Topical Seminar: The Social Context of HIV/AIDS in Africa
Centre of African Studies, Autumn 2010

Tuesdays 8.45-11.00 a.m. in Auditorium 7 (1st floor)

With PhD student Louise Nygaard Rasmussen

This course brings together a range of different social science perspectives on HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa. During the course we will discuss the history of AIDS in Africa; the social, economic, political, cultural and biological contexts in which HIV/AIDS was able to spread so rapidly on the continent, especially in Eastern and Southern Africa. HIV/AIDS appeared in African societies at a time of social and economic transformations, we will discuss how HIV/AIDS can be interpreted as part of these transformations, as well as the profound effects HIV/AIDS itself have had on families, kinship, moralities and notions of gender and sexualities.

The AIDS epidemic in Sub-Saharan Africa has also been the centre of international attention and intervention. The course deals with how HIV/AIDS in Africa has been conceptualised as a problem of international development interventions and of global health governance; we will discuss how representations of ‘African AIDS’ are connected to a longer history of representing Africa, how to analyse global and local interventions to address the AIDS epidemic in the context of international & national politics and economics, and how the international AIDS interventions and discourses have fed into and influenced local political, moral and cultural debates on how to address the AIDS epidemic.

Course overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tue 7 Sept</td>
<td>8.45-11</td>
<td>Introduction: the history of AIDS in Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tue 14 Sept</td>
<td>8.45-11</td>
<td>A political economy of AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tue 21 Sept</td>
<td>8.45-11</td>
<td>AIDS, Africa and representation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tue 28 Sept</td>
<td>8.45-11</td>
<td>AIDS, gender &amp; sexualities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tue 12 Oct</td>
<td>8.45-11</td>
<td>Anthropologies of AIDS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tue 19 Oct</td>
<td>8.45-11</td>
<td>AIDS &amp; governance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tue 26 Oct</td>
<td>8.45-11</td>
<td>HIV/AIDS prevention interventions and their social effects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tue 16 Nov</td>
<td>8.45-11</td>
<td>Family and kinship in a time of AIDS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tue 23 Nov</td>
<td>8.45-11</td>
<td>AIDS &amp; Religion: Moralities questioned and re-configured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tue 30 Nov</td>
<td>8.45-11</td>
<td>Providing antiretroviral treatment in African settings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tue 7 Dec</td>
<td>8.45-11</td>
<td>Living on antiretroviral treatment: hopes, dilemmas and uncertainties</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Course format**
The course begins with an introduction session and then moves into 5 sessions each dedicated to introducing one particular theoretical/analytical approach to study the social context of HIV/AIDS in Africa. These theoretical approaches are 1) political economy, 2) discourses and politics of representations, 3) gender & sexualities studies, 4) anthropology (espec. medical anthropology) and 5) governance. The purpose with these sessions is to equip the students with a number of different analytical tools, which will be used throughout the course and which the students can also build on in their exam papers. Sessions 7 to 11 are dedicated to more thematically focused sessions.

**Course literature**
Each session have a number of readings which you are expected to have read before the class. Some sessions also have “further readings”, which are suggestions for further reading on the topic (especially relevant for those wanting to write their exam paper around the particular topic). The further reading texts are not in the compendium, but they will be made available in paper format and in electronic format to the extent possible.

7 September 2010: Introduction: the history of AIDS in Africa
The course will begin with an overall introduction to the course content. This introduction session will include a historical overview of the AIDS epidemic in sub-Saharan Africa from the possible Central African origins of HIV to the current situation, which will highlight the relevance and need for the broad social science perspective that this course proposes.

*We will also discuss various practicalities of the course and its exam, which will include planning for student presentations throughout the course.*


14 September 2010: A political economy of HIV/AIDS on the African continent
In this session a political economy approach to study HIV/AIDS in Africa is introduced, which includes investigating how broader economic, social and political forces have contributed both to the spread and impact of HIV/AIDS on the African continent and to the international policy response. This kind of political economy perspective attempts to sharpen the lens through which disease and globalisation is understood – as a complex articulation of the biological, the behavioural and the political economy.


21 September 2010: AIDS, Africa and representation
This session introduces to an analytical perspective on discourses and politics of representation. In the session we will discuss how ‘African AIDS' has been represented in international discourse since the late 1980s to today. The politics of these representations will be discussed in relation to colonial and post-colonial imaginations, and prevailing rationalities of international development assistance.


Further reading:

28 September 2010: AIDS, gender & sexualities
This session introduces to different contemporary approaches to the study of gender and sexualities in Africa. We will both discuss how locally grounded studies of gender and sexualities can be used to discuss the social context of the spread of HIV in sub-Saharan Africa, as well as how this kind of analytical perspective also can be used to critically engage with international and local representations of gender and sexualities in Africa.


Further reading:

12 October 2010: Anthropologies of AIDS
This session will introduce to anthropological approaches to studying local experiences and meaning-making of the AIDS epidemic. The theoretical/analytical approach presented is a medical anthropology approach which focuses on the pragmatics of addressing misfortunes. We will also discuss more broadly anthropologies of AIDS which bring attention to how local societies make sense of the AIDS epidemic as part of larger moral, social and economic transformations of their society.


Further reading:

19 October 2010: AIDS & governance
This session introduces to a global health governance perspective, which highlights the international relations of global health governance around HIV/AIDS; analysing the interfaces between different state, private and hybrid actors involved in the global governance of HIV, and in particular the position Sub-Saharan Africa have had in global institutional response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. We will also discuss how these global governance structures have influenced responses on the ground.


Further reading:

26 October 2010: HIV/AIDS prevention interventions and their social effects
This session is the first of the thematically oriented sessions. One theoretical text is included though, to introduce broadly to the perspective of studying the moralities involved in objectifying sex and sexuality in the name of health and well-being. Using Uganda as a case, the session will discuss how HIV/AIDS prevention interventions may be practically implemented on the ground, and the different, and often unintended, social effects such interventions have had in the realm of gender and sexualities.


Further reading:

16 November 2010: Family and kinship in a time of AIDS
In this session, we will discuss the impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic on family and kinship relations in different localities in Eastern and Southern Africa. We will specifically touch upon the situation of people living with HIV/AIDS and of those orphaned and widowed as a consequence of AIDS, but also more broadly discuss how families and communities respond to the social breakdowns associated with increased suffering and death.

Further reading:

23 November 2010: AIDS & Religion: Moralities questioned and re-configured
As discussed in the anthropologies of AIDS session, we can identify different local attempts at making sense of the AIDS epidemic in and within different localities. In this session we continue this discussion in relation to religion. We will discuss various ways that people in different African societies rely upon shared religious practices and personal faith in order to conceptualise, understand and thereby act upon the AIDS epidemic.


Further reading:

30 November 2010: Providing antiretroviral treatment in African countries
Contrary to what seemed possible only a few years back, the access to antiretroviral treatment has rapidly increased in many African countries in the last five years. However, working for ‘universal
access’ to antiretroviral treatment in African countries is structured by a number of political, economic and social constraints at the national and international level. On the basis of recently conducted fieldwork in Uganda, we will discuss how these dilemmas play out and are attempted worked in the local context.


7 December 2010: Living on antiretroviral treatment: hopes, dilemmas and uncertainties

With the increasing access to antiretroviral treatment in many African countries, most people living with HIV/AIDS no longer think of themselves heading towards certain death, but as being on a path of uncertain survival. Based on recently conducted fieldwork in Uganda, this session will discuss the hopes, dilemmas and uncertainties living on antiretroviral treatment brings in the context of uneven access, precarious livelihoods, and funding-dependent interventions.