

## **BIGSAS Seminar and Working Group**

### **Epistemologies of the Global South: Contributions to Reconfiguration of African Studies**

Prof. Dr Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni with Dr Christine Vogt-William  
Chair in Epistemologies of the Global South

**Time:** 10am-12noon

#### **Description**

Epistemologies of the Global South embody knowledges that have been silenced and displaced as a result of the unfolding of Euromodernity and its constitutive elements of racism, empire, capitalism and patriarchy. The epistemologies of the Global South are resilient and they confront the problem of cognitive injustice, that is, the practice of non-recognition of diverse ways through which diverse people make sense of the world and themselves. Therefore, epistemologies of the Global South are directly linked to struggles for re-existence of those people who were subjected to coloniality but maintain their will to live. Throughout the seminar, the decolonial analytical category of intersectionality and engendering of knowledge production is deployed as an intrinsic component of decolonization as it highlights how historically and socially produced modes life and living are aggravated by race, gender, class, sexuality, religion, able-bodied-ness, among other cultural and political identity vectors. As a decolonial critical praxis, intersectionality clears space for marginalized groups to articulate new and old realities from their situated standpoints. Therefore, the seminar series and discussions draw insights from epistemologies of the Global South and decoloniality to test their contribution and applicability to the reconfiguration of African Studies.

#### **Mode of delivery of seminars**

- Facilitated discussions
- Presentations
- Invited speakers
- Debates & conversations.

#### **1. Creating an Intellectual Community of Practice**

19/4/2021

**Description:** *This opening session is dialogic and conversational on how to constitute ourselves into an intellectual community of practice that is open and sensitive to inequalities, cognitive injustices, racism, sexism, patriarchy, and other injustices. The second task here is to agree on a mode of working together, learning together, teaching each other, and co-producing knowledge in a non-colonial and non-hierarchical way. The third task is to explore how to make sure we all benefit from this intellectual community of practice.*

#### **2. Decolonizing Methodology and Theory**

26/4/2021

**Description:** *Do the existing methodologies and theories enable the oppressed to represent the world as their own and in their own terms? Are methodologies and theories free from politics of knowledge? The biggest task at hand is how to decolonize knowledge and the methodologies by which it is produced. The starting point is to*

*accept the epistemic diversity in order to enlarge and deepen world experience and conversation; all this cannot happen without change in our methodologies and theorising. Questioning the epistemological, methodological and theoretical premises of Eurocentric knowledge is an agenda which is upon and we have to rise adequately to the challenge before us through engagement with processes, politics and in indeed practices of decolonizing methodologies and theories.*

### **Readings**

- Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni. 2019. 'Provisional Notes on Decolonizing Research Methodology and Undoing Its Dirty History.' *Journal of Developing Societies*, 35(4), pp. 481-492.
- Obioma Nnaemeka. 2004. 'Negotiating Feminism: Theorising, Practicing and Pruning Africa's Way.' *Signs*, 29(2). pp. 357-385.
- Boaventura de Sousa Santos. 2018. 'Chapter 7: On Nonextractivist Methodologies.' In Boaventura de Sousa Santos. 2018. *The End of the Cognitive Empire: The Coming of Age of Epistemologies of the South*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, pp. 143-163.
- Bagele Chilisa. 2020. 'Chapter 1: Situating Knowledge Systems.' In Bagele Chilisa. *Indigenous Research Methodologies*. Los Angeles: Sage, pp. 1-20.
- Donna Haraway. 1988. 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective.' *Feminist Studies*, 14(3), pp. 575-599

### **3. The Cognitive Empire and Colonization of the Mind**

**Date:** 03/5/2021

**Description:** *The cognitive empire operates through invasion of the mental universe of its targets. This invasion is called epistemological colonization mainly because it targets the mind. This seminar posits that knowledge creates reality (epistemology frames ontology). Hence the empire was always underpinned by coloniality of knowledge. Such institutions as school, church and university played a central role in the unfolding of the cognitive empire. In this seminar, we discuss the technologies used by the cognitive empire to inscribe colonization of the mind. The starting point concerns the coloniality of being enacted through social classification of human population in accordance with racial and gender hierarchies to invent artificial differential ontological densities. The seminar also discusses the long-term impact of colonization of the mind as well as the ways of decolonizing the mind. At the same time the colonization of the mind – that of the coloniser and the colonised – is read through frames of multiplicity and relationalities of power and position informed by intersectionality perspective.*

### **Reading:**

- Oyeronke Oyewumi. 2002. 'Conceptualizing Gender: The Eurocentric Foundations of Feminist Concepts and the Challenge of African Epistemologies.' *JENdA: A Journal of Culture and African Women Studies*, 2(1), pp. 3-24.

- Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni. 2020. 'The Cognitive Empire, Politics of Knowledge and African Intellectual Productions: Reflections on Struggles for Epistemic Freedom and Resurgence of Decolonization in the Twenty-First Century.' *Third World Quarterly*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2020.17775487>.
- Maria Lugones. 2008. 'The Coloniality of Gender.' *Worlds & Knowledge Otherwise*, Spring, pp. 1-17.
- Boaventura de Sousa Santos. 2007. 'Beyond Abyssal Thinking: From Global Lines to Ecologies of Knowledges.' *Review*, XXX (1), pp. 45-89.

#### 4. The Politics of Knowledge and African Intellectuals

**Date:** 10/5/2021

**Description:** *The questions of what accounts as knowledge, who has knowledge and who does not have knowledge constitute some of the key questions in the politics of knowledge in Africa's continental and diasporic contexts. At the centre of politics of knowledge are the following: the theft and erasures of histories, epistemicides, linguicides, and alienations. African intellectuals are products of the modern westernized university and this has long-standing impact on their psyches and consciousness. The diversity of situated standpoints amongst African intellectuals necessitates the consideration of intersectional complexity among African intellectuals and their relations to their intellectual pursuits, their academic community networks and their own political positionalities. The advantage is that it makes them part of the global knowledge network on the one hand, but the disadvantage is that their immersion into modern knowledge has often entailed abandonment of their African cultures, history and African ways of knowing – which in turn have been subjected to modes of colonization especially with regard to conceptions of race, gender, knowledge production and evaluations thereof. This seminar discusses the following issues: the formation of African intellectuals, their self-perceptions as African intellectuals, and the genealogies and younger generations of African intellectuals.*

**Reading:**

- Mahmood Mamdani. 2016. 'Between the Public Intellectual and the Scholar: Decolonization and Some Post-Independence Initiatives in African Higher Education.' *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 17(1), pp. 68-83.
- Amina Mama. 2017. 'The Power of Feminist Pan-African Intellect'. *Feminist Africa*, 22. December, pp. 1-15.
- Thandika Mkandawire. 1995. 'Three Generations of African Academics: A Note.' *Transformation*, 28, pp. 75-83.
- Francis Njubi Nesbit. 2003. 'African Intellectuals in the Belly of the Beast: Migration, Identity and the Politics of African Intellectuals in the North.' *Critical Arts*, 17 (1-2), pp. 17-35.

#### 5. African Studies and African Intellectual/Ideological Productions.

**Date:** 17/5/2021

**Description:** *Despite the epistemic damages inflicted by the cognitive empire, African intellectuals have not been passive in resisting epistemological colonization. They have been resisting, contesting and countering Eurocentric knowledge. Such resistance and contestation have manifested at the intersections of cultural, structural, interpersonal and disciplinary domains of power, where discrepancies in intellectual engagement with socio-political concerns and cultural mindsets in many disciplines have been noted, navigated and interrogated. This seminar discusses African intellectual and ideological productions and how they responded and contested Eurocentric knowledge, beginning with how African intellectuals disproved the notion of an Africa without history and knowledge.*

**Reading:**

- Jean Allman. 2013. 'Kwame Nkrumah, African Studies, and the Politics of Knowledge Production in Black Star Africa.' *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 46 (2), pp. 181-203.
- Ama Biney. 2018. 'Fanonist 'Pitfalls' in Pan African Movement Since 1945.' *Africa Insight*, 48(3), December, pp. 1-17.
- Bethwell A. Ogot. 2009. '#Rereading the History and Historiography of Epistemic Domination and Resistance in Africa.' *African Studies Review*, 52(1), pp. 1-22.
- Paulin Hountodji. 2009. 'Knowledge of Africa, Knowledge by Africans: Two Perspectives on African Studies.' *RCC Annual Review*, 1(1), pp. 121-131.
- Dani Wadada Nabudere. 2007. 'Cheikh Anta Diop: The Social Sciences, Humanities, Physical and Natural Sciences and Interdisciplinarity.' *International Journal of African Renaissance Studies*, 2(1), pp. 6-34.

## 6. The Africanization and Decolonization of the University in Africa

**Date:** 31/05/2021

**Description:** *Africa had some of the earliest universities in the world in such places as Mali, Morocco, and Egypt. These were precolonial African universities that were not part of the present westernized global university system. However, these institutions did not continue into modern era. Hence Africa has to 'receive' universities from elsewhere during the colonial era. These institutions were part of Euromodernity's colonization of the world. This is why one finds African anti-colonial nationalists not just agitating for African universities but also trying the Africanize existing universities in Africa. What does such Africanization entail? Citation practices regarding Global South scholarship would be a good place to interrogate whose knowledge is foregrounded and evaluated as 'proper' scholarship. Considering especially local African scholarship at African universities as possible sources of decolonial thought might be a first step, whereby the tensions that are raised through reading local African scholarship through intersectional frames may reveal modes of coloniality around understandings of e.g. race, gender, ethnicity and religion, existing alongside 'western' frames of thought, will also merit scrutiny. This seminar is focused on the question of universities in Africa as sites of struggles and discusses the key decolonizing initiatives since the 1960s.*

## **Readings**

- Awino Okech. 2020. 'African Feminist Epistemic Communities and Decoloniality.' *Critical African Studies*, 12 (3), pp. 313-329
- Sylvia Tamale, 2020. 'Chapter 7: Rethinking the African Academy.' In Sylvia Tamale. *Decolonization and Afro-Feminism*. Ottawa: Daraja Press, pp. 335-284.
- Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018. 'Chapter 7: Education/University in Africa.' In Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni. *Epistemic Freedom in Africa: Deprovincialization and Decolonization*. London and New York: Routledge, pp.161-196.
- Achille Mbembe, 2016. 'Decolonizing the University: New Directions.' *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education*, 15(1), pp. 29-45.

## **7. The Crisis in African Higher Education and Neoliberal Coloniality of Markets**

**Date:** 7/6/2021

**Description:** By the mid-1970s African higher education plunged into crisis because of a combination of factors such as economic crisis, rise of authoritarianism (one party states and military juntas), Cold War ideological coloniality, and impact of the Washington Consensus and its neoliberal philosophies. The African public university system suffered a deep crisis as Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) were unfolding in the 1980s and 1990s. Conceptions of knowledge underwent commercialization, commodification and corporatization. Universities were invaded by corporate cultures that turned them into 'market places.' This seminar focuses on this era where students were redefined as customers, intellectual productions were subjected to quantification and universities suffered from managerialism with its log-frames.

**Reading:**

- Tande Akin Aina. 2010. 'Beyond Reforms: The Politics of Higher Education Transformation in Africa.' *African Studies Review*, 53(1), pp. 21-40.
- Paul Tiyambe Zeleza. 2003. 'Academic Freedom in the Neo-Liberal Order: Governments, Globalization, Governance and Gender.' *Journal of Higher Education*, 1(1), pp. 149-194.
- Akilagpa Sawyerr. 2004. 'Challenges Facing African Universities: Selected Issues.' *African Studies Review*, 47(1), pp. 1-59.

## **8. Cognitive `Turns` in African Knowledge Production**

**Date:** 14/06/2021

**Description:** *African knowledge production has experienced many intellectual and academic 'turns' beginning with the 'colonial turn' dated to the time of colonial encounters. This seminar discusses the key 'turns' in African knowledge production such as the 'nationalist turn,' the 'Marxist turn,' the 'cultural turn,' the 'feminist turn,'*

*the 'neoliberal turn,' the 'postcolonial turn,' right up the current 'decolonial turn', and how these turns impacted on the understanding of Africa.*

**Reading:**

- Ramon Grosfoguel. 2007. 'The Decolonial Epistemic Turn: Beyond Political-Economy Paradigms.' *Cultural Studies*, 21(2-3), pp. 211-223.
- Paul Tiyambe Zeleza. 2006. 'The Troubled Encounter Between Postcolonialism and African History.' *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association*, 17(2), pp. 89-129.
- Amina Mama, 2011. 'What Does It Mean to Do Feminist Research in African Contexts?' *Feminist Review*, pp. 4-20.
- Amina Mama, 2001. 'Challenging Subjects: Gender and Power in African Contexts.' *African Sociological Review*, 5(2), pp. 63-73.
- Rita Abrahamsen. 2003. 'African Studies and the Postcolonial Challenge.' *African Affairs*, 102, pp. 189-210.

**9. The Global Political Economy of Knowledge**

**Date:** 21/6/2021

**Description:** *A global republic of letters is upon us together with its global protocols, standards, measurements, and rankings. This reality has generated debates about a possible human commonwealth of knowledge enabled by increased planetary human entanglements. One strand of debate is that there is even nothing called Western/European knowledge because that knowledge is fed by other knowledges. The argument is also that binaries and dichotomies of North-South and Centre-Periphery no longer make sense in a globalized world. It is within this context that the notion of global economy of knowledge and global studies has arisen. This seminar discusses the logics and critiques of this notion of a global economy of knowledge and raises questions of the resilient uneven intellectual and academic division of labour as well as the continued hegemony of Eurocentric knowledge.*

**Reading:**

- Mahmood Mamdani. 2016. 'Between the Public Intellectual and the Scholar: Decolonization and Some Post-Independence Initiatives in Higher Education.' *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 17(1), pp. 68-83.
- Achille Mbembe. 2016. 'Decolonizing the University: New Directions.' *Arts & Humanities in Higher Education*, 15(1), pp. 29-45.
- Birgit Brock-Utne. 1999. 'African Higher Universities and the African Heritage.' *International Review of Education*, 45(1), pp. 87-104.

**10. Engendering Knowledge and Scholarship on Africa**

**Date:** 28/6/2021

**Description:** *The problem of patriarchy and androcentrism bedevilling modern society is also endemic in knowledge and scholarship. Across the world there is resilient male dominance in knowledge production and scholarship. This seminar discusses the*

*necessity and politics of engendering knowledge and scholarship on Africa. It posits the urgent need for depatriarchization of knowledge and scholarship through privileging the feminist and womanist archives and such concepts as intersectionalization of knowledge.*

**Reading:**

- Ayesha M. Imam. 1997. 'Engendering African Social Sciences: An Introductory Essay.' In A. M Imam, A: Mama and F. Sow (eds.). *Engendering Africans Social Sciences*. Dakar: CODESRIA Book Series, pp. 1-25.
- Amina Mama. 2001. 'Challenging Subjects: Gender and Power in African Contexts.' *African Sociological Review*, 5(2), pp. 63-73.
- Obioma Nnaemeka. 2017. 'Bodies that Don't Matter: Black Bodies and the European Gaze.' In Maureen Maisha Eggers, Grada Kilomba, Peggy Piesche, and Susan Arndt (eds.). *Mythen, Masken, Subjekten*. Munster UNRAST Verlag, pp. 90-102.
- Bibi Bakare-Yusuf, 2003. 'Book Review: Yoruba Don't Do Gender: A Critical Review of Oyeronke Oyewumi's The Invention of Women: Making African Sense of Western Gender Discourses. *African Identities*, 1(1), pp. 121-142.

## **11. The Rhodes Must Fall Movements**

**Date:** 05/7/2021

**Description:** *The outbreak of the Rhodes Must Fall movements in South Africa in 2015 and 2016 producing other formations such as Fees Must Fall constituted a necessary rupture in the knowledge domain and forced universities in South Africa in particular to take the agenda of decolonization of the university seriously. This seminar focuses on these student movements, their demands, their politics and their impact on the global knowledge project and the universities in Africa.*

**Readings:**

- Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018. 'Chapter 9: Rhodes Must Fall.' In Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni. 2018. *Epistemic Freedom in Africa: Deprovincialization and Decolonization*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 221-242.
- Kealeboga Ramaru. 2017. 'Feminist Reflections on the Rhodes Must Fall Movement.' *Feminist Africa* 22. December, pp. 89-96.
- Dalia Gebrial. 2018. 'Rhodes Must Fall: Oxford and Movements for Change. In Bhabra et al. *Decolonising the University*, pp. 19-36.

## **12. The Black Lives Matter Movements and Planetary Decolonization of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

**Date:** 12/7/2021

**Description:** *The death of George Floyd in the United States of America galvanized a planetary decolonization struggles whose key signature was the toppling of statues and monuments of celebrating figures that dehumanized black people through slavery, colonialism and apartheid. While the statues and monuments became the soft targets, the planetary decolonization of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is broader and confronts issues of*

*racism at a world scale. This seminar focuses on the Black Lives Matter movements and their advancement of decolonization.*

**Readings**

- Akosau Adomako Ampofo. 2016. 'Re-viewing Studies on Africa, #Black Lives Matter, and Envisioning the Future of African Studies.' *African Studies Review*, 59(2), pp. 7-29.
- Ashley Atkins, 2019. 'Black Lives Matter or All Lives Matter? Colour-blindness and Epistemic Injustice.' *Social Epistemology*, 33(1), pp. 1-22.
- Dewey M. Clayton, 2018. Black Lives Matter and the Civil Rights Movement: A Comparative Analysis of Two Social Movements in the United States.' *Journal of Black Studies*, 49(5), pp. 448-480.

**13. Conclusions of semester.**