

Africa and Technology

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| Start date | 21 November 2020 | End date | 21 November 2020 |
| Venue | Virtual classroom | | |
| Tutor | Jennifer Thornton | Course code | 2021NDR408 |

For further information on this course, please contact Mairi Mayfield
prof-shortcourses@ice.cam.ac.uk

To book See: www.ice.cam.ac.uk or telephone 01223 746262

Tutor biography

Jenny is a highly experienced international development practitioner and researcher, with specialist knowledge on the politics of sub-Saharan Africa. She was part of the team to establish the University of Cambridge's 'Cambridge Africa' Research Centre and is a board member and former director of the Cambridge African Film Festival. She has an undergraduate degree from the University of St Andrews in Geography and Social Anthropology, and completed her Masters with Distinction in International Relations at the University of Cambridge in 2017. Her Masters thesis interrogated the inequalities of research partnerships between Uganda, Rwanda and the UK, which involved three months of fieldwork. She is also interested in the decolonisation of knowledge. Jenny's professional area of expertise focuses on online safety, internet governance, as well as the politicised and moralised role of digital technology. She regularly advises national governments in sub-Saharan Africa on these topics. Jenny previously taught the Africa module on the Undergraduate Certificate in International Relations course at the Institute of Continuing Education.

Programme:

All sessions will be recorded and made available to students shortly after the course has finished. *The lectures will be online using a secure version of Zoom; if you are new to Zoom, there will be a separate guide for how to set it up.*

09:00 – 10:30

Technology in shaping Africa's Past, Present and Future

The colonisation of African countries was exacerbated by technological change. Now, in the global digital age, it is important to analyse whether technology still has a negative, exploitative influence for Africans and African countries, or whether it heralds a new, positive and prosperous era. We will review the current innovations and politics surrounding technology, including the heavy reliance on mobile money.

11:00 – 12:30

Social media giants and the 'techno-colonialism' concept

We will explore the dominance of social media giants and their impact on the day-to-day lives of many citizens. The Africa2 subsea cable project will also be introduced before we hear from a guest speaker from Facebook. This will be followed by a group discussion.

Lunch

13:30 – 15:00

Hardware: conflict minerals, off-grid solar power and mobiles

By reviewing examples of innovation and new products from across sub-Saharan Africa we will consider attempts to decolonise hardware technology. We will also critically review technology that could be inadvertently neocolonial. Case studies include the first hightech smartphones to be developed on the continent and pay-as-you-go solar power for off-grid households.

15:30 – 17:00

Digital innovation in African filmmaking and cinema

Turning towards the arts, we will consider how technology has advanced filmmaking processes as well as being the source of inspiration for a new cinematic genre in African cinema. As a group, we will view Kenya's first science fiction film before finishing with discussion on how film is a channel for expressing imaginings for the continent's future.

Course syllabus

Aims

This course aims to:

- Understand the impact of technological change on the past, present and future of the African continent.
- Introduce participants to different case studies from a number of countries and technological innovations/services.

Content

Focusing on technology, we shed the negative stereotypes that have long misrepresented sub-Saharan Africa. The continent is being shaped and influenced by online interactions and technical hardware. We explore conflict minerals in electronics, the impact of mobile money on the day-to-day lives of citizens, and how the dominance of social media companies could constitute a new techno-colonialism.

This online, one day course combines lectures with interactive elements including a short film, group quiz, discussion time and a guest speaker from Facebook. It assumes no prior knowledge on the topic and is open to all students.

Presentation of the course

The lectures and group discussions will take place in the virtual classroom via Zoom. There will be an pre-recorded interview with a Facebook representative shown via Zoom. A short 20 minute film will be shown. An interactive group quiz will be held via Mentimeter which shows live responses as they come in. Quiz results will be shared in real time via Zoom.

As a result of the course, within the constraints of the time available, participants should be able to:

- Identify the connections between technology, the history of Africa, and colonialism;
- Evaluate how new technologies are helping African nations to 'decolonise' and break the cycle of dependency on the global north;
- Analyse the role social media giants play in increasing internet connectivity in Africa.

Reading and resources list

Listed below are a number of texts that might be of interest and can add to the enjoyment of the course, but do not need to be bought, nor are they required.

| Author | Title | Publisher and date |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|
| John Iliffe | Africans: The history of a continent | Cambridge University Press 2007 |
| Lizelle Bisschoff and Ann Overbergh | Digital as the New Popular in African Cinema? Case Studies from the Continent | <i>Research in African Literatures</i> , vol. 43, no. 4, 2012, pp. 112–127. <i>JSTOR</i> , www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/reseafrilite.43.4.112 |
| Toussaint Nothias | Access granted: Facebook's free basics in Africa | <i>Media, Culture & Society</i> , 42(3), 329–348. https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443719890530 <i>Free access</i> |
| David Arnold | Europe, technology, and colonialism in the 20th century | <i>History and Technology</i> , 21:1, 85-106, https://doi.org/10.1080/07341510500037537 <i>Free access</i> |
| The Enough Project | Conflict Minerals 101: 2018 Update | https://youtu.be/6aJxEkSiPg |
| Wanuri Kahiu | PUMZI (2009) | https://vimeo.com/46891859 |

Additional information

Venue

Virtual classroom via Zoom

Note Students of the Institute of Continuing Education are entitled to 20% discount on books published by Cambridge University Press (CUP) which are purchased at the Press bookshop, 1 Trinity Street, Cambridge (Mon-Sat 9am – 5:30pm, Sun 11am – 5pm). A letter or email confirming acceptance on to a current Institute course should be taken as evidence of enrolment.

Information correct as of: 16 September 2020