Elective 2: Visual Controversies in South Africa, Past and Present

Course Co-ordinator: Prof Stella Viljoen
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Stella Viljoen is an Associate Professor in Visual Studies. She holds an MA in History of Art and a PhD in Media Studies. Her research is principally concerned with the politics of gender as it pertains to the representational cultures of art and media. She is especially interested in the interplay between visualised and narrativised constructions of gender (and especially masculinity) in South African magazines and art and has documented the rise of men’s magazines in South Africa.
COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course, we will track major developments and changes in South African art and media during the Apartheid era (1948-1994) and after (1994-present). The point of this broad historical perspective is not so much to provide a condensed history of South African art and media, as it is to explore the relationship between South Africa’s turbulent socio-political landscape and its visual culture. In particular, we aim to explore the notion of collective national identities as they manifested and still manifest in art and visual culture. The course deals with the concurrent rise of English, Afrikaner and African nationalism in the early 20th century, and the role of visual culture in the construction of these competing identities. The lecture series also deals with the years of the ‘struggle’, when the dominant white construct of nation came into conflict with the rising tide of militant African nationalist aspiration which culminated in Afropolitanism. The finally series looks at ‘new’ South African nationalism, and the often conflicted art and media it produces.

Overarching programme objectives:

- To develop a sense of the unique relationship between the visual arts, media and national identities in South Africa.
- To deepen students’ awareness of the complexity of South African history and its changing socio-political environment and how the shifting tides of South Africa’s turbulent history affected the concept of a South African gender, racial and cultural identity.
- To inculcate a greater understanding of issues around nationalism and the postcolony in art and popular media.

PRESENTATION

The course combines formal lectures with film screenings and a field trip to various galleries.

EVALUATION

Course evaluation is based on a class test and assignment.

COURSE CONTENT
Monday 2 July

DAY ONE: Afrikaner nationalism and art of the apartheid era  
(Marnell Kirsten)

09:00 – 10:30  Lecture: The rise of Afrikaner nationalism: Marches and monuments

10:30 – 11:00  Tea break

11:00 – 12:30  Lecture: Second tear from the laager: Art, kitsch, and Afrikaner nationalism

12:30 – 14:00  Lunch

14:00 – 16:00  Screening: District 9

Prescribed reading:


Tuesday 3 July
DAY TWO: Print capitalism and identity during and after apartheid (Prof Stella Viljoen)

09:00 – 10:30 Lecture: Colonial masculinities in men’s magazines before and during apartheid.

10:30 – 11:00 Tea break

11:00 – 12:30 Lecture: Turn of the century black masculinity in The Crisis & Drum.

12:30 – 14:00 Lunch

14:00 – 16:00 Lecture: New masculinities in post-apartheid men’s magazines.

Prescribed reading:

Bailey, J. & S Rosenberg (2016) Reading twentieth century urban black cultural movements through popular periodicals: a case study of the Harlem Renaissance and South Africa’s Sophiatown, Safundi, 17:1, 63-86.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wednesday 4 July</th>
<th>Images of dissent (Marnell Kirsten)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>09:00 – 10:30</td>
<td>Lecture: Images of dissent: <em>Loslyf</em> as case study</td>
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<td>10:30 – 11:00</td>
<td>Tea break</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:00 – 12:30</td>
<td>Lecture: Multiple stories: Afrocentrism and Afropolitanism</td>
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<td>12:30 – 14:00</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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<tr>
<td>14:00 – 16:00</td>
<td>Nollywood: An appropriation and reversal of western cultural expression</td>
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**Prescribed reading:**


Other useful site [here](#).


Also available [here](#):


Available [here](#).


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**Thursday 5 July**

**DAY FOUR: Violence: a Marxist reading (Desré Barnard)**

09:00 – 10:30 Lecture: Seeing South Africa through a Marxist lens: refocalising a violent history
10:30 – 11:00  Tea break

11:00 – 12:30  Lecture: Contemporary (re)presentation of apartheid South Africa in new international media (a Marxist reading of District 9 and Elysium)

12:30 – 14:00  Lunch

14:00 – 16:00  Workshop: Violence as a manifestation of Marxist tensions

**Prescribed reading:**
For the workshop, students are required to choose a film that they have either recently watched, or know very well.


Friday 6 July

**DAY FIVE:** Galleries visits in Stellenbosch (Desré Barnard & Marnell Kirsten)

09:00 – 10:00 Test (choice between two questions)

10:30 – 12:30 Gallery visits

12:30 – 13:30 Lunch

13:30 – 15:00 Walking about: Visual Studies in the spaces around us

**TEST**

The test will be based on Marnell’s work.

**Prescribed reading for the test:**

Please note that all prescribed readings for her 2 days of the course are important for the test, but these are compulsory:


Also available [here](#).

ASSIGNMENT

Sources you might find useful:


