



Center for African Studies

Fall 2017 Colloquium
Tuesdays, 12:30 – 2:00 PM
223 Moses Hall

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This is ~~Socialist~~ Ghana Television

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Unlike the origins of radio and cinema, television in Ghana was born without the baggage of paternalistic colonial ancestry. The first broadcast on July 31st, 1965 came out of a radical time when Africans across the continent were boldly and creatively inventing systems of governance resistant to imperialism and global white supremacy and promoting the visions of Pan-Africanism and African socialism. Yet, with the 24th February 1966 coup d'état, only seven months after programming began, Ghanaian socialist television came to an end. Based on summer archival research and oral histories from pioneers of Ghana Television, in this talk I will ask what role socialism played in the origins of Ghana television. I will show that television in Ghana mediated two seemingly divergent ambitions; to produce a radically novel African socialist media system that would promote empowering images made by and for Africans while actively working to ensure that Ghana television met modern global standards by hiring British, Canadian, and Japanese experts for technical consultation and financial assistance. I argue that a continuation of UNESCO communication policies after the coup, which emphasized the educational potential of broadcast as a means for modernization, concealed the loss of the radical socialist angles of Ghana television.



Jennifer Blaylock is a PhD candidate in Film & Media at University of California, Berkeley. Her dissertation, "Spectacularly Mobile: Transnational Histories of New Media in Ghana," narrates the history of new media technologies in Ghana from the early 1900s to the present. Each chapter focuses on a different media technology to reveal discursive continuities and ruptures in the way new media technologies have been imagined in the context of Sub-Saharan African development. In addition to her PhD work in Film & Media, she holds an MA in Moving Image Archiving and Preservation from New York University.