

Ben Gurion University of the Negev

Faculty for Humanities and Social Science

Youth in Africa: transitioning from childhood to adulthood.

Second Semester, Monday 16:00-18:00, 2025 (online)

Lecturer: Dr. Manya Oriel Kagan kaganm@post.bgu.ac.il

Africa is the youngest continent in the world, with more than half of its population between the ages of 0-24 and above, 250 million over the age of 15. Transitioning from childhood to adulthood does not always align with chronological ages and is influenced by numerous local and global forces. The concepts of youth and adolescence both vary and are similarly shaped cross-culturally. While populations around the world are aging, young people in Africa are shaping the face of the future. This course will discuss contemporary aspects of youth's lives, focusing on shaping youth within global, national, and local contexts. The categories of youth are flexible and achieved through everyday practice. We will examine topics such as socialization, development, rites of passage, adult perspectives of the adolescent experience, subcultures, and youth engagement with globalization and technology. In our discussions, we will also consider how adolescents are active agents in shaping the world around them and, conversely, how they are shaped by their worlds. We will critically engage with theoretical frameworks from within and outside the continent and explore the structural challenges and the coping mechanisms young people face in forming their place within families, communities, and countries.

Course Requirements:

Attendance, reading & active participation with open cameras – **obligatory**. Both individually and collectively, attendance and active participation are essential to a successful learning environment – especially in an online course. Although there will be a significant amount of class time devoted to lectures, we will have time during every lecture to discuss the issues raised in the lecture, the readings, your projects, and your personal experience.

Midterm assignment 1– 30%

Midterm assignment 2 – 30%

Midterm assignment 3 – 30%

Course participation – 7% + Presentation of midterm assignment – 3%

Weekly Meetings: (Subject to Change)

March 17th, week 1: Introduction

- Abbink, Jon (2005). Being young in Africa: The politics of despair and renewal. In, Jon Abbink and Ineke van Kessel (eds.). *Vanguards or Vandals: Youth, politics and conflict in Africa*. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 1-34.

March 24th, week 2: “African Childhoods”- Guest Speaker Dr. Naama Morag

- Bluebond-Langner, M. “Challenges and Opportunities in the Anthropology of Childhoods: An Introduction to ‘Children, Childhoods, and Childhood Studies.’” *American Anthropologist* 109(2): 241-246.
- Imoh, Afua Twum-Danso (2016). From the singular to the plural: Exploring diversities in contemporary childhoods in sub-Saharan Africa. *Childhood* 23(3) 455-468.
- Ansell, Nicola (2017) Global South Research in Children’s Geographies: from useful illustration to conceptual challenge. *Establishing Geographies of Children and Young People*. (Eds.) Skelton, S. Aitken, ^Springer Nature Singapore Pte Ltd.
- James, Allison, and James, Adrian (2004) *Constructing childhood: Theory, policy, and social practice*. Hampshire & New York: Palgrave Macmillan. Introduction.

Eid Al-Fitr

April 7th, week 3: Youth Studies and research

1st assignment

- Furlong, Andy (2013). Youth Studies: An introduction. Routledge, chapter 1, pg. 1-18.
- Cooper, Adam, Swartz, Sharlene, and Mahali, Alude (2019) Disentangled, decentred, and democratised: Youth Studies for the global South. *Journal of Youth Studies* 22(1): 29-45.
- Cerecer, Quijada, Alberto, David, Cahill, Caitlin, and Matt Bradley (2013) Toward a critical youth policy praxis: Critical youth studies and participatory action research. *Theory into practice* 52(3): 216-223.

- Swartz, Sharlene, and Anye Nyamnjoh (2018). Research as freedom: Using a continuum of interactive, participatory, and emancipatory methods for addressing youth marginality. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 74(3): 1-11
- Morrow, Virginia. (2013). "Practical Ethics in Social Research with Children and Families in Young Lives: A longitudinal study of childhood poverty in Ethiopia, Andhra Pradesh (India), Peru and Vietnam." *Methodological Innovations Online* 8(2): 21-35. (E)

Passover

April 21st, Week 4: Becoming Youth

- Tefferi, Hirut. (2007) Reconstructing Adolescence after displacement: experience from Eastern Africa. *Children and Society* 21 297-308.
- Pooley, Thomas M. (2020). Songs of gender and generation: ethnographic perspectives on initiation songs and wellbeing in Southern Africa. *The Routledge Companion to interdisciplinary studies in singing: Volume 3*.
- Munthali, Alister and Zulum E. M (2007). The timing and role of initiation rites in preparing young people for adolescence and responsible sexual and reproductive behaviour in Malawi. *Sabinet: African Journal of Reproductive Health*. 11(3).

April 28th, Week 5: Living in Waithood – Guest Speaker Dr. Noa Levy –

- Masquelier, Adeline (2013) Teatime: Boredom and the temporalities of young men in Niger. *Africa* 83(3): 470-491.*
- Vigh, Henrik (2006) Social death and violent life chances. In *Navigating Youth, Generating Adulthood: Social Becoming in an African Context*. Catrine Christiansen, Mats Utas and Henrik Vigh (eds.), 31-60. Uppsala: Nordiska Afrika Institutet.*
- Honwana, Alcinda M. (2008) *The time of Youth: Work, Social Change, and Politics in Africa*. Boulder & London: Kumarian Press. Chapter 1 & 2.
- Honwana, Alcinda M. (2013) *Youth, waithood and protest movements in Africa*, International African Institute Lugard Lecture.

May 5th, Week 6: Making ends meet: 2nd Assignment

- Mwaura, Grace Muthoni (2017). Just farming? Neoliberal subjectivities and agricultural livelihoods among educated youth in Kenya. *Development and Change* 48(6): 1310-1335.*
- Finn, Brandon and Oldsfield, Sophie (2015) Straining: Young men working through Waithood in Freetown, Sierra Leone. *Africa Spectrum* 50(3): 29-48.*
- Camfield, Laura, and Yisak Tafere (2009) “No, living well does not mean being rich’: Diverse understandings of well-being among 11-13-year-old children in three Ethiopian communities.” *Journal of Children and Poverty* 15:119-138. (E)
- Atif Awad (2020) From school to employment; the dilemma of youth in Sub-Saharan Africa, *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 25:1, 945-964

May 12th, Gendered negotiations:

- Did you Go to School for this? Bocast Brooke Schwartz. <https://www.anthropology-news.org/articles/did-you-go-to-school-for-this/>
- Boehm, Christian (2006). Industrial labor, marital strategy and changing livelihood trajectories among young women in Lesotho. In, Catrine Christiansen, Mats Utas and Henrik E. Vigh (eds.), *Navigating Youth, Generating Adulthood: Social Becoming in an African Context*. Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 153-182.*
- Janson, Marlose (2016) ‘How, for God’s sake, can I be a good Muslim?’: Gambian youth in search of a moral lifestyle. *Ethnography* 17(1): 22-46.*

May 19th, Culture and Youth:

- Adhis, Paula 2024. From Nairobi to Seoul. Okay Africa <https://www.okayafrica.com/kpop-kenya-africa/>
- Dillabough, Jo Anne and A. Kennelly, *Lost Youth in the Global South: Class, Culture and the Urban Imaginary*. Routledge Press.
- Hansen, Karen Tranberg. 2008. Introduction: Youth and the City. *Youth and the City in the Global South*.
- Cole, Jennifer. 2011. *A Cultural Dialectics of Generational Change: The view from Contemporary Africa*.
- *Youth and Popular Culture in Africa : Media, Music, and Politics*, edited by Paul Ugor, University of Rochester Press, 2021. ProQuest Ebook Central,

<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/upenn-ebooks/detail.action?docID=6730404>.

- Youth Challenges African Tradition. New York Times (1972)

May 26th, Technology and Youth:

- Obijiofor, L. (2010). New technologies as tools of empowerment: African youth and public sphere participation. In *Popular media, democracy and development in Africa* (pp. 223-236). Routledge.
- Tournadre, J. 2019. Between Boredom, Protest, and Community: Ethnography of Yung Activists in a South African Township. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 49(3) 318-344.
- Etieyibo, E. (2016). Information and Communication Technologies and African Youth in a Globalized World. In *African Youth Cultures in a Globalized World* (pp. 127-148). Routledge.
- Henrik Vigh (2009) Wayward Migration: On Imagined Futures and Technological Voids, *Ethnos*, 74:1, 91-109, DOI: 10.1080/00141840902751220

Shavnot

June 9th, Aspirations of migration – Refugee Youth Strategies of Mobility-

- Dubinsky, Itamar and Schler, Lynn (2019) Goal dreams: Conflicting development imaginaries in Ghanaian football academies. *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 57(2): 247-272.*
- Henrik Vigh (2009) Wayward Migration: On Imagined Futures and Technological Voids. *Ethnos* 74(1): 91-109.*
- Grayson, Catherine-Lune (2017) *Children of the camp: the lives of Somali Youth raised in Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya*. Bergharn Books. Chapter 3. 71-92.
- Clark-Kazak, C 2014 “A refugee is someone who refused to be oppressed”: Self-Survival Strategies of Congolese Young People in Uganda. *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development*, 3(1): 13.
- Van Blerk, L., Shand, W. et al. (2021). *Youth transitions in protracted crises: conceptualizing the ‘rupture’ of refugees’ pathways to adulthood in Uganda and Jordan*. *Trans Inst Br Geographies*, 47: 315-330.

June 16th, week 13: Politics from Below: Civil society and hope 3rd assignment

- Ibiduni M'Cormack (2007) Empower Youth in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone: A Case Study of GTZ-International Services. *Africa Insight* 37(3): 344-361.
- Abdou, Ehaab D. and Skalli, Loubna H. (2017) Egyptian youth-led civil society organizations: Alternative spaces for civic engagement. In, Elina Oinas, Henri Onodera and Leena Suurpää (eds.), *What Politics? Youth in a Globalizing World*, Volume 6. Brill, 75-94.*
- Tournadre, Jérôme (2019) Between boredom, protest, and community: Ethnography of young activists in a South African township. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 49(3): 318-34.
- Muhula, Raymond (2007) Youth and Politics in Kenya: Promise or Peril. *Africa Insight* 37(3): 362-375.
- Fokwang, Jude. (2016) Politics at the margins: alternative sites of political involvement among young people in Cameroon. *Canadian Journal of African Studies/Revue canadienne des études africaines* 50(2): 211-228.
- Kamete, Amin (2007) Youth in urban governance: Rationalities, encounters, and interaction in Zimbabwe. *Africa Insight* 37(3): 327-343

June 23rd, week 14: Short presentations/ submissions of 3rd midterm assignments

Enjoy the semester!

Instructions for Assignments and grading: (subject to change)

Participation and active reading are mandatory. Students are expected to read the materials, engage with them, and provide critical observations and questions on the topic in class. Unless indicated otherwise, reading the first article in the list under each week's unit is mandatory, while others are suggestions for further reading.

3–5-minute presentation of either of the 3 midterm assignments during the last class. Please notify title and put yourself on the schedule via Moodle by the 7th of July.

3 midterm assignments. Each will be 600-1000 words focusing on a different aspect of the course and topic related to youth. Instructions for the assignments and specific dates will be provided later but one will be assigned in March, second in May, last in beginning

of July. The papers must be 1.5 spaced, with one-inch margins and in 12-point font. your name, title, course name and assignment number at the top of the first page. Be sure to use AAA citation format and properly cite any direct quotes, paraphrases, or other ideas you use from the readings. It should be clear what information comes from the texts and which are your own ideas. Include a Bibliography at the end of your paper (the bibliography does not count towards the word count). You must also submit your notes, data chart, and/or copies of the material culture as Appendices to your paper. Your papers will be graded on a 30-point scale. Your score will be based on the: Main argument (finding and significance)—5 points. Supporting claims and evidence (presented, explained)—12 points. Explanation of relevance to course reading, concept—8 points. Overall readability (grammar, spelling, clarity of writing, organization, etc.)—3 points. Formatting (AAA style, correct citation, inclusion of Bibliography, Appendices)—2 point.