INTRODUCTION TO AFRICAN ART (AAAS/FA 74B)
T–Th 2:00 PM–3:20 PM @ SHIFFMAN HUMANITIES 216

SPRING 2018

Department of African and Afro-American Studies
Brandeis University
MS 092, 415 South Street
Waltham, MA 02454

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Office Hours: Mondays 3:30-4:30PM, OR By Appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
This course is a survey of the visual artistic traditions of Africa. It investigates the different forms of visual art in relation to their historical and socio-cultural context. Symbolism and complexity of Africa’s visual art traditions will be explored through the analysis of myth, ritual, cosmology, and history. In-depth analysis of particular African societies will be used to examine the relationship of the arts to indigenous concepts of time, space, color, form, aesthetics and socio-political order. The course will also investigate the modernist experience in African art. Therefore, art works produced within a modernist, post-modernist perspective, and other contemporary discourses will also be explored. Power Point presentations, films and videos will be used to illustrate material discussed in class.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS
1. Attendance: Attendance is required at all class meetings. Missing classes without prior notification will negatively affect students’ grades. This penalty is in addition to the lower grades received for not handing in reading summaries on time.

2. Readings: All students should be ready to discuss readings in class on the assigned dates. The organization of the course requires students to be active participants. Class participation is required and on specific dates students will be asked to lead class discussion by summarizing the readings and posing analytical questions to the class and raising issues concerning the significance of art works and material discussed.

3. Reading Summaries: Please submit one 3 to 4-page summary for reading assigned in each course units. Make sure to include your name and title of the paper at the top of the title page, and the paper must be typed and double-spaced, using 1" margins, and 12-pt Times New Roman font. Use footnotes in a citation manner that conforms to a specific manual of style (MLA, Chicago). It must be submitted on the Monday class of the week during which the course unit will be the subject of study in the syllabus.
4. Mid Term and Finals: Mid Term and Finals will be based on a take home essay exams. As always, grammar, spelling, clarity, and elegance in writing will be considered in grading the mid term and final exams’ essays.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY
You are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity as stated in Section 4 of the Rights and Responsibilities handbook. [http://www.brandeis.edu/studentlife/srcs/rr/](http://www.brandeis.edu/studentlife/srcs/rr/) Plagiarism and evidence of cheating on exams will not be tolerated and will result in an automatic failing grade. You may refer to the International Center for Academic Integrity for additional information: [http://www.academicintegrity.org/icai/home.php](http://www.academicintegrity.org/icai/home.php)

CLASS ROOM CONDUCT:
Your classroom conduct will be a factor in your participation grade. You are expected to arrive to class on time, be attentive (no falling asleep), and focused (no cellphone use). You are expected to maintain the highest standards of collegiality with your classmates. Discussions of the course materials and content must be conducted with awareness that we all bring differing levels of knowledge, experience and perspective to the subject matter. Acts of disrespect will not be tolerated. Repeated disruptive behavior will result in your failure of the course.

DISABILITY POLICY:
If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately. If you have questions about documenting a disability or requesting academic accommodations, you should contact Beth Rodgers-Kay in Academic Services (x63470 or brodgers@brandeis.edu.) Letters of accommodation should be presented at the start of the semester to ensure provision of accommodations. Accommodations cannot be granted retroactively.

GRADING
1. Reading Summaries: 40%
2. Mid Term and Final Exams: 50%
3. Attendance and class participation: 10%

TEXTS:
All required and recommended readings will be posted on LATTE and on reserve in the Library.


The following books are useful as references for topics and visual material covered in class and will be kept on reserve in the Africana library:


COURSE OUTLINE
* Required Readings.

1. INTRODUCTION: ART HISTORY IN AFRICA (JAN.11 TO JAN. 16):
   * Binyavanga Wainaina, *How Not to Write About Africa* (guardian.co.uk)
   * Ekpo Eyo, “Primitivism and Other Misconceptions about African Art.” *Munger Africana Library Notes*. Issue No. 63, April 1982(California Institute of Technology). (Download as PDF: http://authors.library.caltech.edu/25707/1/MALN_63.pdf)

   Martin Bernal, Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization (The Fabrication of Ancient Greece 1785-1985, Volume 1), (Introduction: focus on summary of the argument and summary of volume 1)

   Or: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X75COneI4w8

2. ART, MYTH AND COSMOLOGY (JAN 23 AND JAN 25):
   (Case study: *The Dogon of Mali*):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hxrANrXdC8Y


3. ART, POLITICS AND POWER (JAN 30-FEB 1) 
(Case study: Benin- Nigeria )
*Brain, R. 136-142.
Kathleen Bickford Berzock, Benin: The Royal Art of a West African Kindom (Chicago: The Chicago Art Institute, 2008)

Film: *Kingdom of Bronze* (56 min., BBC,1970): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=065nvN-h-2c
Africa’s Past: Ife and Benin Kingdom (12th and 19 Centuries: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TKG6Ei505GQ

4. THE VERBAL-VISUAL NEXUS IN THE ARTS (FEB. 6- FEB 8): 
(Case study: the Akan- Ghana ):

Films: *Masters of Brass: Lost Wax Casting in Ghana* (22 min.)
*A Great Tree Has Fallen, 1977

5. ART AND THE RITUAL PROCESS: PERSONAL ADORNMENT, BODY PAINTING AND DECORATION (WEEK FEB 13-15):
(Case study: the Nuba- Sudan):
Vansina, J., pp.70-73.

Film: The Nuba  (BBC Worlds Apart Series, 1983; 60 min.)

MID TERM EXAM TO BE HANDED (FEB. 15) AND WILL BE DUE ON FEB 27

***REMINDER: MID TERM RECESS: WEEK OF 19-23 FEBRUARY

6. THE AESTHETICS OF THE “COOL” (FEB 27-MARCH 1ST)
(Case study: Yoruba-Nigeria)

Required:

Recommended:

7. MODERNITY, MODERNISM AND THE CONTEMPORARY:

A. TRANSITIONAL MODERNITY: ART AND SOCIAL CHANGE (MARCH 6- 8))
Film: In and Out of Africa, 1992 (Ilisa Brabash, Berekley)

B. AFRICAN MODERNISM: DEFINITION AND OVERVIEW (MARCH 13–15):
* Salah M. Hassan, “African Modernism: Beyond Alternative Modernities Discourse” SAQ: South
Atlantic Quarterly 109:3, Summer 2010.

C. Film Screening (March 20)
*Video Screening: Nigerian Art: Kindred Spirit (60 min. Smithsonian World Series, 1990)

D. African Modernism: Schools and Movements I (March 22):
   Video Screenings and discussions: El Salahi, and El Anatsui

E. AFRICAN MODERNISM: SCHOOLS AND MOVEMENTS II (MARCH 27-MARCH 29): (FOCUS: NIGERIAN MODERNISM)


G. MODERNISM: NÉGRITUDE AND PAN AFRICANISM (APRIL 17-19):


Film Screening: Manthia Diawara, Negritude: A Dialogue Between Soyinka and Leopold Sedar Senghor, 2015 (59 minutes)

H. CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN ART: DIASPORA AND EXILE (APRIL 19- 24):

I. CONCLUDING SESSION (APRIL 26):
List of Films to be Shown in Class:

1. *In and Out of Africa,* (59 min. Ilisa Barbash Production, 1992)
5. *Masters of Brass: Lost Wax Casting in Ghana* (22 min. Indiana University)
12. *A Great Tree Has Fallen,* 1977