

PHILADELPHIA UNIVERSITY  
School of Liberal Arts

*L354.480 - Area Studies: Africa*

Spring, 2006

R.M. Shain  
Office: Ravenhill 22  
Office Hours: T & Th - 11:00-12:30  
and by appointment  
Tel: 951-6279  
e-mail: shainr@philau.edu

**OBJECTIVES**

This course like all the College Studies Area Studies courses is designed to make you a more effective professional and a deeper, more wide ranging individual. Through readings, discussions, music, and film, the course enhances your sensitivity to multicultural and gender concerns. This course seeks to transcend a pop internationalism to show you how contemporary cultural processes and economic trends have global dimensions. The course will show how these global processes and trends affect the practice and purpose of your professions, both in the present and in the future. This course also will improve your information literacy. The ability to retrieve and evaluate information from a variety of sources has become an essential component of many jobs. By honing your research skills, this course will greatly accelerate your professional development. This course is designed to be a bridge between the more locally focused courses you took in the School of Liberal Arts in your first year and the capstone course L911 you will take in your final year. It will familiarize you with some of the most pressing global concerns of the present age and help you see your major in more international terms.

This course introduces you to some of the major issues in contemporary African cultural, political and economic development. The course's approach is based on the premise that both Africa's present predicament - and its extraordinary promise - are embedded in its history. The unfolding tragedies of Sierra Leone, Liberia, the Sudan and the Congo can only be understood through a thorough knowledge of those nations' complex history. Similarly, Nelson Mandela's profound knowledge of South Africa's past was a major factor in shaping his politics.

The course will focus on three themes: African conceptions of leadership, the changing role of women in African culture, and the roots of ethnic and religious conflict currently so prevalent in Africa.

One of the most talked about issues in contemporary Africa itself concerns what type of leadership best suits Africa as it approaches the twenty-first century. Since African nations regained their independence in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, the continent has produced some of the most impressive statesmen of the twentieth century like South Africa's Nelson Mandela and Nigeria's Yakubu Gowon and some of the most appalling like Guinea's Sekou Toure and the Congo's Joseph Mobutu. Africans expect a lot from their leaders and tolerate few failures by them. As one way out of Africa's current economic and political crisis, many Africans want a return to the leadership styles of precolonial Africa. This course analyzes the nature of political leadership in precolonial Africa and sees what the leaders of the past can offer the leaders of the future.

Before the advent of European imperialism in the nineteenth century, the position of women in African societies varied according to local circumstances. Among the Akan peoples of modern day Ghana, women could be politically powerful. Women in the Yoruba cultures of Nigeria and the Republic of Benin often were extremely successful traders. Elsewhere in Africa, though, women lacked legal rights and were economically and socially confined to the domestic sphere. The spread of "western" education along with the development of "modern" economies in the twentieth century have allowed many women more control over their lives. This course examines contemporary African women's struggles and achievements.

In the postcolonial period, African nations, by and large, have had a poor track record in creating vibrant democracies. The legacy of colonial tyranny, the pressures of the cold war, and the challenges of rapid, state-driven modernization programs have all undermined the construction of democratic civic cultures. Frequently, authoritarian military regimes have seized power and terrorized their country's civilian populations. In other nations like Rwanda, the state sponsored attempts to systematically exterminate entire ethnic groups. Murderous religious strife between Christians and Muslims also has become a major problem in countries like Nigeria and the Sudan. This course explores the reasons why military rule, ethnic civil war and religious turmoil have become so prevalent in contemporary Africa.

## **REQUIRED TEXTS**

Bâ	<u>So Long a Letter</u>
Berkeley	<u>The Graves Are Not Yet Full</u>
Niane, editor	<u>Sundiata</u>
Wrong	<u>In the Footsteps of Mr. Kurtz</u>

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING**

Class Participation - 20%

Mid-Term - 20% - (includes map test, Niane and Bâ)

Research Essay - 30% (see separate hand-out)

Oral Presentation - 30% (see separate hand-out)

(Note: To receive a passing grade, you must complete all the course requirements).

## **PAPER**

You will be required to write a research paper for this course. It should be between seven and ten pages long and explore the connections between contemporary Africa and your area of professional specialization (see separate hand-out). It must be typed and properly foot-noted. **In addition, it must be stapled and each page must be numbered.** Papers, which contain more than five errors or are not properly foot-noted, will be returned ungraded. Be specific in your paper. Style counts, as does factual accuracy. Please do **not** e-mail papers. E-mailed papers will **not** be read and graded. Please familiarize yourself with the University's regulations regarding academic honesty. This course will enforce a **zero tolerance policy** for any form of plagiarism, whether planned or accidental. I will check your paper for plagiarism using the latest software programs. Those students who are guilty of plagiarism will receive a grade of "0" on their paper and will be reported to the university administration.

Your grade on your essays will reflect how well I think your work meets the following nine criteria:

- Effective introductory and concluding paragraphs

- Clean, uncluttered sentences with clear subjects and active verbs
- Well structured paragraphs with forceful topical sentences
- Strong over-all sense of organization
- A good argument or working hypothesis
- Textual examples from **all** parts of the assigned text
- Essay more analytical than descriptive
- Essay goes beyond classroom work
- Clear citations and a comprehensive bibliography

If you received a grade lower than 85, you have the option of rewriting your essay, provided it was turned in on time. Before you have turned in a re-write, you must have had both an individual conference with me **before** the last week of classes and a session at The Learning Center. I will mark your resubmitted work and record the higher of the two grades. Please remember when handing in your rewritten work, you **must** also turn in your original paper. Re-writes submitted without the original cannot be graded. Students are *strongly* advised to keep copies of their paper for this course on a disk/stick until after the final exam period.

Late papers: After the due date for your paper, I will post on my office door the ID numbers of the students who have not yet submitted their papers. All late papers can only be turned in to the Secretary of the School of Liberal Arts. I will retrieve the late papers from her. Please do not submit late papers directly to me.

### **ORAL PRESENTATIONS**

Each student in the class will be a member of a group responsible for making an oral presentation on political leadership in contemporary Africa (see separate handout for further instructions). The presentations should last between 20 and 25 minutes and each student should speak for at least ten minutes. Any student who misses their groups' presentation for any reason

other than illness will receive a "0". If students miss their presentation for a valid reason, they will have to write a typed, double-spaced five-page paper on their presentation topic. I will grade the presentations using the following four criteria:

- Seamless integration of reading, new research, and other course materials
- **Accuracy of information**
- Quantity of information
- Efficiency of presentation (organization, oral proficiency, effectiveness of audio-visual aids)

### **GROUP WORK**

Cooperative learning is an important component of this course. Numerous studies have shown that students learn best from one another. Consequently, group work will occur frequently in the class. To make this group work go smoothly, three rules will be in effect:

1. Groups should select a spokesperson (**griot/griotte**) but everyone should take notes and be prepared to present their group work to their classmates. At the beginning of the next class, each **griot** should turn in a typed summary (about ten lines) of their group's conclusions.
2. Everyone should participate. I will circulate around the room so I will be able to see if just a few people in each group are doing all the work. Failure to participate in-group discussions will adversely influence your end of the semester class participation grade.
3. Groups should NOT use group time to discuss matters EXTERNAL to the class. If you quickly finish your questions, let me know and I will give you more work. Failure to do so will significantly lower the class participation grade of everyone in the group.

### **HOW TO USE ASSIGNED READING DISCUSSION GUIDES**

As you work on the assigned reading, you should take detailed notes on the Reading Discussion Guide questions and write down your answers in a notebook. You should **always** bring this notebook to class. I will not inspect this notebook but I will call on you in class from time to time to

answer a Discussion Guide question when we are dealing with a particular reading assignment. If your answer to my question reveals that you have not done the reading carefully enough, it will have a negative impact on your class participation grade. Feel free to hand-in your Discussion Question notebook at any time for feedback and further guidance

## **TOPICS**

1. Paths Through the Rain Forest: Lineages of African Civilization.
2. The Places of History: Mapping Africa.
3. Big Men and Saints: Varieties of African Political Leadership.
4. A Tradition of Invention: African Religion and Islam.
5. The Fate of Vultures: Political Competition and Conflict in Postcolonial Africa.

## **READING ASSIGNMENTS AND CLASS CALENDAR**

January 19 - Course Orientation; Social Organization of Africa; Start Bâ.

January 24 & 26 - Finish Bâ; Niane: 4-70; Film: *Xala* (Ousmane Sembene, Senegal).

January 31 & February 2- Niane: 70-84; Topic Proposal **due** for Research Paper due Thursday, February 2.

February 7 & 9- Wrong: 1-61; Rough draft of oral presentations begin Thursday, February 9.

February 14 & 16 - Wrong: 62-148; Rough draft of oral presentations (cont.).

February 21 & 23 - Wrong: 151-248; Rough drafts of oral presentations conclude Tuesday, February 21. Mid-Term review: Thursday, February 22.

February 28 - The **Mid-Term** will be given on Tuesday, February 28. It

will include material from class discussions, Bâ, Niane, and a map test; No class on Thursday, March 2.

March 7 & 9 – Berkeley: 1-61.

March 14 & 16 - Berkeley: 195-243; Extra Credit Research Packet **due** on Thursday, March 16.

March 21 & 23 - Research Papers **due** on Thursday, March 23. Please note that e-mailed research papers will **not** be accepted *under any circumstances*.

March 28 & 30 - Berkeley: 195-243.

April 4 & 6 - Berkeley: 245-284.

April 11 & 13 – Work on Oral Presentations.

April 18 – April 18: Groups # 1 & 2 Oral Presentations; No class on Thursday, April 20.

April 25 & 27 – April 25: Groups 3 & 4 Oral Presentations; April 27: Group 5 Oral Presentation; Africa contemporary leadership in comparative perspective – a discussion.

May 2 - Concluding Discussions.

## **TESTS AND POLICIES**

Grading System:

A = 90-

A- = 88-90

B+ = 85-88

B = 80-85

B- = 78-80

C+ = 75-78

C = 70-75

C- = 68-70

D = 60-68

F = 0-60

Tests: I will administer one exam during the semester, which will be a mid term. The midterm will include essay questions on the reading and class work, questions on African geography and contemporary history and a map test. Your grade on the essay section of the mid-term will be determined by how well your answers meet the following six criteria:

- Completeness
- Mastery of relevant detail
- Effectively addresses question
- Accuracy
- Coherently presented
- Analytical, not descriptive

Please note: You **must show** up to take your test the day and time your section meets. Students will not be permitted under any circumstances to take their exams or quizzes at a time when another section meets. Absolutely no excuses will be accepted for missing an exam other than a serious illness on the part of a student or the critical illness of a parent. In both cases, extensive documentation must be provided. Failure to take an exam on the date scheduled will automatically result in a grade of "0". If students are able to provide a valid excuse, they will have the opportunity to write a three to five page typed paper on a topic assigned by the professor in lieu of taking the mid-term.

Class participation grade: I will base your class participation grade on regular attendance, the quality and quantity of your participation in class and group discussions (including presentations), and your deportment in class. It is especially important that you actively participate in discussions on the assigned reading. Students who remain silent during the semester should be aware that they will receive a grade of C+ or lower for their class participation even if they attend every class. Doing work for other courses during class time, taking naps, and manifesting negative classroom behaviors will detract from your grade. Under no circumstances are students allowed to "migrate" from one section to another to accommodate personal schedules. More than **two** unexplained absences also will significantly lower your class participation grade as will persistent lateness. Field trips for other

courses will count as an “explained absence”. Participation in University athletic events also will count as an "explained absence". Court cases and doctors’ appointments will count as an “unexplained absence”. Students who leave class early for doctors’ appointments and air port pick-ups will be marked absent for that day. You can receive your course class participation grade by e-mail after the course class work is completed. Up until the mid-term, students who are late for class must give their name on a piece of paper along with an explanation for their lateness to the professor after class. Failure to do so will result in the student being marked absent for that day.

Extra credit: This course provides numerous opportunities for extra credit work. Students can exercise their option to complete a three-part packet on research methods. In addition, during African-American History Month in February, there will be an African film series. By attending the evening screenings in this series, students will be able to earn extra points in the course. Also, at the end of the semester, there may be a research workshop where students can orally present the results of their research. On occasion, there may be extra credit events and field trips. In order to receive extra credit for these events and field trips, you **must** be **present** at the extra credit event and later submit a one and a half page typed “reaction paper” on what you experienced. While I will make every attempt to accommodate everyone’s complex schedules, students should realize that usually it just is not possible to satisfy everyone.

Incompletes: In accordance with School of Liberal Arts policy, I can only give an “incomplete” because of a medical emergency or a crisis of similar magnitude. Students who want an “incomplete” must see the Dean of the School of Liberal Arts to apply for one. Please be aware that the University has stringent guidelines for when students must complete their “incompletes”.