



Africa, 60 years of independence

30 January 2020

Stadsgehoorzaal, Breestraat 60 Leiden (Aalmarktzaal)

Programme

8.30-9.30 Registration

9.30-9.35 Word of welcome

9.35-11.00 Key note lecture by **Professor Lungisile Ntsebeza**

African Studies in Africa in the aftermath of the "Fallist" Moment: prospects and challenges

Discussant: Professor Ton Dietz

11.00-11.30 Coffee/tea break

11.30-13.00 Key note lecture by **Professor Birgit Meyer**

What is "Religion" in Africa? Relational Dynamics in an Entangled World

Discussant: Professor Rijk van Dijk

13.00-14.00 Lunchbreak

14.00-15.30 Key note lecture **Professor Carolyn Hamilton**

Inherited Concepts in Motion: Vernacular Pasts and the Future Precolonial

Discussant: Professor Jan-Bart Gewald

15.30-16.00 Coffee/tea break

16.00-17.30 Key note lecture **Professor Jan Abbink**

Political renewal in Africa? Popular protest and governance in Sudan and Ethiopia, 2016-2020

Discussant: Professor Mohamed Salih

17.30-18.30 Drinks

Abstracts

Professor Lungisile Ntsebeza

African Studies in Africa in the aftermath of the "Fallist" Moment: prospects and challenges

The focus of this keynote address is on African Studies in Africa in the aftermath of the "Fallist" moment and to consider prospects and challenges that this moment gave rise to. I use the term "fallist" moment to refer to the student-led campaign which erupted into the open initially at the University of Cape Town in March 2015 for the removal of the statue of Cecil John Rhodes that was prominently erected on the grounds of the same university. This campaign was dubbed #RhodesMustFall and by the end of that year had spread to other universities in South Africa and beyond. By this time, the issues raised by students went far beyond the removal of the statue to include calls for fees to fall (#FeesMustFall), "decolonization of the curriculum" which was in reference to a rejection of what students referred to as a "Eurocentric" approaches to research and teaching, in favour of "Afrocentric" ways of doing research and teaching. I will argue that the issues raised by students, although not clearly articulated, as could be expected, presented academics, students and intellectuals outside the academy with research questions about how Africa and its people have been and must/should be studied. These are, of course, not new questions, but questions that had been sidelined and ignored largely as a result of heavy repression in most parts of the Continent soon after the dawn of independence in the late 1950s and the 1960s, as well as the effects of the Structural Adjustment Programmes imposed by the Bretton Wood Institutions. This historical background will form the context within which African Studies in the current period will be presented. I will wrap up the presentation by reflecting on opportunities and prospects for African Studies within the Continent, as well as challenges.

Professor Birgit Meyer

What is "Religion" in Africa? Relational Dynamics in an Entangled World

Tracking the social, economic, political and cultural implications of introduction of the category of religion to Africa by missions, scholars and colonial administrations, this lecture approaches religion from a relational angle that takes into account the connections between Africa and Europe. Much can be learned about the complexity and power dynamics of these connections by studying religion not simply in but also from Africa. The lecture will mainly refer to historical and current materials from Ghana, from the dismissal of indigenous deities as "fetishes" to the rise of Pentecostalism. Doing so, my concern is not to offer a history of religion in Ghana, but rather to show how a focus on religion can serve as a productive entry point into the longstanding relational dynamics through which Africans and Europeans are entangled with each other. This is a necessary step in decolonizing scholarly knowledge production about (religion in) Africa.

Professor Carolyn Hamilton

Inherited Concepts in Motion: Vernacular Pasts and the Future Precolonial

The lecture will lay out an argument for recognising the depth and extent of the available discursive archive, much of it in isiZulu, capable of illuminating the conceptual world of

Africans in the region that is today KwaZulu-Natal in the first instance in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and through careful methodological work, in the eras before that. The focus in the lecture is on inherited concepts in motion in eras across the precolonial/colonial divide. I argue that in the face of this extended archive it is no longer possible, if it ever was, to rely on the ethnographies of the same period for insight into the conceptual world of that time of Zulu speakers, and to assume people in previous eras had much the same "worldview". Scholars can no longer valorise the brokerage and syntheses of the ethnographers at the expense of paying attention to the brokerage and syntheses that we can see in the many texts of much the same period produced by Zulu-speaking thinkers. To make these points is not to wish simply to supplant the ethnographic texts with these ones. Rather it is to recognise that each of these kinds of texts - ethnographic as much as the literary or recorded oral - is a particular production that is worth investigating as a production.

The lecture will also engage critically with the way in which history produced by black intellectuals, typically operating in urban settings, was consigned out of the field of historiography as literature and politics, while the oral productions of history by black thinkers, typically in rural settings, were in turn, positioned as sources. This double manoeuvre not only denied historical authority to both of these forms of history production, but favoured the narratives of the rural informant as historically more authentic than the writings of the urban intellectual, thereby lancing both forms of historical production of their discursive potency. The lecture will offer thus a historical perspective on the pressures on the academies today to grapple with the limits of the existing disciplines and the weight of what Bheki Petersen has termed the Black Humanities (2017) developed over the last century by intellectuals and thinkers outside those disciplines.

Professor Jan Abbink

Political renewal in Africa? Popular protest and governance in Sudan and Ethiopia, 2016-2020

Sudan and Ethiopia have recently gone through remarkable phases of political renewal. Mass popular protests in the past years have led to changes of government and leadership. This is quite surprising for what were two of the most autocratic regimes in Africa. How did this come about? Was real 'system change' achieved? Is the 'power of the streets' enough to cause a transformation of the political system and of governance practices in these countries? What were the political skills of the protesters, and why were the regimes sensitive to change? I will look at the political culture and historical heritage in these two countries - which fell outside the 1960s wave of African independence - to see if certain underlying 'structures' and political-demographic dynamics might complicate or hinder durable changes in the political system. I will also discuss the future prospects of democratic breakthrough, civic-political freedoms and economic development in the two countries, to see if they are on course to realise the ideals and demands voiced by the mass protests.