

# AFRICA

## is not a country.



## Understanding the Continent

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### Writing 20.69: Academic Writing

MW 11:40 – 12:55

Bell Tower West 113

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Office Hours: by appointment

Welcome to Duke, welcome to Writing 20, and, and in a virtual and distant way, welcome to Africa....

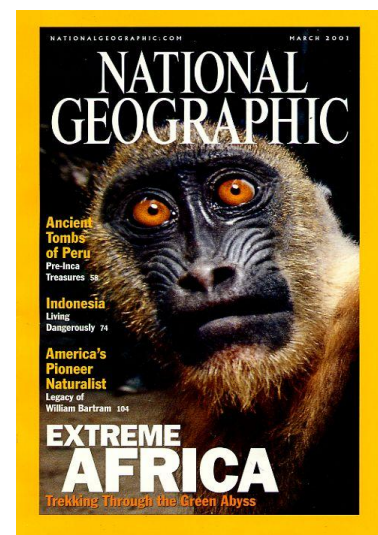
### Course Overview:

Africa: a land of lush savannas, dark jungles, and dangerous animals. Africa: a place where centuries-old traditions survive, politicians are corrupt, and children go to war. Africa: a region of poverty and without technology, which the rest of the world can save with aid, intervention, and charity.

Is this Africa?

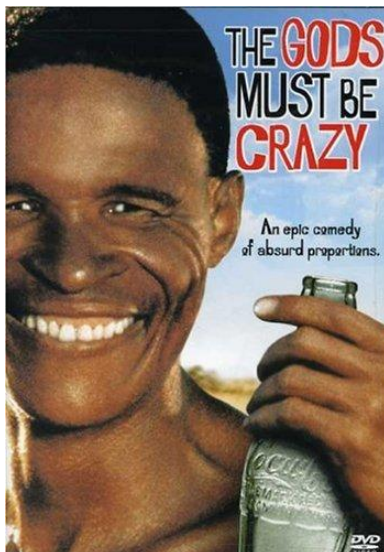
Depictions of Sub-Saharan Africa in Western imagery often portray the stereotypes noted above (and to the right) – a ‘wild’ tourist destination, primitive societies susceptible to corruption and violence, and extreme poverty which needs development and ‘saving’. Yet, none of these depictions provide a comprehensive account of the diversity and reality of the continent. In this class, you will be asked to analyze photographs, films, and texts which present particular images of Africa (focusing on Sub-Saharan Africa).

We’ll start by confronting our own knowledge about Africa. What do we know? How do we know it? Where do we get



our information from, and why do we accept it as being accurate and comprehensive? We'll use our class blog to interact with our readings, and begin to analyze not only what is presented, but also what is missing.

We'll proceed through the semester in both a chronological and thematic fashion, investigating how knowledge and understandings of Africa have developed over time. The colonial experience in Africa emerged out of both adventurism and imperialism, and the colonial interpretations of Africans, from their dances to their systems of socio-political organization, influence our contemporary understandings. We'll specifically examine colonial understandings of civilization, race, and tribe. As we strive to complicate superficial readings of African societies, we'll also begin to uncover the diversity of the continent's landscapes. While there are, of course, beautiful wildernesses and remote villages, there are also large urban centers, developed seashores, and industrial hubs. The existence of these places challenges the idea that Africa is a primitive place, without history or progress. Our blog will assist us in decoding and interpreting historical representations of Africa that seem

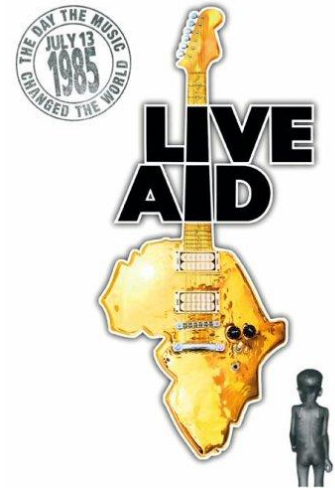


common place, and we'll begin to analyze visual images as well as textual representations. Your first Writing Project will select one colonial image from Duke's special collections, and place it in historical context based on our class readings.

Our historical investigations will serve to prepare us for the second part of the semester, in which we'll investigate contemporary representations of the continent. In part, we'll continue to examine how ideas of wilderness, tribalism, and primitiveness persist, using the film *The Gods Must be Crazy* as an example. The film will also help us begin to understand how to provide critical analysis of videos, which you may later apply to film, television, music videos, news broadcasts, etc.

As technology developed, television, film, the 24 hour news cycle, and publicity campaigns were able to portray Africa in specific ways through new mediums. We'll focus on three closely related issues: travel, development, and aid. What do we hope to gain or see by visiting Africa? Why? What do we feel is 'wrong' with Africa? What inspires us to give, donate, or volunteer? Our texts, images, and videos will include accounts of American students traveling abroad, developmental interpretations of underdeveloped countries, and celebrity involvement (LiveAid, Bono, and Gwyneth Paltrow, to name a few). How do these representations mimic or diverge from earlier representations of the continent? What are the implications of contemporary popular representations? We'll continue to use our class blog, pushing ourselves to consider the future implications of contemporary images, which will assist you in preparing for your final research project.

The final project (approximately 10 pages) asks that you combine the skills you've gained from the blog posts and the short essays, choosing a contemporary image or video, analyzing its content (using the skills you developed in the short essays) and place it in historical context (similar to the first project). Similar to your blog posts, you will also be asked to think about the larger social, economic, and political implications of the representations, utilizing academic sources along the way. For example, you may choose an image of George Clooney with an African child, place it in the context of increasing celebrity humanitarianism, interpret the purpose the image serves, and consider the messages the image transmits to the public about development in Africa.



Our class readings will come from a variety of disciplines including anthropology, international development, history, and political science. In addition, I'll include newspaper and magazine articles, satirical pieces, and a variety of images and videos. Our resources are sometimes relatively simple, sometimes purposefully controversial, sometimes detailed and technical – they are all chosen to inform as well as provoke you, and to provide examples of writing techniques. The types of writing you undertake – blog posts and the two writing projects -- will simultaneously augment your knowledge of Sub-Saharan African and further your skills in researching, articulating your own position, understanding the context of the materials you are working with, and revising your own work. The final type of writing you will engage in is providing comments to your peers regarding both the content of their blog posts (in the comments section) and suggestions to improve their writing. Discussion, participation, and group work are important components of this course.

### **Course Goals and Objectives:**

Writing 20 is designed to introduce you to the key goals and practices of academic writing. Much of our work – as academics, in professions, and in life in general – relies on communication and discussion. Regardless of academic discipline or eventual profession, writing is the main medium through which communication and discussion occur. The process of writing also assists us in clarifying our thoughts and articulating our reasoning. Through this course, our aim is to develop skills in engagement, articulation, and contextualization.

These three objectives comprise the course goals for all Writing 20 classes. In this course, **engagement** with the work of others will consist, in part, of analyzing the purpose and context of specific texts and images and identifying the methodological and presentational tools utilized by authors. You will develop skills in **articulation** by representing and critiquing the arguments of others, as well as developing your

own positions and striving to elucidate new and interesting interpretations. Further, I will ask you to **contextualize** your writing in different venues, using different (yet similar!) analytical tools and to present your arguments, making use of the appropriate conventions of acknowledgement, citation, document design, and presentation of evidence, thereby **translating** your ideas to different audiences. These aims should be kept in the forefront of your minds as we work through the practices of researching, workshopping, revising, and editing – practices which demonstrate that writing is a **process** rather than a **product**. These practices also emphasize that writing is a **social** act, in which we turn to our peers for inspiration, discussion, comments, support, and celebration. For more information on the Writing 20 Course Goals and Practices, please see <http://uwp.duke.edu/courses/writing20/students/goals.html>.

The issues we will explore this semester lend to a few additional course goals. First, we'll obviously be using a variety of sources, from images to films, from blog posts to academic analyses. Thus, this course should provide you with the skills to be able to recognize and work with multiple types of sources. Related to this, we'll use some representations, textual and visual, as **primary sources**, learning how almost any object and curiosity can inspire research questions, critical analysis, and good academic work. Finally, I hope to demystify some of what 'real academics' do. The work you do in this course is similar to one of my own projects, a co-authored chapter on the ways in which celebrity humanitarianism represents the developing world. I plan to share the projects I'm doing with you throughout the course, providing you with glimpses of the various types of questions, research, and writing which may come your way at Duke and beyond.

### **Expectations and Policies:**

***Respect and Integrity:*** By now you all know about Duke's Community Standard. This class requires that you follow the standard, remembering that it entails acting honorably and cultivating a culture of integrity. You are expected to attend class on time and prepared, treat your fellow classmates with respect and openness, and follow appropriate guidelines for acknowledging sources and feedback. This is especially important as some of the topics we discuss may be sensitive, to say the least. You should feel free to approach me if you feel that anyone's participation in the course is being impeded. Any student found to be plagiarizing will face disciplinary action. For more on the Community Standard, please see:

<http://www.registrar.duke.edu/bulletins/communitystandard/>.

Information on citing sources and avoiding plagiarism can be found online at <http://library.duke.edu/research/>.

***Readings and Materials:*** There are two required books for this course: Joseph Harris' *Rewriting: How to do Things with Texts*, Curtis Keim's *Mistaking Africa: Curiosities and Inventions of the American Mind*. Other readings and resources will be made available on our course website, and occasionally distributed in class. I use

email as a means of communicating with the class and with individual students. Email sent to your Duke address are considered to be required reading for this course. Please be sure to check your email daily.

You should **always** bring class readings with you, as we will discuss them. You are responsible for bringing hard copies (please use double-sided printing if possible!) of the texts posted to our site. In addition, there will be many handouts throughout the semester, so I suggest that you secure a folder or binder to organize them, as well as to keep track of your own work.

Always bring paper and pen/pencil to class. ***Laptops and cell phones are not necessary, unless specified, and I ask that you do not use them at all during class.*** This means that you **must** be prepared with printed copies of the texts and writings we are working with. Of course, there will be times when you need a laptop in class. I will notify you in advance if you may need your laptop to complete in-class work. Anyone found accessing email/the internet/texts/etc. during class will be asked to leave, and will be considered absent.

***Additional Resources:*** I strongly encourage you to stay up-to-date with the issues and interests that drew you to this class. We will be making connections between the academic, public, and policy arenas. Thus, following issues of concern via news sites, blogs, etc. may be beneficial to you. Our course website has a list of relevant links. Often I will email you with links to interesting or relevant articles which have come to my attention – unless specified these articles are optional reading. Many organizations and media sources can be followed on social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter. If interested, you can sign up for email newsletters from IRIN, the UN's organization for humanitarian news and analysis (<http://www.irinnews.org>). These are just a few examples of the information that is easily available to you.

I further suggest that you increase your familiarity with the world! We'll examine maps of Africa in class, but mainly we will treat the issues we encounter as themes. You are welcome, in your own writing, to develop your interests in specific regions or countries.

***Website:*** This course will make extensive use of a WordPress blog site, which can be accessed at [http://sites.duke.edu/writing20\\_69\\_f2011/](http://sites.duke.edu/writing20_69_f2011/). You should utilize your Duke ID to login. You can find a variety of documents there, including the syllabus some of our readings. Specific instructions on how to post to the site, and how to submit assignments, will be distributed separately or discussed in class.

***Writing:*** I highly, highly recommend that you compose your blog posts in word processing software, giving yourself a chance to both proofread and revise. Writing Projects should be typed in 12-inch font, on standard letter-size paper, with 1 inch margins and page numbers. Please include your name on the document!



You should be aware that there are a number of excellent resources at Duke to assist with the researching, referencing, revising, and editing processes. Do explore the library website (<http://library.duke.edu>) for both research and writing assistance. We will have at least one specific library research session during the semester. I further strongly encourage you to make use of the tutors and resources at the Writing Studio (<http://www.duke.edu/wstudio/>). A tutor from the studio will visit our class to explain their resources. For English as a Foreign Language students, please see: <http://uwp.duke.edu/wstudio/resources/eslefl.html>. I will continue to inform you of resources throughout the university as the semester proceeds.

Finally, our website will eventually include a Library Guide and guidance from the Writing Studio, designed to help you complete your Writing Projects for this class.

**Undergraduate Writing Tutor:** This section of Writing 20 has been paired with an Undergraduate Writing Tutor, Adrienne Niederriter, who is a current junior and has just returned from a Duke Engage trip to Uganda, in eastern Africa. You will be meeting with her to revise your writing projects.

**Writing in the Real World:** Please remember that good writing practices are not limited to your class work. You should be aware of your authorship roles and the audience you are addressing in **all** of your writing – including in emails to professors(!). Although email is generally an informal means of communication, within the university (amongst other settings), you should remember that every email you send to a professor represents you as a student. Address the recipient properly, avoid text speak (I understand some of it, but not all of it!), and strive to use correct grammar and punctuation. While I check email often, please do not demand immediate responses; do not expect quick answers to questions just before an assignment is due, nor late-night or weekend responses.

**Grading:** Your final grade for this course will be composed as follows:

20%	Writing Project 1
30%	Writing Project 2
15%	Writing Project 2 Components
5%	Reflection Paper
20%	Blog Posts & Comments
5%	In-Class Writing
5%	Revision Work (Comments to Peers and UWT Documents)

The blog posts and comments, in-class writing, and revision work will be graded as follows:  $\checkmark+$  (exemplary),  $\checkmark$  (satisfactory),  $\checkmark-$  (passing, but unsatisfactory work), and 0 (missing/late/off-topic). As long as the majority of your grades are  $\checkmark+$  and  $\checkmark$ , you will be fine. If you have more than one or two  $\checkmark-$  grades, your grade will be lowered. All other grades are on the normal A-F scale (included below), with grading criteria provided for each assignment.

All assignments must be handed in on time – this means that if I have requested them to be turned in during class, they must be ready at the **beginning** of class. Late blog posts and comments, revision work, and in-class writing will automatically receive a 0, as noted above. In addition, late Comments for Peers will lower your final course grade by one point for *each late comment*. For example, if your comments for two peers are late, and your final grade is a 91, this will be lowered by two points to an 89. For all other assignments, work handed in 15 minutes past the deadline (electronically or by late arrival to class) will be considered one day late; assignment grades will be lowered by half of a letter grade (e.g., from an A- to a B+) for *each day late*. Whilst I do not grade your drafts, they must be submitted on time and be complete (as per specific directions). Late drafts or incomplete drafts will lower your final project grade by half a letter grade. Finally, your work should be complete – careless or incomplete work will not be accepted; you will be notified in these instances and be requested to resubmit. Your grade for resubmitted assignments will be lowered by half of a letter grade.

**Every assignment for this class must be submitted, on time or otherwise. Not doing so will result in an incomplete for the course.** *Save all of your work until the course is completed!* You will need to review your work for your final Reflection Paper.

***Participation:*** is a crucial element of this class. Thus, you must attend class and arrive on time. Arriving more than 15 minutes late qualifies as an absence. In addition, two late arrivals (arriving 5 minutes late) constitute an absence.

As ‘stuff happens’ that might be out of your control, you have two ‘free’ absences for this class. I encourage you **not** to ‘plan’ to use these! Except under significant extenuating circumstances (when you should contact your dean/academic advisor), your ‘freebies’ should account for situations such as illness. At the end of the semester, each additional absence (beyond two), will result in the lowering of your final grade by half a step (for example, an A would become an A-; an A- would become a B+, etc.) Please note that while STIN forms allow you additional time to complete your work, they should be submitted to me **before** the missed class session if possible, and that they do not provide an ‘excused’ absence.

Finally, I reserve the right to lower final grades by **at least** half a grade for low participation in class and revision activities, and/or for not meeting the guidelines outlined above under ‘Respect and Integrity’.

Percentages and grades correspond as follows:

94-100	A	80-83	B-	67-69	D+
90-93	A-	77-79	C+	64-66	D
87-89	B+	74-76	C	60-63	D-
84-86	B	70-73	C -	<60	F

### **Course Schedule:**

**(Note: the schedule may change – all changes will be noted in class and email. The readings and writings are DUE on the date they are next to – with the exception of Blog Posts and Comments.) WP means that the reading is available on our WordPress site.**

<b>Day</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Assignment</b>
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#### ***What is Africa? What do we know and how do we know it?***

<b>M</b>	<b>8/29</b>	Introductions
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<b>W</b>	<b>8/31</b>	<i>Writing Due:</i> Blog Post 1 <i>Read:</i> Granta article (WP) Keim Chapter 1
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<b>M</b>	<b>9/5</b>	<i>Writing Due:</i> Blog Post 2a (due 5pm 9/2, Comments due 8am 9/5) <i>Read:</i> Keim Chapter 2 Harris Chapter 1
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#### ***The Colonial Encounter***

<b>W</b>	<b>9/7</b>	<i>Read:</i> Keim Chapter 3 Joseph Conrad's <i>Heart of Darkness</i> (WP) – note: Books 1 and 2 Required, Book 3 Optional
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<b>M</b>	<b>9/12</b>	<i>Writing Due:</i> Blog Post 2b (due 5 pm 9/9, Comments due 8am 9/12) <i>Read:</i> Harris Chapter 2 Chapter 1 from V.Y. Mudimbe's <i>The Invention of Africa</i> (WP)
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#### ***They Live in Tribes, Right?***

<b>W</b>	<b>9/14</b>	<i>Read:</i> Terence Ranger, "The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa" (WP) Chapter 1 from Marcus Banks' <i>Visual Methods in Social Research</i> (WP)
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<b>M</b>	<b>9/19</b>	<b><i>Meet in Rare Book Room, Perkins Library, West Campus</i></b>
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<b>W</b>	<b>9/21</b>	<i>Writing Due:</i> Blog Post 2c (due 5pm 9/19, Comments due 8am 9/21) <i>Read:</i> Leroy Vail, "The Creation of Tribalism in Southern
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Africa" (WP)

Terence Ranger, "The Invention of Tradition Revisited" (WP)

**M**            **9/26**            *Writing Due:* Blog Post 3a (due 5pm 9/23, Comments due 8am 9/26)  
*Read:* Harris, Chapter 3  
Thomas Spear, "Neo-traditionalism and the Limits of Invention in British Colonial Africa" (WP)

**W**            **9/28**            *Read:* Keim, Chapter 8

***Into the Wild***

**M**            **10/3**            *Writing Due:* Blog Post 3b (due 5pm 9/30, Comments due 8am 10/3)  
***Writing Project 1, Draft 1, Due 5pm 10/3***  
*Read:* Keim, Chapter 9

**W**            **10/5**            *Writing Due:* Comments for Peers 1  
***Class replaced by Small Group Workshops***

**M**            **10/10**            ***No Class: Fall Break***

**W**            **10/12**            *Watch (at any time before 10/17): The Gods Must be Crazy, Available at Lilly Library*  
***No Class: Fall Break Extended!***  
*Writing Due: Writing Project 1, Final, 5pm, Friday, 10/14*

**M**            **10/17**            *Writing Due:* Blog Post 3c (due 5pm 10/14, Comments due 8am 10/17)  
*Read:* Chapter 2 (Read pp. 13-23 and 42-47) from Marcus Banks' *Visual Methods in Social Research* (WP)  
Frances Harding, "Africa and the Moving Image" (WP)

**W**            **10/19**            ***Library Day (Meet in Perkins Library)***

***Contemporary Views: Travel, Development, and Humanitarianism***

**M**            **10/24**            *Writing Due:* Blog Post 4a (due 5pm 10/21, Comments due 8am 10/24)  
*Read:* Keim, Chapter 6  
Excerpt from Chapter of James Ferguson's *The Anti-Politics Machine: Development, Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho* (WP)

W	10/26	Read: Introduction and Chapter 2 from Kathryn Mathers' <i>Travel, Humanitarianism, and Becoming American in Africa</i> (WP)
M	10/31	Writing Due: Writing Project 2 Proposals Read: Chapter 3 from Kathryn Mathers' <i>Travel, Humanitarianism, and Becoming American in Africa</i> (WP)
W	11/2	<b>Class replaced by Individual Conferences</b>
M	11/7	Writing Due: Blog Post 4b (due 5pm 11/4, Comments due 8am 11/7) Read: Introduction, Chapters 1 and 2 from Mahmood Mamdani's <i>Saviors and Survivors: Darfur, Politics, and the War on Terror</i> (WP)
W	11/9	Read: Keim, Chapter 10  <b>Writing Project 2, Draft 1, Due 5pm 11/11</b>
M	11/14	Writing Due: Comments for Peers 2 <b>Class replaced by Small Group Workshops</b>
W	11/16	Read: Harris, Chapter 5
M	11/21	Writing Due: Blog Post 4c (due 5pm 11/18, Comments due 8am 11/21) <b>Writing Project 2, Revised Introductions</b>
W	11/23	<b>No Class: Thanksgiving Break</b>  <b>Writing Project 2, Draft 2, Due 5pm 11/27</b>
M	11/28	Writing Due: Comments for Peers 3 (In-class Workshops)
W	11/30	Presentations 1
M	12/5	Presentations 2
W	12/7	Writing Due: Blog Post 5 Read: Keim, Chapters 11 and 12

**\*\*\*Final Writing Project 2 and Reflection Paper due Monday, December 12, at 5PM\*\*\***