

African Women's History

T/F 1:30-2:45, Denny 204

Instructor	Office	Email	Office Hours
Jeremy Ball, Ph.D.	Denny 019	ballj@dickinson.edu	Thursday 9-11am

This course examines the role of women in African societies since the nineteenth century. Lectures and readings will be arranged thematically. Themes include sexuality and reproduction, the household, women's economic activity, political power, religion, colonialism, nationalism, democracy, and AIDS. After a discussion of gender, we will analyze pre-colonial production and reproduction, family life and religion in the twentieth century, women's roles in nationalist politics, the politics of female genital mutilation, and the life of a contemporary African woman leader. Readings, including historical studies and novels, songs, and art, will be drawn from across the cultures and languages of Africa.

Course Readings

Required

Achebe, Nwando, *Farmers, Traders, Warriors, and Kings: Female Power and Authority in Northern Igboland, 1900-1960*. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 2005.
Dangarembga, Tsitsi, *Nervous Conditions*. Seattle, Wash.: Seal Press, 1988.
Emecheta, Buchi, *The Slave Girl*. New York: George Braziller, 1977.
Maathai, Wangari, *Unbowed A Memoir*. New York: Knopf, 2006.
Ramphela, Mamphela, *Across Boundaries: The Journey of a South African Woman Leader*. New York: Feminist Press of the City University of New York, 1997.

In addition to required books, you will be required to print weekly readings on blackboard.

Reserve

The Cambridge History of Africa. Volumes 1-8. Edited by J. D. Fage and Roland Oliver. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975-1986.

Film and multimedia

Blooms of Banjeli

Flame

Warrior Marks

Trokosi: Wife of the Gods

You Have Struck a Rock

Yesterday

A couple of the best websites about Africa include:

- The Stanford University African Studies Center:
www-sul.stanford.edu/depts/ssrg/africa/guide.html
- The African Studies Center at the University of Pennsylvania:
www.africa.upenn.edu/

Course Requirements:

This course will be run as a seminar, therefore your participation in discussion is vital.

Writing Assignments:

Essay #1 (Due Friday March 9), 20% of course grade, 8-10 pages. Choose one:

- a. Did patriarchy subordinate women in pre-colonial African society? Choose an African society and one or two issues to illustrate your argument.
- b. What is *lobolo*? Explain how *lobolo* has worked in one African society (Zulu, Tswana, etc.). Has *lobolo* changed over the past century?

Essay #2 (Due Tuesday May 1), 30% of course grade, 10-12 pages. You will present your research to your colleagues in a class presentation. Choose one:

- a. Write a biography of an African woman leader (historical or contemporary).
- b. Propose an essay topic. Topics must be approved no later than Tuesday 3 April.

Weekly Questions, Map Quiz, & Debate, 20% of course grade. Discussion questions will be collected *in class* every Friday. Questions will be emailed to students a week in advance.

Book Review & Presentation, 20% of course grade.

Each student will help to lead discussion on one of the assigned books. You will be expected to ask questions about arguments and details in the reading. The point of these questions is to stimulate thinking and discussion. In addition to your presentation, you will submit a 3-4 page book review. [Guidelines will be distributed.]

Group Project (Due Friday April 20), 10% of course grade.

In groups you will research and present how AIDS affects women in an African society.

Accommodations for Disabilities

In compliance with the Dickinson College policy and equal access laws, I am available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that may be recommended for students with disabilities. Requests for academic accommodations are to be made during the first few weeks of the semester (except for unusual circumstances) so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

Students are required to register with Academic Resource Services in the Advising Office (first floor of Biddle House) to verify their eligibility for appropriate accommodations.

Plagiarism

For clarification and details of the official College statement on plagiarism, please see the Dickinson Writing Program's website:

www.dickinson.edu/departments/writing/plagiarism.html

Course Schedule

WEEK 1: Why Women?

Jan. 23: Africa Introduced

Jan. 26

Electronic Reserve: [Print and bring to class]

- Josephine Beoku-Betts, "Western Perceptions of African Women in the 19th & Early 20th Centuries," pp. 20-25.
- Niara Sudarkasa, "The 'Status of Women' in Indigenous African Societies," pp. 25-31.
- Ayesha Mei-The Imam, "The Presentation of African Women in Historical Writing," pp. 20-40.

WEEK 2: Gender and Power

Jan. 30

Electronic Reserve:

- Catharine Coquery-Vidrovitch, "Peasant Women," pp. 9-20.
- Eugenia Herbert, *Iron, Gender and Power*, pp. 115-127.
- Film: *Blooms of Banjeli*

Feb. 2

Electronic Reserve:

- Catharine Coquery-Vidrovitch, "Slave Women," pp. 21-29.
- Film: *Trokosi: Wife of the Gods*
- **Map Quiz**

WEEK 3: Gender and Sexuality

Feb. 6

Electronic Reserve:

- Catharine Coquery-Vidrovitch, "Rural Women and Colonialism," pp. 59-72.
- Helen Bradford, "Women, Gender and Colonialism," *Journal of African History* 37 (1996) 351-360.
- J. B. Peires, "The Central Beliefs of the Xhosa Cattle-Killing," *Journal of African History*, 28 (1987), pp. 43-63.

Feb. 9

Electronic Reserve:

- Rev. Josiah Tyler, "Polygamy and Other Evil Practices," in *Forty Years Among the Zulus*. Boston: Congregational Sunday-School and Publishing Society, 1891, pp. 117-124.
- Patrick Harries, "Symbols and Sexuality: Culture and Identity on the Early Witwatersrand Gold Mines," *Gender and History* 2 (1990): 318-336.
- Eilileen Jensen Krige, "Girls' puberty songs and their relation to fertility, health, morality and religion among the Zulu," *Africa*, XXXVIII, 1968, pp. 186-191.
- **Map Quiz (make-up)**

WEEK 4: Women, Slavery, and Trade

Feb. 13

Buchi Emecheta, *The Slave Girl*, pp. 1-72.

Electronic Reserve:

•Catharine Coquery-Vidrovitch, “Women and Trade,” pp. 94-108.

•George E. Brooks, Jr., “The Signares of Saint-Louis and Gorée: Women Entrepreneurs in Eighteenth-Century Senegal,” in *Women in Africa*, Edited by Nancy Hafkin and Edna Bay. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1976, pp. 19-44.

Feb. 16

Buchi Emecheta, *The Slave Girl*, pp. 73-End.

•**Map Quiz (Final)**

WEEK 5: Female Power and Authority

Feb. 20

Nwando Achebe, *Farmers, Traders, Warriors, and Kings*, pp. 1-107.

Feb. 23

Nwando Achebe, *Farmers, Traders, Warriors, and Kings*, pp. 108-230.

•**Achebe Book Review due in class.**

WEEK 6: Women, War, and Nationalism

Feb. 27

Tsitsi Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*, pp. 1-102.

Electronic Reserve:

•Caroline Ifeka-Moller, “Female Militancy and Colonial Revolt: The Women’s War of 1929, Eastern Nigeria, in *Perceiving Women*, Edited by Shirley Ardener. London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1977, pp. 127-145.

March 2

Tsitsi Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*, pp. 103-End.

WEEK 7:

March 6

Field trip: Osubi Craig, “African Musical Diasporas,” Weiss Rm. 235, 1:30pm.

March 9

•Film: *Flame*

Essay #1 Due in class.

WEEK 8: SPRING BREAK

NO CLASS.

WEEK 9: Women's Leadership & Resistance to Apartheid

March 20

Mamphela Ramphela, *Across Boundaries: The Journey of a South African Woman Leader*, pp. 1-91.

Electronic Reserve:

- Julia C. Wells, "Why Women Rebel: a Comparative Study of South African Women's Resistance in Bloemfontein (1913) and Johannesburg (1958)," pp. 56-70.
- Films: *You Have Struck a Rock & Amandla!*
- Pflaum Lecture, Stern Center, Great Room, 7pm. Dr. Lamin Sanneh. (Extra Credit)

March 23

Mamphela Ramphela, *Across Boundaries: The Journey of a South African Woman Leader*, pp. 92-End.

- **Ramphela Book Review due in class.**

WEEK 10: Female Circumcision/Genital Mutilation

March 27

Electronic Reserve:

- Lynn M. Thomas, "'Ngaitana' (I will circumcise myself): The Gender and Generational Politics of the 1956 Ban on Clitoridectomy in Meru, Kenya." *Gender and History*, 1996, 8 (3), pp. 338-363.
- Heather Bell, "Midwifery Training and Female Circumcision in the Inter-war Anglo Egyptian Sudan," *Journal of African History* 39 (1998), pp. 293-312.

March 30

- Film: *Warrior Marks*.

WEEK 11:

April 3

Electronic Reserve:

- Elliot Skinner, "Female Circumcision in Africa: The Dialectics of Equality" in *Dialectics and Gender: Anthropological Approaches*, pp. 195-210.
- Stanlie James, "Shades of Othering: Reflections on Female Circumcision/Genital Mutilation" *Signs* 23 (1998), pp. 1031-1048.

April 6 **Debate**

Resolved: *Female Genital Circumcision ought to be declared a crime against humanity by the United Nations*

WEEK 12: Women and the AIDS Epidemic

April 10

Electronic Reserve:

- Noerine Kaleeba, *We Miss You All*.
- John Iliffe, *The African AIDS Epidemic A History*, pp. 112-157.

April 13

Electronic Reserve:

•Fiona Scorgie, “Virginity Testing and the Politics of Sexual Responsibility: Implications for AIDS Intervention,” *African Studies*, 61, 1, 2002, pp. 55-75.

•Film: *Yesterday*

WEEK 13:

April 17

•Film: *Yesterday*

April 20

Group Project Presentations

WEEK 14: Women, Leadership, and the Environment

April 24

Wangari Maathai, *Unbowed A Memoir*, pp. 1-163.

April 27

Wangari Maathai, *Unbowed A Memoir*, pp. 164-End.

•**Maathai Book Review due in class.**

WEEK 15: Conclusions

May 1 Essay Presentations

Essay #2 Due in class.

May 4 Essay Presentations & Conclusions