Course description

Comedy is certainly the most successful genre in African cinema, television and theatre and yet it has been totally ignored. One of the reasons for the lack of attention paid to the genre might be the unexpected discourse on Africa which comes out of this production, distant from and contrasting with the usual dramatic and pessimistic representations of the continent. The aim of this course is to explore and understand better this neglected genre. To do so, we will focus mainly on the comedy in African cinema and television, the challenging depictions of African societies they provide and the engaging issues they raise. Following an introduction to the cinematographic production of the continent, a brief overview of the conventions of the genre, we will study several African comedies from different parts of the continent and examine their distinctive characteristics. We will look at the history of the genre and its evolution in its broad definition that includes the farce and the satire and will also include highly controversial examples such as *The Gods must be crazy*. We will analyze the ‘generic conventions’ of African comedies and examine in particular the topics, the forms, the characters, the settings and the mode of representations of African societies that are most effective in activating the laughter. In addition to draw examples from cinema, attention will also be paid to the Nigerian television productions. By focusing on the social, cultural and political context in which comedies have been produced, the course will enable us to better understand how comedy responds to critical historical moments and changing socio-political environment.

Course Requirements:

The purpose of this course is to give you a grasp of African comedies. Some knowledge of context will be provided and our focus will be on films. You will be expected to complete assigned reading prior to the class in which the material is discussed. Three essays (5 pages) and one presentation are required for this class. The essays necessitate close analysis of one or more films studied in class. In addition to the essays, there will be an oral presentation. Indeed attendance is mandatory for this class.

Class format: lectures, discussions and presentations.
Grades:

1. First Essay: 20%
2. Second Essay: 20%
3. Third Essay 30%
   Participation (includes attendance, oral presentation and class discussion) 30%
Total 100%

The final grade is obtained by totaling your points and assigning the grade as follows:

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Academic Honesty: The University places a high premium on academic honesty. Accordingly, severe penalties are imposed for plagiarism and other instances of deception or fraud. The university’s policies regarding intellectual honesty are detailed in the Academic Honesty Guidelines, printed in full in the current Undergraduate Catalog.

Students with special needs: “Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation”.

Any additional material for the course, words or pdf documents, and links to websites will be posted on the online course reserve, which you can access by logging on https://ares.uflib.ufl.edu. You need to consult the site quite regularly (the easiest would be for you to sign up for email alert).

The format of the course: lectures, discussion, and presentations.

Selected films

Faces of women (Visages de femmes) Desiré Ecaré
Taafe fanga, Adama Drabo
Quartier Mozart, J.P. Bekolo
Guimba the tyrant, C.O. Sissoko
Life is rosy (La vie est belle) Benoît Lamy, Mweze Ngangura
Gito l’ingrat, Leonc Ngabo
Pièces d’identité, Mweze Ngangura
Rocking Ponpouinguine (Ça twist à Ponpouinguine), Moussa Sene Absa
The gods must be crazy Jamie Uys
Onaga Saga, Dani Kouyaté
The Elephant Balls, Henri Koumba Bididi
The readings will be distributed and most of the films are on reserve in the Library.

Class Schedule

Week 1  August 22. Introduction syllabus.

Week 2  August 22-27. African cinema: an overview
        Manthia Diawara, «The iconography of West African cinema»
        Frank Ukadike, «African cinema»

Week 3  September 3. No class.
        September 5. Comedy «Definitions, genres, and forms»
        African comedies.
        Ferid Boughedir: «African cinema and ideology: tendencies and evolution»
        Olivier Barlet: «Black humours»

Week 4  September 10-12. *Life is rosy*
        «African cinema: theoretical perspectives on some unresolved questions»
        Diawara and Ukadiké

Week 5  September 17-19. *Quartier Mozart*
        Unkadiké, “Interview with Bekolo”
        First Essay due

Week 6  September 24-26. *Taafe Fanga*
        Melissa Thackway: “Integrating orality into West African films”.

Week 7  October 1-3. *The Elephant Balls*

Week 8  October 8-10. *Rocking Pompenguine*

Week 9  October 15-17 *Pièces d’identité*
        Ngangura «African cinema: militancy or entertainment».

Week 10 October 22-24 *The Gods must be crazy*
        Gugler “Fiction, fact and the critic’s responsibility: yaaba, camp de thiaroy and the gods must be crazy”
        Toby Wolkman: “Out of South Africa: the gods must be crazy”.
        Second essay due

Week 11 October 29-31 *Usuofia goes to London*
        Barlet «television strategies»
        Haynes, Jonathan; Okome, Onookome.
Week 12 November 5-7 *Usuofia goes to London*

Week 13 12 Veteran day: no class
November 14: *Gimba the tyrant*

Week 14 November 19-20 *Onaga Saga*, Dani Kouyaté

Week 15 November 26-28: *Gito l’ingrat*

Week 16 December 3-5: *Visages de femmes.*
Ukadike « Reclaiming images of women in Film from Africa and the Black Diaspora »
Pfaff Françoise « eroticism and SubSaharan African films »

Third essay due