

The Audrey Richards Annual Lecture in African Studies

Professor Simon Gikandi

"The Formation of African Intellectuals"



Friday 9 March 2012 at 5pm

The Keynes Lecture Theatre, King's College, Cambridge

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The basic premise of this lecture is that what has come to be known as the crisis of postcolonial society in Africa is not simply about the collapse of the infrastructure of modernity, nor the extroverted nature of African knowledge, but the historical process by which intellectuals were formed on the continent. I will argue that the most influential intellectual class in Africa was produced on the margins of the colonial system of power, and that their most important mode of expression was "creative writing." I will focus on how the written narrative became the mode through which modern African identities could be imagined, African life ordered, and a new social order narrated both within and outside colonialism. My lecture will focus on a group of "organic" intellectuals, newly literate conscripts to modernity, whose work was crucial in establishing African histories and identities.

Simon Gikandi is Robert Schirmer Professor of English at Princeton University and editor of the *PMLA*, the official journal of the Modern Languages Association of America. He is the author of many books and articles including *Writing in Limbo: Modernism and Caribbean Literature*, *Maps of Englishness: Writing Identity in the Culture of Colonialism*, and *Ngugi wa Thiong'o*, which was a Choice Outstanding Academic Publication for 2004. He is the co-editor of *The Cambridge History of African and Caribbean Literature* and the editor of the *Routledge Encyclopedia of African Literature*. His new book, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste* was published by Princeton University Press in 2011.