

C&T Lecture Notes on 9.14.05

Discussion: Curtis Keim's *Mistaking Africa* (Readings Book H)

- A. Where did you first find out about Africa?
 - a. Media:
 - i. Movies
 1. Air Up There
 2. Coming to America
 3. Lion King
 4. Hotel Rwanda
 5. The Gods Must Be Crazy
 - b. School:
 - i. Geography
 - ii. Colonialism: occurred in Africa
 - c. Preconceptions:
 - i. South Africa
 1. known best
 2. Dave Matthews
 3. not much else
 - ii. Ethiopians:
 1. jokes
 2. South Park (tv show)
 3. Running
 - iii. Egypt:
 1. Arabic associations
 2. mummies
 - d. Information:
 - i. Media
 1. CNN
 - a. Only reports negative events (typically military related)
 2. Internet
 3. Violence
 - a. World wide negativity vs. American concept
- B. Where are we ignorant when it comes to Africa?
 - a. Culture:
 - i. All summed up together as a continent rather than individual countries
 - ii. Day to day life
 - b. Primitive:
 - i. National Geographic images (focus is usually on the rural areas and "primitive" tribes)
- C. Is Africa music part of Western society?
 - a. No (general consensus)

- i. Maybe some western music is influenced, but no real African breakthroughs have occurred in the West
- D. Keim: *Mistaking Africa*
 - a. Evolution:
 - i. Separating races and cultures
 - ii. P. 33 polytheist vs. monotheist to justify slavery
 - iii. Societies advance from simple to more advanced
 - iv. 3 categories: (by nature)
 - 1. savages
 - 2. barbarians
 - 3. civilized
 - v. westerners see industrialization as civilized
 - 1. does living in city guarantee civilized?
 - b. “Moderate Racism”
 - i. originally Europeans thought of Africans as bad and savage men, but still as men
 - c. flip side- If Africans conquered the West, maybe they would look down on west for lack of nature
 - d. Boas:
 - i. West considered African customs to be primitive, but they were also found to be rational and creative under the circumstances
 - ii. Cultural relativism vs. Evolutionism
 - iii. P. 47 culture understood on own terms
 - 1. *Dances with Wolves*
 - 2. can't take things out of context (apples to oranges)
 - iv. others doing evolutionism theories, while Boas experienced the cultures that he was studying