

PHILADELPHIA UNIVERSITY  
School of Liberal Arts

*L354.479 & 354.480 – Area Studies: Africa*

**RESEARCH PAPER**

Description of Paper

One of the major requirements for this course is that you write a typed 7-10 page research paper on contemporary Africa. This research paper should be a focused in-depth exploration of a topic which as much as possible combines your current and prospective career interests with the subject matter of this course.

Since this is a major research paper and not just a “report”, you will be expected to draw on ideas and information culled from current, relevant sources as well as your own knowledge and insights. You will need to be able to evaluate contrasting viewpoints and interpretations and then devise your own perspective on your topic. You also will need to use good research methods. This means having the ability to find useful material through electronic databases as well as through other research means. It also means taking the time to ensure that your sources are yielding reliable, truthful information. *Your paper, at a minimum, must consult at least 12 sources, excluding encyclopedias and other reference works (avoid “Wikipedia”).* It can be misleading for Africa). These 12 sources should be evenly divided between Internet materials; data base articles, and printed books. You should plan to spend a substantial amount of time on this project. For many of you, traveling to other libraries than the University’s will be necessary. Please take this fact into account when budgeting you time for the semester.

Format

Your paper must be word-processed in a standard typeface and font. Use standard margins (1” – 1 1/2”) on top, bottom, and on both sides. Number the pages of your paper. A standard page has about 250 words per page. All use of all sources must be appropriately documented both in the body of your paper and in your Works Cited list. Use MLA documentation unless you have been directed otherwise. **You must staple and number each page or your paper will be returned to you ungraded. Under no circumstances, can you e-mail your paper.** E-mailed

papers will be returned ungraded.

## Grading

This paper counts towards 30% of your final grade for the course; 5% for the topic proposal and 25% for the research paper itself. Please note that in order to receive credit for your proposal, you **must** turn it done in the proper format on the date due

## Stages of this project:

### **1. Topic Approval**

To get your topic approved, you must submit a proposal that begins with a paragraph-long description of your projected topic. Following this statement, in separate paragraphs, explain (a) what you already know about the topic, (b) what you think you might learn, and (c) how the topic fits each of the objectives for the assignment. End by listing 3-5 questions that you will want to investigate in your research (see attached sample proposal). These questions should form the foundation of the paper and be key to the topic under study.

Your proposal **MUST** be approved before you proceed with your project. You may **not** change your topic without approval. If your topic has not been approved in advance, your paper will not be accepted. If you do want to change your topic and your new topic is approved, you **must** still turn in a topic proposal for your new topic.

The proposal is **due**: February 2

### **2. Extra Credit Packet on Research Methods**

I have prepared three exercises designed to enhance your research skills. One exercise enables you to evaluate sites more efficiently. A second exercise will help you work with databases more effectively. The third exercise, an annotated bibliography, encourages you to read books and journal articles more analytically. If you successfully complete all three parts of the research methods packet, I will increase your grade on your research paper by 10%. Please note you must complete all three assignments and hand them in on time to receive

the 10% grade bonus.

The packet is **due**: March 16

### **3. Submission of Paper**

Your Paper will be **due**: March 23

### **4. Revision of Paper**

Any student receiving a grade below 85 on their paper is encouraged to submit a re-write. Two conditions must be met for a re-write. First, students need to meet with me to discuss any relevant content issues. Second, students **MUST** have a session at The Learning Center. Your grade on the re-write will supercede your grade on your initial draft. All revised papers must be submitted by the date of the final exam.

### **Academic Honesty**

Please familiarize yourself with the University's regulations on plagiarism. There will be a **zero tolerance policy** in this course regarding academic dishonesty, whether deliberate or accidental. Although we will discuss what constitutes plagiarism in class, please do not hesitate to consult me if you have any questions on this matter. I will check all papers for plagiarism using the latest software programs which are extremely efficient. All infractions will be dealt with in accordance with the stated university procedures.

## Suggested Topics

To get you thinking about your research paper, I have listed below, 20 potential topics.

- Roots of Environmental Crises in Africa (choose one or two countries)
- Militarization of Childhood in Sierra Leone and/or Liberia
- Revival of Democracy in Sénégal, Mali or Ghana
- Islam in Sénégal
- The Rise of African Fashion Designers
- Ecotourism in Tanzania or South Africa
- Oil and Development in Nigeria
- Popular Music in Nigeria, Sénégal, or The Congo
- Plight of Civilian Women in African War Zones
- Religious Conflict in Nigeria
- New Patterns of External Aid to Africa (Oprah, Bob Geldof, Bono etc.)
- Diamond Smuggling in Angola and/or Sierra Leone
- Women in Ghana
- Traditional Architecture in Nigeria
- Contemporary Art in Sénégal or Nigeria
- Soccer (football!) in Africa
- African Immigration to France
- African “Traditional” Medicine
- Mud brick Mosque Architecture in Mali
- Corruption and Democracy in Kenya

**Note:** There is a *moratorium* on the following two topics: “Female Circumcision in Africa” and “AIDS in South Africa”.

## Sample Topic Proposal

“The Changing Position of Women in Senegal”

Your name here (MW - 3:00)

My project will examine the changing position of women in Senegal.

Traditionally in Senegal, women enjoyed less freedom than women elsewhere in Africa. During French colonialism, though, western education created new opportunities for women and it became possible for women to enter prestigious wage professions like teaching. In the 1980s, two social movements had a profound impact on women in Senegal. A Feminist movement emerged which pushed for more equal legal and cultural rights for women. Simultaneously, an Islamic revival movement became influential which sought to circumscribe the growing autonomy of Senegalese women. My paper will analyze how these and other social and political forces have influenced the position of women in contemporary Senegalese culture.

A. *What I already know about the topic:*

I have read So Long a Letter and I also have learned about gender issues in other SLA courses. I have a broad idea of the situation of women in Senegal but I need to have more detailed information and I have to refine my thinking about the topic.

B. *What I will learn:*

I will learn about the complexity of women's' situations in Africa and I will gain a clearer sense of women and Islam.

C. *How this paper will meet the objectives of the assignment:*

This paper will increase my sensitivity to gender issues, will sharpen my research skills, and will enable me to gain an in depth understanding of contemporary Africa.

*Beginning Questions:*

1. What Senegalese women have become famous? How and why?
2. Is there such a thing as an **Islamic** position on women?
3. How have women in Senegal mobilized to achieve their goals?
4. What influence does class background have on the choices open to a Senegalese woman?
5. What forces and institutions are promoting increased opportunities for women in Senegal? What forces and institutions are putting obstacles in their path?

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The proposal is **due**: February 1

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The packet is **due**: March 15.

### **3. Submission of Paper**

Your Paper will be **due**: March 22

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