



The Department of

Sociology and Social Anthropology
cordially invites you to

Essentialism, grief, and student protests at South African universities

Public Lecture by
Inge Konik, Adrian Konik

as part of our Seminar Series

Date and Time: Monday, October 17. 17:30

Venue: CEU, Monument Building Gellner room

The #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall student protests, which began at South African universities in 2015, have recently ground the academic project to a halt across the country, forcing many universities to close due to violence perpetrated by the protesters. This violence includes the burning down of university buildings, intimidation of non-protesting staff/students, and most recently, armed attacks on journalists, security personnel, and the police ordered in by the president to quell the unrest. The cost of the damage currently stands at one billion rand. Although these protests have been accounted for in political and/or economic terms because of the protesters' demands for the *decolonization* of all university curricula and *free* education for all – their existential dimensions have rarely been thematized. Accordingly, in this presentation, we consider the possibility that the student protests are at least partially linked to a wider experience of emotional crisis, related to the loss of an essentialist African renaissance dream in the wake of the Marikana massacre of 2012 – in which 34 striking mineworkers were killed by police. As will be discussed, this essentialist African renaissance dream, orientated around the anticipated revival of ostensible precolonial African social harmony and purity in the wake of apartheid, grew up alongside Thabo Mbeki's post-1994 dream of an African renaissance predicated on free market economics. However, the tragedy of Marikana revealed it to be without foundation, and this has seriously problematized any continued emotional recourse to the struggle ontology of the past.

Adrian Konik is an associate professor of Cultural Studies and Film Studies in the Department of Journalism, Media and Philosophy, School of Language, Media and Culture, at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. In his research he draws mainly on the work of Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault.

Inge Konik is a postdoctoral research fellow in the Department of Philosophy, Faculty of the Humanities, University of the Free State. Her research is focused on indigenous value systems, ecological feminism, and social change.