

Public Abstract

First Name:Guimel

Middle Name:

Last Name:Sibingo

Adviser's First Name:Earnest

Adviser's Last Name:Perry

Co-Adviser's First Name:

Co-Adviser's Last Name:

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Department:Journalism

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Title:2014 Ebola Newspaper Coverage: Through the Lens of Orientalism

This study is a critical discourse analysis of United States (U.S.) newspaper coverage of the 2014 Ebola outbreak and its representation of West Africa in relation to the West. The study sought to determine whether the coverage reflected the theory of Orientalism, as defined by Palestinian-American philosopher Edward Said. Orientalism refers to the West's patronizing of Middle Eastern and Asian societies. Orientalism occurs when the West objectifies non-Western cultures turning them into an "other." In this study, the theory is applied to the West's patronizing of Africa.

The study analyzed 240 articles from The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal, and The Los Angeles Times and determined that Orientalism is indeed reflected in the coverage, contributing to negative media portrayals of the continent of Africa. It also shows that as an institution of power, U.S. newspaper media contributes to the creation of a subject-object view of Africa in regards to the continent's relationship with the West.