**Lecture 1: The “Matrilineal Puzzle”**

What is matrilineal kinship and where is it to be found? The first of these lectures begins with a discussion of what is meant by the term ‘matrilineal’, and goes on to consider the diversity of norms and practices that this category may contain. We will then look at the ways in which early observers in Africa, including Christian missionaries, colonial officials and anthropologists, understood (in many cases misunderstood) matrilineal norms of kinship. The so-called ‘matrilineal puzzle’ looms large in early efforts to get to grips with matriliney, and we will ask what this puzzle entailed and why it was considered puzzling.

**Lecture 2: Is Matriliny Doomed?**

If matriliney seems puzzling to many, it has also often been spoken about as in decline, or indeed ‘doomed’. The second lecture will ask whether we can reassess predictions of decline or assimilation to patrilineal norms in light of more recent ethnographic work. We will also ask why it might be important or illuminating for anthropologists working on seemingly unrelated topics to understand matrilineal kinship.

**Reading List**


Mohanty, Chandra T. (1988) 'Under Western eyes: feminist scholarship and colonial


**Possible Supervision Questions**

What is the ‘matrilineal puzzle’ and how puzzling is it?

Is matriliny doomed?

It is possible to argue that whether or not matrilineal norms of kinship prevail in a particular setting is irrelevant to the study of aspects of people’s lives beyond their kinship relations. To what extent do ethnographic studies conducted in matrilineal contexts support such a claim?