of marriage and identity politics.” *Social Dynamics* 36(3): 531-546.
Engh, Mari Haugaa  
2011  “Tackling femininity: The heterosexual paradigm and women’s soccer in South Africa.”  

Gunkel, Henriette  
2009  “Through the Postcolonial Eyes: Images of Gender and Female Sexuality in Contemporary South Africa.”  

Matebeni, Zethu  
2009  “Feminizing Lesbians, Degendering Transgender Men: A Model for Building Lesbian Feminist Thinkers and Leaders in Africa?”  

Watch the video: “Carmen Gei”

Week 9  
VII The Construction of Masculinity

Critical Reading of:  
Dover, Paul  

Hunter, Mark  
2005  “Cultural politics and masculinities: Multiple partners in historical perspective in KwaZulu Natal.”  
Culture, Health & Sexuality 7(4) July–August.

Kimmel, Michael  

Cornwall, Andrea  
2003  “To Be a Man is More than a Day’s Work: Shifting Ideals of Masculinity in Ado-Obo, Southwestern Nigeria” in Men and Masculinities in Modern Africa.

Rabie, Francois; Lesch, Elmien  
2009  “‘I am like a woman’: constructions of sexuality among gay men in a low-income South African community.”  

Gunkel, Henriette  
2009  “What’s Identity Got To Do With It?: Rethinking Intimacy and Homosociality in Contemporary South Africa.”  

Week 10  
VIII The Youth and the Construction of Sexualities

Critical Reading of:  
Govender, Kaymarlin  
2011  “The cool, the bad, the ugly, and the powerful: identity struggles in schoolboy peer culture.”  
Culture, Health & Sexuality 13(8): 887-901.

Bhana, Deevia; Pattman, Rob
Muhanguzi, Florence Kyoheirwe
Bhana, Deevia; Pillay, Nalini
Chant, Sylvia; Evans, Alice

Week 11
**IX Changing Conceptions of African Intimacies in the Age of AIDS (1)**

Critical Reading of:
Worthington, Nancy
Bhana, Deevia; Morrell, Robert; Shefer, Tamara, and others 19
Fetene, Getnet Tizazu; Dimitriadis, Greg
Mindry, Deborah

Week 12
**IX Changing Conceptions of African Intimacies in the Age of AIDS (2)**

Critical Reading of:
Eriksson, Elisabet; Lindmark, Gunilla; Axemo, Pia
Hawkins, K.; Price, N.; Mussa, F.
Okal, Jerry; Luchters, Stanley; Geibel, Scott, and others
Hanass-Hancock, Jill
Pourette, Dolores

Week 13
Students’ Presentations

Week 14
Students’ Presentations