

OBERLIN COLLEGE
AFRICANA STUDIES 328/ HISTORY 334
African Women in Comparative Perspective
121 King Hall, Tuesdays: 1pm-2:50pm

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Office hours: Tuesdays 9:30am- 12:30PM

Course description

In this course we will widen our appreciation of African Women's experiences, including history, legal and socio-economic status, religious and political roles, productive and reproductive roles, and the impact of colonialism and post-independence development and representation issues. The course will move across time and space to examine the aforementioned in pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial Africa. We will begin with the question: What common beliefs/images about African women did/do Euro-Americans share?

REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION

Students are expected to participate extensively in discussions, answer questions about the readings, and do a paper whose content is conveyed to the class orally. There are no exams; rather, you are expected to work as you go along on the discussion questions. Grades will be assessed as follows:

30% Class Participation

Lively and informed class participation is required and expected; this means that you must have read the assigned readings before class. You should ask questions and debate the issues in a respectful way. It goes without saying that **ALL** students in this class have the right to speak and share their opinions in a safe and friendly environment. As such, you will debate the issues, not each other. Therefore, personal attacks and rude comments are strictly prohibited throughout the semester and will negatively impact your final grade. Also, reticence and or failure to demonstrate that you have done the readings will result in a lower final grade even if higher grades had been obtained on other assignments (eg. A to A-). If you are a person who finds it difficult to talk in class, please come see me early in the semester. Class participation includes attending, participating in discussion in an informed manner, and class presentation of your research paper (a five to ten minute discussion of your findings).

30% Discussion Questions

For each class session students should do a two page (typewritten, doubled-spaced, 12 point font size, 1 inch margins) response paper that reflect knowledge of **ALL** assigned readings and should be footnoted.

30% Research Paper

All students will select a topic at the beginning of the course from among those asterisked on the syllabus under the dates when the paper is due. On that date you will hand in the paper and convey your findings to the class orally to contribute to our discussion. Begin your research by consulting the readings for that day and those recommended on the syllabus, not forgetting previous course readings. In some cases that will be sufficient; in others you will need to seek further bibliography (a librarian can help you with this). You must, in any case, refer to course materials in your paper. In your paper and presentation be sure to develop a cogent argument and convey to the class the gist of the assigned articles and other materials you discovered while researching your topic. I will be happy to discuss both the assigned and possible bibliography with you. The paper should be between 8-10 pages, doubled spaced, 12 point font, 1 inch margins and should include a bibliography.

10% Film Analysis

Films are an integral part of this course. Two times during the semester you are asked to do a two page (typed, 12 point font, 1 inch margins) analysis of a film shown to the class that considers its relationship to the topic for the day it is shown. It is due at the next class.

My Commitment to Your Success

I am committed to helping you succeed in this course. I will endeavor to accommodate your needs, but not in ways that will give you undue advantage over your colleagues. I therefore strongly encourage you to kindly bring to my attention any difficulties you may encounter with the readings or lectures and to consult me during office hours on issues requiring personal attention. Also, I will check my email daily and will response to you ASAP. It is my desire to make this course interesting and productive for you and to help you obtain an excellent grade.

Late Assignments

In fairness to all students, a paper that is submitted late will receive one letter lower grade for each day of tardiness (e.g. from A to B). Any assignment submitted after three days of the due date without the instructor's permission will receive an automatic "F" for the assignment. Extension will be granted for verifiable circumstances.

Academic Misconduct

The term academic misconduct includes all forms of misconduct wherever committed, including but not limited to cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations and research papers. Plagiarism is the representation of another's works or ideas as one's own. It is one of the most serious offenses that can be committed in an academic community. Always cite your sources (I will be happy to assist you with this). The Oberlin Honor Code applies to all assignments in this course, and can be found through Blackboard and should be placed on all assignments, tests and quizzes. In order to preserve the integrity of Oberlin College as an excellent institution of higher learning, and to maintain your own integrity, **DO NOT PLAGIARIZE!**

Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students who wish an accommodation for disability for health reasons are responsible for requesting accommodation from the instructor. This self-identification is the only way to assure that the instructor can provide the appropriate accommodation. Anyone who feels the need for an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me to arrange an appointment as soon as possible. At the appointment we can discuss the course format, anticipate your needs, and explore potential accommodations. You will need to provide documentation of your disability to **Ms. Jane Boomer**, director for services for students with disabilities. Her phone number is **58464** and her office is located in **Peters G-38A**.

Required Texts

Buchi, Emecheta. 1979. *The Joys of Motherhood* (novel), reprinted in 2008 by Heinemann's African Writers Series.

Cornwall, Andrea. Ed. 2005. *Readings in Gender in Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Hay, Margaret and Stichter, Sharon. 1995. Eds. *African Women South of the Sahara* (2nd edition). New York: Longman Publishing.

Ndambuki, Berida and Robertson, Claire. 2000. "*We Only Come Here to Struggle:*" *Stories from Berida's Life* (life history).

***Course readings will either be handed out in class or made available on Blackboard.

Course Schedule

*Instructor reserves the right to modify the schedule if necessary, but students will be informed of such revision in advance.

Week Two, Feb 11: Organization and introduction to Africa

Week Three, Feb 18: Perceiving African Women: status argument

GA: Beoku-Betts, Sudarkasa, Nnaemeka; chapter on "The Hottentot and the Prostitute: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality."

Week Four, Feb 25: Women's Pre-colonial Roles

Hay/Stichter: ch. 1; Frances White (1987) chapter on "Confronting Freedom: A New Breed of Women;" chapter on "The Politics of Motherhood: Women and the Ideology Making Process."

Week Five, Mar 4: Women in Pre-colonial and Colonial Politics

GA: Bolanle Awe, Jean Allman; chapter on “The Dual-Sex Political System in Operation: Igbo Women and Community Politics in Midwestern Nigeria; Chapter on “Gender and the Pre-colonial Sociopolitical Organizations.”

***Paper topic: Was pre-colonial politics the province of elite women only?**

Recommended sources: Aidoo’s article in F. Steady, ed. *The Black Woman Cross-Culturally* (pp. 87- 101); Onaiwa Ogbomo, *When Men and Women Mattered*.

Week Six, Mar 11: Women and Religion

Hay/Stichter ch. 6; GA: Berger, Gaitskell

***Paper topic: What did participation in Christian Sects offer women?**

Recommended sources: Jules-Rosette article in B. Jules-Rosette, ed., *The New Religions of Africa*; Spring article in A. Spring and J. Hoch-Smith, ed., *Women in Ritual and Symbolic Roles*; M. Grosz-Ngate/ O.H. Kolole, eds., *Gendered Encounters*; Nwando Achebe, article in *Journal of Women’s History* 14, 4 (2003).

Week Seven, Mar 18: Colonialism and Economic Change: Agriculture, Domestic Servitude, Prostitution and Trade

Documentary: *Maids and Madams*

GA: Cooper, Bujra; Chapter by Mona Etienne on French colonialism and cloth production among the Baule women of The Ivory Coast

***Paper topic: How did colonialism affect the gender division of labor in agriculture, crafts, or trade (pick one).**

Recommended sources: Claire Robertson, *Sharing the Same Bowl, Trouble Showed the Way*; Muntemba article in E. Bay, ed., *Women and Work in Africa*; Elizabeth Schmidt, *Peasants, Traders and Wives: Shona Women in the History of Zimbabwe 1870-1939*.

Week Eight, Mar 25: Spring Break, enjoy!

Week Nine, Apr 1: Marital Transitions

Emecheta, entire novel

***Paper topic: How did marriage change with colonial rule? Select one or two case studies**

Recommended sources: Emecheta; Byfield and Lovett articles in *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 30, 1 (1996): 32-68; Robertson, *Trouble Showed the Way*; V. Tashjian and J. Allman, *I Will Not Eat Stone*.

Week Ten, Apr 8: Women in Anti-colonial Struggles

Documentary: *You Have Struck a Rock*

Hay/Stichter ch. 10; GA: Geiger; chapter by Van Allen

***Paper topic: How did West African women's resistance to colonialism differ from that of women in East Africa?**

Recommended sources: S. McCurdy article in *Canadian Journal of African Studies* (see Oct.25): 10-31; Wipper article in *Africa* 58, 4 (1989); W.W. Otieno, *Mau Mau's Daughter*

Week Eleven, Apr 15: Women in the Contemporary Rural Economy

Hay/Stichter, ch. 2; GA: Ekejiuba, Schroeder; *We Only Came Here to Struggle*, entire

Week Twelve: Apr 22: Women in Contemporary Urban Society

Documentary: *Mama Benz*
Hay/Stichter, ch.3; GA: Musisi

***Paper topic: What has been the effect of African urban living on women's childrearing and fertility?**

Recommended sources: Lewis article in E.Bay, *Women and Work in Africa*; J. Allman and V. Tashjian, *I Will Not Eat Stone*; B. Bozzoli, *Women of Phokeng*

OR

How has involvement in trade affected/changed women's lives?

Recommended sources: Gracia Clark, *Onions Are My Husband*; Claire Robertson, *Troubled Showed the Way*; Nancy Horn, *Cultivating Customers: Market Women in Harare, Zimbabwe*

Week Thirteen Apr 29: Women and Politics

Hay/Stichter: ch. 11; GA: Goetz, Tripp (review Geiger)

Week Fourteen May 6: Women, Colonialism and Social Change

Hay/Stichter: ch.4; GA: Mutongi
Conclude course

