African Studies and Anthropology

Module Descriptions 2019/20

Level I (i.e. 2nd Yr.) Modules

Please be aware that all modules are subject to availability.

If you have any questions about the administration of the modules, please contact us at calincomingexchangemodules@contacts.bham.ac.uk.

For these modules, you will need to be familiar with essay-based and reading-heavy modules. Students who have some background in literature, history, political science, sociology or anthropology will probably adapt most easily into these modules. Students whose main degree is in mathematics, biology, engineering etc. may find these modules difficult. If there is another module that you need to have studied before taking this, it will be stated in the module description.

Please note that at the time this document has been prepared (February 2019) the following information is provisional, and there may be minor changes between now and the beginning of 2019/20 academic year.
**NEW AFRICAN WRITING**

**MODULE TITLE**
New African Writing

**MODULE CODE**
23566

**CREDIT VALUE**
20

**ASSESSMENT METHOD**
2 x 2000 word essays (50% each)

**TEACHING METHOD**
TBC

**SEMESTER**
1

**DESCRIPTION**

This module explores the variety of approaches to the business of making literature in the circumstances of contemporary Africa that the continent’s writers have evolved in the last two decades.

We will look, for example, at writers’ responses to gender and sexuality, at the rise of genre fiction, and the ‘extroverted African novel’ and diaspora. The problems of constructing adequate and appropriate critical tools for the discussion of such work will be considered.
**DESCRIPTION**

By 2050, 68% of the world population will live in cities, making the city, a particular kind of settlement, the dominant way of spatially organising livelihoods and communities. This module explores anthropological approaches to the study of the city. We will question the place of the urban in anthropological thinking and discuss whether anthropologists have carried out an *anthropology of the city* or an *anthropology in the city*. We will follow ethnographers as they investigate the city as a place of often contradictory forms of togetherness and interconnectedness, exclusion and segregation. The module will cover themes such as ethnographies of marginality and urban economies, popular culture and urban lifestyle, architecture and the built environment, infrastructure and global flows of capital in order to guide students through multiple meanings and experiences of the urban. Students will develop an understanding of how power dynamics, inequalities, identities and aesthetics shape how individuals and communities live, act, and imagine the future in cities.

**Topics covered**

- Citylife: popular culture, the everyday and urban identities
- The “modern city”: architecture and urban planning
- Infrastructure, material politics and connectivity
- Construction booms and “ghost cities”: economies and temporalities of city building
- “Global”, “world” and “ordinary” cities
- Cities in Africa
- Inequalities and the urban form: gentrification and segregation
- Marginality, exclusion and getting by in the city
- Resistance, insurgent citizenship and the right to the city

**Module Lead: Marco di Nunzio - To be taught in either semester 1 or 2 (to be confirmed)**

**Key readings**


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>MODULE TITLE</strong></th>
<th>Rural Livelihoods and Development Interventions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>MODULE CODE</strong></td>
<td>24295</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CREDIT VALUE</strong></td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ASSESSMENT METHOD</strong></td>
<td>2 x 1500 word essay (50%) and 1 x 2000 word project evaluation report (50%).</td>
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<td><strong>TEACHING METHOD</strong></td>
<td>TBC</td>
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**DESCRIPTION**

Within the wider context of globalisation and modernity, and from a variety of conceptual and analytical perspectives, but particularly livelihoods, the module examines changing rural geographies of household, village and regional livelihood systems, and processes during the colonial and post-independence periods in the first semester.
**DESCRIPTION**

Students will engage with classic concerns in the anthropology of kinship, developing a chronological understanding of developments in the field since the mid-twentieth century. They will study the parallel development of the anthropology of women in the 1970s and 1980s, and the subsequent emergence of the anthropology of gender and sexuality. Topics covered will include: marriage and family forms, the reputed ‘crisis’ of masculinity, attitudes towards romantic love, and discourses of human, women’s and LGBTQ+ rights. Emphasis will be placed on the theoretical contributions of feminist anthropologists as well as debates about the suitability of feminism as a framework for anthropological studies of non-Western societies. Students will be encouraged to engage with the work of African and Asian scholars alongside texts produced by European and North American anthropologists. Case studies will be taken from across the world in an effort to make ‘the familiar strange and the strange familiar’, encouraging students to examine their own assumptions about family forms, gender relations and human sexuality.

**Possible topics covered**

- Marriage and family
- ‘Crisis’ of masculinity
- Human, women’s and LGBTQ+ rights
This module looks at the process of emancipation from slavery in twentieth century Africa. Between the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century European powers legally abolished slavery in their African colonies. However, research on the ‘slow death of slavery’ suggests that the actual process of emancipation took a long time. Colonial governments introduced new forms of unfree labour, and old dependent relations changed gradually and at different paces in different contexts. This module focuses on the agency and experience of slaves and slave descendants. Students will look at primary and secondary sources on the legal contexts of slavery and emancipation; forced labour and its reform; labour migration and ‘proletarianisation’; the relationship between slave descent, ethnicity, and political movements; and gendered aspects of slavery (including concubinage and sexual slavery). The module also considers work on human rights, citizenship, and the political mobilisation of slave descendants today.
**DESCRIPTION**

Ethnographies of the Marginalised explores anthropological interpretations and involvement with socially, economically and politically deprived groups.

In the 1980s, inspired by recent civil rights, feminist and student activism, and in reaction to the social science’s preoccupation with theories of totalising power, anthropologists became concerned with interpreting the actions of the less powerful. Anthropologists asked two questions: How can we account for change? How can we best represent the less powerful ‘other’? The module begins with these two questions, using key theoretical readings to introduce the themes and concerns of early Subaltern Studies. Covering four distinct topics (race, labour, youth and gender), the first half of term draws on key anthropological texts from the 1980s to explore how power differentials can both marginalise and lead to social innovation on the part of the subordinate. The chosen texts have become seminal texts in anthropology because they provide rich ethnographic data about subordinate groups, but they also provide a powerful critique to anthropological method and practice, allowing students to interrogate the aims of the discipline.

The second half of the module transcends this focus on dominant/subordinate to examine how we can understand the identities and actions of marginality through the concepts of hope, fantasy, morality and ethics. For these sessions, students are asked to think how groups living beyond the boundaries of power might operate, and how supposedly powerless groups can break through hierarchies of power by using the dominant to act in their interests. The module concludes by considering whether marginalised groups are not just the subject of anthropology but use ethnography to fight their own causes.

**Possible topics covered**

- Representation and the Subaltern ‘Other’
- Labour and resistance
- Gendered bodies and language
- Activism and Sexuality
- Hope and the Experience of Time
- Fantasy and Global Belonging
- Ethics and Public Anthropology
DESCRIPTION

The module traces the emergence and changing nature as well as (development) significance of NGOs with reference to Africa. It explores the challenges and opportunities associated with the role of these organisations in African development policy, planning, implementation and evaluation. It also introduces students to the world of NGO work through invited seminar presentations by NGO workers and the requirement for students to undertake a project which involves designing an NGO.
DESCRIPTION

This module will provide an overview of the structure and volume of the transatlantic trade in enslaved African people; describe the practices of slave-raiding, trading and ownership in selected pre-colonial West African states and societies; analyse enslaved people’s experiences of the ‘middle passage’; explain the economics of plantation slavery on the Caribbean sugar islands; and explore the social and cultural lives of enslaved people, with an emphasis on their struggles for survival and freedom. Students will be asked to reflect critically on the limitations and possibilities of the primary sources that historians of Atlantic Slavery have at their disposal.

Possible weekly topics

- Easy money: how easy was it for European traders to generate profits from the transatlantic trade in slaves?
- Middle passage: how common were revolts on slave ships, and by what means were revolts suppressed?
- Sex and sustenance: identify the specific means by which enslaved women were exploited, and any situations in which they might weaponise their sexuality.
Do you want to know more about the world’s second largest religion?

The module “Anthropology of Islam” explores the diversity and complexity of Islam around the world. It pays attention to the different ways in which this truly global religion adapts to the local, and questions how it shapes the lives of Muslims. Drawing on ethnographic studies of Islamic groups, this module focuses on the lived experiences of Muslims: students will learn how Islam shapes legal, political, social, and cultural spheres of life for these communities. Throughout the module, students are encouraged to pay attention to the ways in which anthropologists have approached the study of Muslim societies, and how Islam sits within broader anthropological debates on religion and secularity, statehood, and globalisation.

Topics that the module covers will include, but are not limited to

- Piety and everyday life: How do men and women think of themselves as ‘good Muslims’ in different groups and societies? How do they relate everyday practices, such as such as listening to dance songs or sharing dinner invitations, to the ideas and debates that constitute Islam?
- Kinship and gender: How do Muslim women and men navigate social life by drawing on different cultural and religious resources?
- Relations between Muslims and non-Muslims: How do Muslims distinguish themselves from non-Muslims in different societies? Why are interfaith relations conflictual in some societies and cordial in others?

By the end of the module students should be able to:

- demonstrate a critical understanding of the diversity and complexity of the Muslim world;
- analyse and critique ethnographically grounded insights into key concerns in Muslim societies around the world; and
- reflect critically on the significant developments in the anthropological study of Islam, including the different ways in which anthropologists have conceptualised and approached the study of Islam and Muslim societies.
**MODULE TITLE** | Perspectives on Africa  
---|---  
**MODULE CODE** | 22703  
**CREDIT VALUE** | 20  
**ASSESSMENT METHOD** | Group presentation (10%), written material to support presentation (20%), 1500 word analysis (20%) and 2500 dissertation preparation folder (50%)  
**TEACHING METHOD** | TBC  
**SEMESTER** | 1&2  

**DESCRIPTION**

This is a student-led seminar course that takes on issues of immediate contemporary concern in Africa, focusing on the way they are debated in Africa itself and situating these debates in their global context. The topics will be organised in blocks around the themes of politics, the environment, culture and religion. The emphasis will be on breaking news stories, and seminars will be based on material gathered by students from the media, internet, and recent publications. These findings will be analysed in the light of recent theoretical writing on Africa. Throughout the module, attention will be given to techniques of analysis and presentation, following on from work done in the first-year course Focus on African Studies. The second half of the module will be devoted to dissertation training in preparation for the compulsory 3rd-year dissertation. Sessions will focus on research, writing, IT and presentations skills for final year dissertations. In order to take account of the multidisciplinary nature of CWAS, students will have the opportunity to attend smaller-group sessions targeted at those interested in different disciplinary approaches. All students will also be given the opportunity to discuss their research ideas either in a group or individually with the module convenor.
**MODULE TITLE** | Theory & Ethnography
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**MODULE CODE** | 24291
**CREDIT VALUE** | 20
**ASSESSMENT METHOD** | 2 x 2,000 word essays.
**TEACHING METHOD** | TBC
**SEMESTER** | 1&2

**DESCRIPTION**

Theory and Ethnography covers essential elements of social theory for anthropology, and anthropological theory for the social sciences and humanities. It provides training in theories and theorists who have influenced anthropological thought and ethnographic research; and in the historical development of anthropological schools of thought in Britain, the US, and France, from the nineteenth century to the present day.

Possible Topics:


Term 2: The body, space and place, material culture, power, resistance, neoliberalism.

Schedule:

The module runs across both teaching terms. There will be 9 lectures in term 1 and about 6 lectures in term 2.
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<tr>
<th><strong>MODULE TITLE</strong></th>
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<td><strong>CREDIT VALUE</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ASSESSMENT METHOD</strong></td>
<td>2,000 word essay (40%); 1,000 word research proposal (10%); 3,000 word research project (50%)</td>
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<td><strong>TEACHING METHOD</strong></td>
<td>TBC</td>
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<td><strong>SEMESTER</strong></td>
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**DESCRIPTION**

Ethnography, Theory, and Research covers essential elements of social theory for Anthropology, and anthropological theory for the Social Sciences and Humanities. It provides training in theories and theorists who have influenced anthropological thought and ethnographic research (e.g. Marx, Durkheim, Weber, etc.); and in the historical development of anthropological schools of thought in Britain, the US, and France, from the nineteenth century to the present day. It constitutes a fundamental component of degree programmes with an anthropological focus. The module includes an assessed practical research project for which enrolled students receive training and support through additional contact hours. The project must be based on a strand of theory examined on the module. In the Spring Term students must develop and discuss with a tutor a research plan and then submit an essay that integrates theory, ethnography, and research early in the Summer Term.