

GEOG 268: GEOGRAPHIES OF AFRICA
Tuesday, Thursday 9:30-10:45 CH 220
Prof. Ndaliko

In GEOG 268, we will study dynamic sociocultural, political, economic, and environmental issues shaping contemporary sub-Saharan Africa. Given all that is happening globally, our particular focus this term will be media and social change. And here's why: Africa is a vast continent with extraordinary biodiversity, cultural and linguistic diversity, and history. But despite its many specific attributes, Africa is often collapsed into a single set of stereotypes. Indeed for centuries, explorers, missionaries, and even scholars have circulated stories and images that present Africa as a fantastical place—of pristine nature inhabited by exotic animals and people, and a place ravaged by war, poverty, disease, violence, and corruption. This idea of “Africa” has played a central role in shaping the modern world—it has been used to justify projects of civilization, development, economics, charity, and education, all of which continue to impact both the continent and the Western world. But is the idea of Africa on which these projects are founded actually true?

The aim of this course is to understand—and help shift—Africa's place in the global geopolitical imagination. To that end we will study the history and consequences of the idea of Africa as well the reasons it persists. We will also study social, political, cultural, and economic initiatives that challenge dominant Western views of the continent and advance positive social change. Throughout this process we will analyze various forms of media (in particular photographs, text, film, and sound) to investigate the relationship between representation and the sociopolitical construction of place. To put theory into practice, we will also produce original media pieces that offer nuanced perspectives on issues critical to the continent.



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