Medicine, Health, and Markets in Africa
UCL Seminar
Kris Peterson

This seminar will examine ethnographic approaches to political economy as well as theories of capital and property in Africa. Through the lens of medicine, health, and markets we will think through both knowledge production and ethnographic scaling. We will examine significant changes that occurred in the 1970s – the crash of African commodity markets, the significance of oil, the rise of speculative capital, the power of the Washington consensus, structural adjustment, and nationalism and decolonization. How did these events help make Africa what it is today? How do they pertain to current critical issues concerning access to drugs, disease burden, drug markets, and clinical research in Africa? In addition to understanding these linkages, we will closely examine works that pertain to health concerns of local actors and well as larger-scale systems such as commodity chains, transnational markets, and intellectual property law. We will also examine the kind of methods, writing strategies, and theoretical frameworks that are used to make sense of multiple and complex activities. Drawing on the readings as well as outside works (if students wish), students will be expected to write a 5-10 paper on either these or related themes of the course.

Tentative Reading Schedule (subject to change)


Guillaume Lachenal. “Viruses as resources: State collapse, neo-liberal government and the economy of AIDS research in Cameroon.” Manuscript


