

FLR 416/516 (36175/36213): AFRICAN FOLKLORE
SPRING 2010, 10:00-11:20 TR, 111 LIL

Professor: Dr. Lisa Gilman

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Office Phone: 541-346-3967

Office hours: Mondays 2-3:30 pm, Tuesdays, 2-3:30 pm, any by appointment

Office: 447 PLC

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- Furniss, Graham and Liz Gunner., eds. 1995. *Power, Marginality and African Oral Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (F&G)
- Fabian, Johannes. 1996. *Remembering the Present: Painting and Popular History in Zaire*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Gilman, Lisa. 2009. *The Dance of Politics: Gender, Performance and Democratization in Malawi*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- McMahon, Felicia R. 2007. *Not Just Child's Play: Emerging Tradition and the Lost Boys of Sudan*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi.
- Additional articles available electronically on Blackboard

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course investigates a variety of expressive forms practiced by different groups of people living in Sub-Saharan Africa. We will examine the folklore (e.g. oral narratives, songs, paintings, and dance) of specific groups to explore issues of aesthetics, identity, politics, economics, gender, class, and globalization. Audio-visual materials—video footage, documentary films, audio recordings, and photographs—will be used to augment students' understanding and engagement with life across the continent and with the specific materials studied.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- Familiarize students with the folklore of a wide variety of communities living in African contexts and abroad
- Engage students with ways in which culture intersects with critical social and political issues in African contexts
- Introduce students to important scholars, scholarship, and theoretical perspectives in the field of African folklore
- Develop vocabulary relevant to the study of folklore and African Studies
- Strengthen oral and written communication skills
- Augment critical thinking skills

RESPECT: It is essential that we work together to create a classroom environment where everyone feels free to express their opinions while simultaneously respecting the plurality of experiences and perspectives of others.

DISABILITY: I will do everything possible to assist those with special needs. Please meet with me in the first week of class to discuss how I can accommodate you.

FLR 416 (UNDERGRADUATE) GRADING AND COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- **Country Overview and Proposal for Journal (5% of final grade, DUE April 8):** 3-page paper that provides a brief overview of the geography, history, political system, and cultural make-up of the country students have selected for their Folklore in Africa Journal project as well as a brief explanation of the types of folklore they will profile in their journals (see next assignment). Guidelines will be distributed in class.
- **Folklore in Africa Journal (25% of final grade, DUE May 27):** Student will select an African country to research this term. Over the course of the term, students will research six examples of folklore (e.g. folk tales, jokes, proverbs, music or dance performances, games, festivals, holiday celebrations, genre painting, and so on) from that country. These examples can be found in books, journal articles, documentary films, audio recordings, and online sources. For each example, students are required to write a journal entry in which they describe the folklore, explain who participates in this type of folklore (be specific regarding nationality, ethnicity, age, gender, etc.), and the context in which it occurs. They will then use one concept from class to analyze the folklore. Guidelines to be distributed in class.
- **Midterm (30% of final grade, MAY 4):** A short answer and essay exam covering readings and class discussions from the beginning of the term through Week 5.
- **Final Exam (40% of final grade, JUNE 10, 8:00 AM in 111 LIL) :** A short answer and essay exam covering readings and class discussions from the beginning of the term through Week 10. Material from Week 6-10 will be emphasized.

FLR 516 (GRADUATE) GRADING AND COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- **Additional class meetings:** In addition to class meetings, graduate students will meet as a group with the instructor at least three times during the term. Meeting times will be scheduled to accommodate everyone's schedules.
- **Additional Readings:** In addition to the required readings for the course, graduate students will select 5 additional readings from a bibliography provided by the instructor. These readings will be discussed during the graduate student meetings.
- **Lead class (10% of final grade).** Each graduate student will lead one class period. S/he will address that day's topics and readings through any combination of lecture, discussion, and small group discussion. You are encouraged to bring relevant examples of folklore (material objects, records, photographs, video examples, etc.) to illustrate ideas and stimulate discussion
- **Theoretical paper (30% of final grade, DUE May 4):** Select one or more theorists central to one (or more) of our course readings this term. Read that theorist or group of theorists. Write a 6-8 paper in which you explain the theoretical approach, critically consider how the author(s) applied the theorist(s) to her/his work, and how you might apply this theoretical perspective to your own work.
- **Term paper 15-20 pages (60% of final grade, DUE, June 7 by 5:00 in my office):** a theoretically informed paper about some aspect of folklore on the African continent. Students interested in folklore in communities of the African Diaspora should meet with me to determine an appropriate topic.

ATTENDANCE

- Class periods are used for discussions, lectures, small group assignments, writings, and other activities. Attendance is therefore mandatory and fundamental to your success in this course.
 - If you have to miss class, you are responsible for obtaining notes and materials. If your absence is excusable, you may meet with me (either during office hours or a scheduled appointment) to review missed materials.
 - Excusable circumstances include: a death in the family, serious illness, ill children, observance of a religious holiday, and other university recognized conflicts. Be prepared to provide documentation.
 - If excusable circumstances prevent your attendance at a test or your turning in an assignment on time, inform your professor **before** or **within 24 hours after** the quiz or due date via e-mail, telephone, or a dated note in the professor's mailbox (this requirement will be lifted in extreme circumstances). **STUDENTS CANNOT MAKE-UP TESTS DUE TO UNEXCUSED ABSENCES. LATE PAPERS (not due to excusable circumstances) WILL DROP ONE LETTER GRADE EACH DAY THEY ARE LATE.**
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SCHEDULE OF CLASS READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

TUESDAY, 3/30: Introduction: What is folklore? What is Africa?

THURSDAY, 4/1: Introduction: Folklore and power in African contexts

Readings:

- Peek, Philip M. and Kwesi Yankah. 2004. "Introduction." African Folklore: An Encyclopedia, eds. Philip M. Peek and Kwesi Yankah, pp. ix-xv. New York: Routledge. [Blackboard]
- Finnegan, Ruth. 1994. The Poetic and the Everyday: Their Pursuit in an African Village and an English Town. *Folklore* 105 (1/2): 3-11. [Blackboard]
- Furniss, Graham and Liz Gunner. 1995. "Introduction: Power, Marginality, and Oral Literature." (F&G)

SECTION #1: POWER, MARGINALITY AND AFRICAN ORAL LITERATURE

TUESDAY 4/6: Orality and the power of the state

Reading:

- Mlama, Penina. "Oral Art and Cultural Nationalism" (F&G)
- Hofmeyr, Isabel. "The letter and the Law: the Politics of Orality and Literacy in the Chiefdoms of the Northern Transvaal." (F&G)
- Agovi, Kofi. "A King Is Not Above Insult: The Politics of Good Governance in Nzema *Avudwene* Festival Songs." (F&G)
- Stoeltje, Beverly. 2000. Gender Ideologies and Discursive Practices in Asante. *Polar: Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 23 (2): 77-88. [Blackboard]

THURSDAY 4/8: Representing power relations/ Caleb Owen's presentation on Taarab

*******DUE FOR UNDERGRADUATES: Country Overview and Proposal for Journal*******

*******DUE FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS: Theoretical Paper*******

Reading:

- Azuonye, Chukwuma. "Ìgbò Ènwe Èzè: Monarchical Power Versus Democratic Values in Igbo Oral Narratives." (F&G)
- Görög-Karady, Veronika. Tales and Ideology: The Revolt of Songs in Bambara-Malinké Tales. (F&G)
- Steinbrich, Sabine. "Images of the Powerful in Lyela Folktales." (F&G)

TUESDAY 4/13: Oral Forms and the dynamics of power

Readings:

- Johnson, John William. "Power, Marginality and Somali Oral Poetry: Case Studies in the Dynamics of Tradition." (F&G)
- Derive, Jean. "The Function of Oral Art in the Regulation of Social Power in Dyula Society." (F&G)
- Furniss, Graham. "The Power of Words and the Relation between Hausa." (F&G)

Video: Rhythms of Resistance: Black South African Music

THURSDAY 4/15: Endorsing or subverting the paradigms: women and oral forms

Readings:

- Chimhundu, Herbert. Sexuality and Socialisation in Shona Praises and Lyrics." (F&G)
- Opland, Jeff. "Nontsizi Mqqwetho: Stranger in Town." (F&G)
- Gunner, Liz. "Clashes of Interest: Gender, Status and Power in Zulu Praise Poetry." (F&G)
- Durán, Lucy. "*Jelumusow*: The Superwomen of Malian Music." (F&G)

TUESDAY 4/20: Gender, commerce, and power

Video: Mama Benz: An African Market Woman

THURSDAY 4/22: Mediators and communicative strategies

Readings:

- Yankah, Kwesi. "Power and the Circuit of Formal Talk." (F&G)
- De Moraes Farias, Paulo Fernando. "Praise Splits the Subject of Speech: Constructions of Kingship in the Manden and Borgu." (F&G)
- Anyidoho, Kofi. "Beyond the Communal Warmth: The Poet as Loner in Ewe Oral Tradition." (F&G)

SECTION #2: ART, HISTORY, AND POLITICS IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

TUESDAY 4/27: Tshibumba's history: colonialism

Reading: Fabian. *Remembering the Present: Painting and Popular History in Zaire*, pp. 3-90

THURSDAY 4/29: Tshibumba's history: independence

Reading: Fabian. *Remembering the Present: Painting and Popular History in Zaire*, pp. 91-184

SECTION #3: DANCE, GENDER, AND POLITICS IN MALAWI

TUESDAY 5/4: ***UNDERGRADUATES: MIDTERM*******

THURSDAY 5/6 : Gender, dance, and politics in Malawi's history

Reading: Gilman. *The Dance of Politics: Gender, Performance and Democratization in Malawi*. Chapters 1-3

TUESDAY 5/11: Gender and dance in contemporary Malawian politics

Reading: Gilman. *The Dance of Politics: Gender, Performance and Democratization in Malawi*. Chapters 4-6

THURSDAY 5/13: Gendering democracy

Reading: Gilman. *The Dance of Politics: Gender, Performance and Democratization in Malawi*. Chapters 7-8

SECTION #4: FOLKLORE, MIGRATION, AND IDENTITY

TUESDAY 5/18: Fleeing Sudan

Video: *Lost Boys of Sudan*

THURSDAY 5/20: Folklore and migrating to the U.S.

Reading: McMahon. *Not Just Child's Play: Emerging Tradition and the Lost Boys of Sudan*. Chapters 1-3

TUESDAY 5/25: Performance and establishing a new life

Reading: McMahon. *Not Just Child's Play: Emerging Tradition and the Lost Boys of Sudan*. Chapters 4-6

THURSDAY 5/27: Gendered performance

******DUE FOR UNDERGRADUATES: Folklore in Africa Journal Due******

Reading: McMahon. *Not Just Child's Play: Emerging Tradition and the Lost Boys of Sudan*. Chapters 7-8

TUESDAY 6/1: Guest Lecture, Prof. Haring. Folklore of the eastward African Diaspora.

Reading:

- Haring, Lee. 2005. "Eastward to the Islands: the Other Diaspora." *Journal of American Folklore* 118(469): 290-307. [Blackboard]

THURSDAY 6/3: Wrapping up and Final Exam Review

MONDAY, JUNE 7: GRADUATE STUDENT TERM PAPERS DUE BY 5:00 PM IN MY OFFICE

THURSDAY, JUNE 10: UNDERGRADUATE FINAL EXAM-- 8:00 AM IN 111 LIL