Professor José C. Curto
223 Founders College   416-736-5148
Office Hours:    Mondays 10:00 - 11:00; Tuesdays 10:00 – 11:00

During 2009-2010, the topic selected for this seminar is Women in Africa from Precolonial times to the Present. The seminar explores local and external social, cultural, and political factors that have shaped and continue to shape the experiences of women throughout Africa. Its time span covers the precolonial period, the colonial era, the post-independence epoch, as well as the present. Special attention is given to women’s agency and initiative, as well as their subordination and struggles. Topics for discussion include the problem and relevance of gender in African History, the power and legitimacy of some women during the precolonial era, women as both slaves and slave-holders/owners, precolonial women and their families, women and the emerging colonial state, prostitution, changing marital patterns, unruly females, and women and music during the twentieth century, as well as women in the new South Africa. In the process, students will be introduced to the theories and methods used in the reconstruction of the history of African women.

The seminar revolves around weekly readings which students are to discuss in-class. Students are also required to write one (1) book review each semester, as well as write a research essay in the Fall, expand it during the Winter term, and then present a summarized version to the seminar. Such a format not only allows students to develop a more thorough understanding of the complexity of the history of women in Africa, but also to further sharpen their critical (investigative, analytical, and communicative) skills and to enhance their knowledge of the historian’s craft by doing history.

This is an intensive reading/writing course. Each week, every student will read 3 journal articles and/or book chapters on a particular theme. For each seminar, three different students will be picked at random to provide a short, verbal summary of the major arguments found in his/her assigned readings, after which class discussion will follow. Attendance and participation is, consequently, a must.

Most of the weekly readings are available in electronic format and can be downloaded through: www.library.yorku.ca/homepage.htm (click on “Find eResources by title”); www.jstor.com; www.muse.jhu.edu/journals; and/or www.historycooperative.org/journals.html These are identified in the reading schedule below by an * before authors’ names. Those not available in electronic format have been placed on RESERVE in the Scott Library, York University.

The books for review have been pre-selected by in order to ensure uniformity: one book review for FALL Semester and a second book review for WINTER Semester. Each Book Review should be between around 1000 words, describe the main arguments made by the author(s), and conclude with a personal assessment of the major points advanced. See the guidelines for book reviews at the end of this outline.

BOOKS FOR REVIEW

Fall Semester: Philip Havik, Silences and Soundbytes: The Gendered Dynamics of Trade and Brokerage in the Pre-colonial Guinea Bissau Region (Munster: Lit Verlag, 2004).

The topic of the Research Essay shall be chosen by students in consultation with the instructor no later than the 1st week of October. The length should be between around 5000 words for the first draft. This first draft will be graded meticulously (grammar, style, content, etc.) and provide copious comments and directions for students to subsequently submit an improved 2nd, final draft, of about 6000 words. Each student will then make a verbal presentation of their final draft essay over the last four seminar meetings. The bibliography for this research essay shall be made up of 15 journal articles/book chapters AND 15 books, minimum. NB: a copy of the graded first draft must be handed in along with the final version.

All written work must be submitted in typed form and conform to standard annotation and bibliographic forms. Unless students provide the instructor with a valid reason prior to due dates, work submitted late will be penalised at the rate of 5% per day of the overall value of each assignment.

Course Work and Grade Breakdown:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>DUE DATE</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Book Review 1</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>October 26, 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Essay (1st draft)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>December 07, 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Review 2</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>February 01, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Essay (final draft)</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>March 01, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Essay Presentations</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>March 08-29, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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</tbody>
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Weekly Reading Schedule, 2009-2010

SEPT. 14    Introduction to the Course
            VIDEO - *Asante Market Women*

Sept. 21    Problems in the History of Women in Africa


Sept. 28  The Relevance of Gender in African History  


OCT. 05  Matriarchy vs Patriarchy in African History  


Oct. 12  NO SEMINAR

Oct. 19  Power and Legitimacy of Precolonial African Women I: Queen Nzinga of Matamba  


Oct. 26  Power and Legitimacy of Precolonial African Women II  
Book Review 1 DUE  


**NOV. 02 Women and Slavery in West Africa**


**Nov. 09 Women and Slavery in West Central Africa**


**Nov. 16 Women and Slavery in Eastern Africa**


Nov. 23  African Female Traders in Western Africa I


Nov. 30  African Female Traders in Western Africa II


DEC. 07  Women and their Families in West Central Africa
Research Essay (1st draft) DUE


JAN 04  Women and the Emerging Colonial State


Jan. 11     Women and Prostitution


Jan. 18     Changing Marital Patterns


Jan. 25     ‘Wicked’ Women


FEB. 01     Rebellious Women


Feb 08    **Women and Nationalist/Liberation Struggles**  


Feb. 15  
**NO SEMINAR, Reading Week**

Feb. 22    **Women and Music in Urban Spaces**  


MAR. 01  **Women in the New South Africa**  
Research Essay (final draft) DUE  


March 08: Student paper presentations I

March 15: Student paper presentations II

March 22: Student paper presentations III

March 29: Student paper presentations IV
Guidelines for Book Reviews

1) Intent: What are the major objectives (themes/arguments/ideas) of the book?

2) Sources: What are the sources used: primary and/or secondary; written and/or other?

3) Methodology: a) how do the sources used impact the major themes, arguments, ideas advanced; b) what techniques (quantitative history, oral history, etc.) does the author use to bring out the most of the sources; c) was this the most appropriate method?

4) Effectiveness: Does the author get his/her themes, arguments, and ideas across successively?

5) Your Informed/Educated Opinion
   Why is your response to this book (ie., the author's themes, arguments, and ideas) positive OR negative?

You are also strongly encouraged to read a few professional book reviews in leading periodicals of the field, such as:

- Journal of African History
- Canadian Journal of African Studies
- International Journal of African Historical Studies
- Cahiers d'Études Africaines
- Journal of Modern African Studies
- African Economic History

Important dates and deadlines
It is YOUR responsibility to be aware of all of the important drop dates and University deadlines as well as the dates for the submission of course work listed in this outline.

Statement on Plagiarism

Academic Honesty: Violations of the York Senate Policy on Academic Honesty will be treated severely. Recent penalties have included failure in the course, suspension from the University, and withholding or rescinding a York degree, diploma, or certificate. Cheating during in-class or take-home examinations, collaborating on written assignments, failing to use quotation marks and citations when using or paraphrasing the printed or electronically-transmitted work of others, submitting work purchased from or written by someone else, reproducing work submitted in another course, aiding or abetting academic misconduct, and violating any other part of the Policy on Academic Honesty will result in penalties. For further information, see http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/legislation/senate/acadhone.htm.