

Course Syllabus: Spring 2009

SOCIOL 376-23: African Societies: Past & Present

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African societies contain elements of tradition and modernity. The latter derives mainly from the influence of colonialism and the consequent Westernization. In this course, we will examine African social institutions such as the family and the role of women, economy, politics, and religion in their traditional setting. In doing so, we will examine socio-cultural processes different from the Western experience. The interaction between traditional African societies and Western contact will be analyzed in order to identify elements of change and possible conflicts and/or consensus that may have resulted from that contact. Colonial and post colonial social processes and institutions including colonization, independence movements, the economy, religion, family, gender roles, politics, urbanization, international relations and the environment, will be discussed. Our focus is Africa south of the Sahara.

Objectives of Course:

1. To enable students to gain an insight into social institutions in traditional Africa
2. To introduce students to European colonization of Africa and its impact on the continent
3. To let students understand the process of decolonization including independence movements and the patterns of transfer of power
4. To enable students to examine and analyze social institutions and other social processes (politics, economy, religion, family, gender roles, international relations, urbanization, and the environment) in post-colonial Africa.
5. To expose students to non Western peoples, cultures and institutions.
6. Students will improve their written and oral communication skills through written assignments and class discussion.

Course Requirements:

There will be two examinations, two chapter reviews, one in-class video review, and a research paper.

Map and Chapter Review: To understand the aspects of the history and geography of the continent we are learning about, **(a)** draw a map of Africa and fill in the various countries and their capitals with a summary of Chapter 3 of Gordon & Gordon. Always remember that Africa is a continent of many countries. **(b)** Summarize Chapter 2 of Gordon & Gordon and draw the geographic map on page 18. Submit a copy of the summaries and maps to me, keep copies for yourself and bring your maps to class regularly for possible reference. Your summary of both chapters should not be more than 7 pages. Do not include any citations in the text of your summary. The intent here is to let you focus on synthesizing, the ideas in the document. Indicate your source at the end of each summary.

That is, author (s) of chapter. Year. "Title of chapter". Pp. in *title of book*, edited by---. Place of publication: Publisher

Video Summary:

You will be expected to write a video review during the quarter. The relevant video will be shown, unannounced, on any day during the quarter. Once shown in class the video will neither be repeated nor will it be reviewed at an individual level. Therefore, only those in class on the day it is shown will obtain credit for it. Watch the video, make notes, write the review at home, and submit it the next day of class. You should describe and interpret each movie, show how effectively (or otherwise) its content helps us to clearly understand the particular African experience it covers. The video review will be evaluated on the quality of writing, comprehension and coverage of content.

The Examinations:

The two exams will take place on the dates specified on the course calendar. The exams will be made up of multiple choice and short answer questions. There will be a revision guide for each examination

The Research Paper:

Select any topic of interest to you from the subject matter of the course and write a 10-page paper. Before you start, prepare a half-page summary and bring it up for discussion with me during my office hours or by appointment. The summary should specify why your topic is important, the explanations you intend to seek, and your proposed sources of information. The paper should be typed, double-spaced and have a title page. There must be page numbers. Papers without page numbers will lose some points. Your bibliography should come as a separate page at the end of the paper. Citations in your paper (in-text) and the bibliography should be similar to the style used in the *American Sociological Review* published by the American Sociological Association (ASA) generally similar to the *Chicago Manual of Style*. A copy of the ASA format is attached to your syllabus for this course. You can also consult the *American Sociological Review* before you start your paper. If you have problems with the citations/ bibliographical style, please raise them in class or come in for discussion. All your sources should be properly acknowledged. The research paper is due on the last day of class. Submit a hardcopy and an electronic copy

Do the readings in advance of each class meeting to prepare yourself for class discussion. The book by Moseley contains opposing viewpoints on various topics on Africa. We will debate those issues. That means that you should read those topics for you to confidently participate in the debate.

Required Texts:

Achebe, C., 1986. *Things Fall Apart*. Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann Publishers.

Gordon, A. and D. L. Gordon, 2007. *Understanding Contemporary Africa*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Moseley, W. 2009. *Taking Sides: Clashing views on African Issues*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Some readings in the Reserve Library

Course Grades:

Historical/Geographic Summary/Maps	10
First Exam	25
First Video Review	10
Second Video Review	10
Term Paper	15
Final Exam	30
TOTAL	100

Course Calendar:**PART A: TRADITIONAL AFRICA****Week of March 30: Pre-Colonial Social Institutions**

Readings: Gordon, Chapter 3, pp. 23-48
 Mario Azevedo, "The African Family" (On Reserve)
 C. Potholm, "Themes in Traditional African Political Systems (On Reserve)
 E. Charle, "Political Systems and Economic Performance in Some African Societies" (On Reserve)

Week of April 6: African Traditional Society in Literature & Religion

Readings: C. Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (All)
 Igor Kopytoff, "Ancestors as Elders in Africa" (On Reserve)

April 10: Chapter Reviews/Maps due

PART B: COLONIAL & POSTCOLONIAL AFRICA

Week of April 13: Colonialism and its Impact

Readings: Mario Azevedo, "European Exploration and Conquest (On Reserve)
A. Adu Boahen, "African Perspectives on Colonialism (On Reserve)
W. Moseley, pp. 2-33.

Week of April 20: Colonial & Postcolonial Politics and Economy

Readings: Gordon & Gordon, Chs. 4 & 5
W. Moseley, pp. 41-68.

APRIL 24: FIRST EXAM

Week of April 27: International Relations

Readings: Gordon & Gordon, Ch. 6
W. Moseley, pp. 72-96; 117-136

Week of May 4: Population, Urbanization, and the Environment

Readings: Gordon & Gordon, Chs. 7 & 8
W. Moseley, pp. 154-175; 176-207

Week of May 11: Religion, Family and Kinship in Contemporary Africa

Readings: Gordon & Gordon, Chs. 9 & 11
W. Moseley, pp. 210-231

Week of May 18: Gender & Development

Readings: Gordon & Gordon, Ch. 10
S. Afonja, "Changing Patterns of Gender Stratification in West Africa" (On Reserve)
C. Obbo, "East African Women, Work, and the Articulation of Dominance" (On Reserve)
W. Moseley, pp. 232-245

Week of May 25: Miscellaneous Issues on Contemporary Africa

Readings: W. Moseley, pp. 246-288; 334-353

Week of June 1: Reading Week: Research Paper Due Monday June 1

Week of June 8: FINAL EXAMS WEEK

P/S: Please be informed that Northwestern University takes academic integrity very seriously.

Plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty is inconsistent with the *Principles Regarding Academic Integrity* outlined by the University and so will be treated according to the provisions stipulated for violations of those principles.