



## Florence Bernault Professor

Email: [bernault@wisc.edu](mailto:bernault@wisc.edu)  
Phone: (608)263-5424  
Office: 4131 Mosse Humanities  
Mailbox: 4006 Mosse Humanities

Curriculum Vitae: [View PDF](#)

Website: <http://history.wisc.edu/bernault/>

Office Hours: On Leave

Education: PhD: University of Paris-Diderot; MA: University of Paris-Sorbonne; BA: University of Paris-Sorbonne

### Bio Sketch:

My specializations are Equatorial African History and Contemporary Africa. I teach and research on the formation of modern identities, nation-states, and popular culture in West and Equatorial Africa, from the 19th century to the present. I offer courses and seminars on Africa since 1870, on Equatorial Africa since 1500, on Non-Traditional Sources for Modern African History, on African Christianity, and on African Art from the Primitive to the Global: Collections, Tourism, Museums. I have also written extensively on France's current debates about citizenship, naturalization, immigration and the colonial debt.

My work so far has discussed political crises in Congo-Brazzaville and Gabon, and modern forms of punishment in sub-Saharan Africa, in particular custodial imprisonment. I am currently completing a book monograph, *Struggles For the Sacred: A History of Colonialism and the Occult in Equatorial Africa*, that investigates the history of magic in Gabon, and more broadly, the cross-emergence of black and white anxieties about materiality and spiritual agency since the late 19th century. I explore how, as such realms became entangled in colonial assaults and global fluxes, the French and the Gabonese elaborated key representations and tactics concerning accepted divides between the material and immaterial, the sacred and the profane, and the social and market value of the human body. In doing so, the book engages African and colonial history with studies on biopolitics and materiality, and with global intellectual history.

In addition to *Struggles for the Sacred*, I am working on three projects. One concerns the history of the fetish in the colonial context. The second is a collective project on Histories of Violence in Africa. The third one analyzes Late Nativism, archaic fathers and burdensome bodies in the movie *Avatar* (2009).

### Selected Publications: (see my website)

- Ruptures postcoloniales. Les nouveaux visages de la société française [Postcolonial Ruptures. New Trends in French Society] (Paris: La Découverte, 2010), co-editor
- A History of Prison and Confinement in Africa (Portsmouth, NJ: Heinemann, 2003), editor
- Démocraties ambiguës en Afrique centrale: Congo-Brazzaville, Gabon, 1940-1965 [Ambiguous Democracies. Gabon, Congo-Brazzaville, 1940-1965] (Paris: Karthala, 1996)
- "Witchcraft and the Colonial Life of the Fetish," in B. Meier and A. Steinforth, eds., *Spirits in Politics: Uncertainties of Power and Healing in African Societies*, (Frankfurt a.M.: Campus Publishers, 2013), 53-74.
- "Quelque chose de pourri dans le post-empire," [Something's Rotten in the Post-Empire] *Cahiers d'études africaines* 199 (Dec. 2010), 771-798.
- "Colonial Bones: The 2006 Burial of Savorgnan de Brazza," *African Affairs*, vol. 109, 436 (July 2010), 367-390.
- "La chair et son secret: Transfiguration du fétiche et incertitude symbolique au sud-Gabon," [The Flesh and Its Secret: Fetish and Symbolic Uncertainty in Southern Gabon] *Politique africaine*, 115 (October 2009), 99-122.
- "Colonial Syndrome: French Modern and the Deceptions of History," in C. Tshimanga-Kashama, D. Gondola & P. Bloom, eds., *Frenchness and the African Diaspora*, Bloomington, 2009
- "Fin de règne au Gabon" [End of Gabon's Monarchy], special issue of *Politique africaine*, 115 (October 2009), guest editor with Joseph Tonda.



Awards:

- John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship, 2001
- H. I. Romnes Faculty Award, University of Wisconsin, 2000-2005
- Fellow, Institute for Research in the Humanities, University of Wisconsin Spring 2000
- Vilas Associateship, University of Wisconsin, 1998-2000

Courses Taught:

Lecture Courses:

- History 378 - History of Africa Since 1870 - [Syllabus 2011 \(pdf\)](#)
- History 445 - History of Equatorial Africa - [Syllabus 2012 \(pdf\)](#)

Undergraduate Seminars:

- History 500 - Reading Seminar in History - Topics: "African Art From the Primitive to the Global: Collections, Tourism, and Museums" [Syllabus 2012 \(pdf\)](#)
- History 600 - Advanced Seminar in History - Topics: "History of Africa "; "Imagining Africa (19th- 21st centuries)" [Syllabus 2009 \(pdf\)](#)

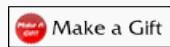
Graduate Courses:

- History 703 - History and Theory
- History 751 - Proseminar in the History of Africa
- History 774 - Methods for Historical Research in Non-Literate Societies - Topics: "Methodologies for Modern African History" [Syllabus 2012 \(pdf\)](#)
- History 861 - Seminar in the History of Africa - Topics: "African Christianity" [Syllabus 2011 \(pdf\)](#)

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