

# 20.06.

18:15–19:45 Uhr  
HS 13  
(Forum 7)

# ifeas

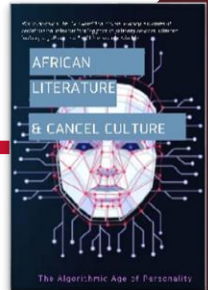
Institut für  
Ethnologie und  
Afrikastudien

## 2023

# James Yékú

University of Kansas

## African Literature and Cancel Culture: The Algorithmic Age of Personality



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My talk is based on my ongoing book project on the problem of cancel culture and literary controversies in social media commentary discourses on African literature. We can hardly think about the way African literature in the current conjuncture is understood as sharing intimacy with digital modes of publishing and circulations without considering what role algorithms play both in that process and in fostering a culture of outrage in literary conversations on African writing. Unlike other digital media forms, social media and blogging are the most prevalent tools of digital storytelling and cultural productions on the continent, but the design and algorithmic politics of these platforms are not sufficiently interrogated in African literary criticism. Literary controversies and cancel culture discourses on prizes and digital literary magazines in African literature allow me to address this problem. Unlike the print domains of previous literary controversies and scandals in African literature, the participatory web has emerged as the favored arena for staging the rhetorical spectacle of these forceful arguments and debates, but importantly than the reterritorialization of outrage is the configuration of these controversies by the technical structures and algorithmic protocols of the web platforms themselves. The role of digital media in the aesthetic expansion of African literature may be well established, but how do African literary discourses circulate on digital media platforms that are algorithmically designed to monetize affective interactions? In tackling this question, my work is motivated by the fact of digital culture as proximate to extractive data relations which are often underplayed in discussions that center the platformization of African literary and cultural forms.

**James Yékú** is an assistant professor of African and African American Studies at the University of Kansas where he leads various initiatives in African digital humanities. He is the author of *Cultural Netizenship: Social Media, Popular Culture, and Performance in Nigeria*, and the collection of poems, *Where the Baedeker Leads*.

Weitere Informationen: [www.ifeas.uni-mainz.de](http://www.ifeas.uni-mainz.de)

Institutskolloquium Sommersemester 2023 Leitung: Heike Drothohn

JG|U