DEPARTMENT OF AFRICAN, MIDDLE EASTERN AND SOUTH ASIAN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES

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0 13 312 AFRICAN FOLKLORE AND MYTH - *FALL 2020*

Tuesday1:10 PM - 2:30 PMCAC
Thursday1:10 PM - 2:30 PMCAC

Instructor: Ousseina Alidou, Ph.D.
Office: 15 Seminary Place Room # 6162 (College Avenue Campus)/
Office Hours: 3:00pm-5:00pm (Tuesdays) and **by appointment**
Email: oalidou@rutgers.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is a survey of Africa's rich folkloric heritage. It explores the lore, recollections, epics, legends, myths, traditions, beliefs and tales of the continent of Africa, taking note of the diversity of experiences, their uniqueness in form and content as well as the affinities that are evident among them. The course will seek to reflect, among other things, the differing concepts of cosmogony, human creation and existence, and the social values that have motivated various African peoples in their pursuit of a meaningful life and an understanding of the spiritual and aesthetic attributes of the world around them. Conversely, it will demonstrate how the folkloric forms themselves have been woven out of the substance of human experiences: human struggles for survival, relations among humans, and between humans and animals; responses to the challenges to the unknown and to the universal need to create order and reason out of chaos and confusion. In addition to the required reading texts, the course will include films, slides, audio-tapes and musical materials that will enhance our understanding of the performance dimension of African folklore.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

This course focuses on reading and discussions (of print, visual and audio materials). Therefore it is very important that each student read assigned reading material before coming to class in order to fully participate in class discussions. Assignments consist of unannounced quizzes and small research projects, a comprehensive take-home midterm exam and a final exam paper (7 pages maximum). A failure to take a quiz or turn in projects on due date will result in a zero (0) grade unless a satisfactory document of excuse is presented.

- Each absence is marked minus 2points.
- There will be NO make-up test or examination without submission of official documentation approved by Rutgers University guidelines regarding absence.

Disability Accommodation: Please do not hesitate to inform me for setting the right accommodation.Thanks

Grading Scale:

A	93-100	A-	90-92		
B+	87-89	B	83-86	B-	80-82
C+	76-79	C	70-76		
D	60-69	F	59 and bellow		

REQUIRED TEXTS

Ogunjimi, Bayo and Abdul-Rasheed Na'Allah. *Introduction to Africa Oral Literature and Performance.* Trenton: Africa World Press, ISBN-13: 9781592211517 and ISBN: 1592211518

Ngugi Wa Thiongo, *Dreams in Time of War: A Childhood Memoir*. Anchor Books. ISBN 978 0 307 47621 0 [Ebook | $9.99 Published by Anchor/Mar 09, 2010 | 192 Pages | ISBN 9780307378958

Maathai, Wangari, *Unbowed: A Memoire.* Random House Digital. 0307492338, 9780307492333

LEARNING GOALS

At the end of the semester, students will demonstrate familiarity with:

- The various schools of interpretation, such as the Myth and Ritual, the Formalist, the Functionalist, and the Psychoanalytical. They will learn to analyze folklore with an eye for origins, typological or formal parallels, and potential functions within the various African societies in which its various forms are current.
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- Theoretical questions of orality v. textuality, folk vs. elite traditions, vernacular vs. official histories, folkloric genres, and other aspects of the composition, transmission, and consumption of folklore, not only within specific cultures but also cross-culturally.

EVALUATION

Weekly Individual or group Assignments	20%
Midterm Exam	30%
Final Paper	30%
Attendance	20%

[**It is a must to attend class and classmates' presentation**]

TENTATIVE WEEKLY COURSE OUTLINE

This is a tentative weekly course outline of the syllabus. The instructor has the right to adjust the syllabus during the course of the semester. Announcements of the changes will be sent in advance to all students.

Week 1 **Introduction to the Course: Defining the field of folkloristics**

Tues, Sept 1 **Defining Africa and Storytelling Traditions: An Overview**

READ SAKAI: Bascom, W. The Fourth Functions of Folklore
The Journal of American Folklore, Vol. 67, No. 266 (Oct. - Dec., 1954), pp. 333-349

Thurs, Sept 3 READ SAKAI: Bascom, W. The Fourth Functions of Folklore
The Journal of American Folklore, Vol. 67, No. 266 (Oct. - Dec., 1954), pp. 333-349

Week 2

Tues, Sept 8 **Introduction to African Oral Literature and Performance**
Verbal Arts as Performance/ Culture, Society and Literature
READ: – (Chap 1- Bayo and Na'Allah, pp. 9-30 *Source and origins of African oral literature and performance*)

Thurs, Sept 10
READ: ***Epic Narratives***
READ: Epic of Sunjata Film: *Keita: The Heritage of a Griot*
Assignment

Week 3

Tues, Sept 15 **Oral Literature and Oracy: What is Oral Literature? Oracy and Society**
Research and Field-work
READ: (Chap 2- Bayo and Na'Allah, Fieldwork Practice and Research Methodology), pp. 31-47
READ: Ngugi Wa Thiongo, *Dreams in Time of War: A Childhood Memoir* (pp.1-44)

Thurs, Sept 17 ***Archetypes*** READ: (Chap 3- Bayo and Na'Allah), pp.47-54
READ SAKAI**:** **Assignment:** *Adamu and Ifu*

Week 4

Tues, Sept 22 ***Myths***
READ: (Chap 4 -Bayo and Na'Allah), pp.55-64
READ: READ: Maathai, Wangari, *Beginnings.* (pp. 3-28)

Thurs, Sept 24 ***Myths***
READ: Maathai, Wangari, *Unbowed:* Cultivation *(pp.29-52)*
Assignment: Look for **Kikugu and Mumbi Myth of Creation**

Week 5 ***Legends***

Tues, Sept 29 READ SAKAI: (Chap 5 -Bayo and Na'Allah), pp. 65-74
Assignment:

Thurs, Oct 1 READ: Maathai, Wangari, *Unbowed:* Education and State of Emergency (pp. 53

Week 6 ***Folktales***

Tues, Oct 6 READ: (Chap 6 -Bayo and Na'Allah), pp. 75-84
READ: SAKAI *Adamu and his beautiful Wife*
Assignment

Thurs, Oct 8 ***Gender, Folktales, and Fairytales***
READ: SAKAI A Cinderella Tale in The Hausa Muslim Imagination *Journal of Comparative Literature* by Ousseina Alidou (/SAKAI)
Assignment

Week 7 ***Secular and Religious Poetry Performance***
Tues, Oct 13 ***and Performance***
READ: (Chap 10 and chap11 -Bayo and Na'Allah), pp. 125-147
READ: Ngugi Wa Thiongo, *Dreams in Time of War: A Childhood Memoir* (pp.122-128)

Thurs, Oct 15 ***Gender, Songs, Poetry and Performance***
READ: Gueye, Marame. *Woyyi Céet*: Senegalese Women's Oral Discourses on Marriage and Womanhood. *Research in African Literature* Vol 41 (4) Winter (2010): 65-86. (SAKAI)

Week 8 ***Gender, Songs, Poetry and Performance***
Tues, Oct 20 Film: *Um Kulthum: A Voice Like Egypt*

Thurs, Oct 22 ***Gender, Songs, Poetry and Performance***
READ: Kidjo, Angélique. *Spirit Rising: My Life, my Music (Chapter 1-chapter2) p.1-37* Documentary

(TAKE HOME MIDTERM EXAM DUE THURSDAY, OCT 22 ON SAKAI DUE NOV 3 ON SAKAI)

Week 9 **MIDTERM EXAM WEEK**
Tuesday, Oct 27 Midterm Exam
Thursday, Oct 29 Midterm Exam

Week 10 **African Proverbs and Riddles and Ideology**
Tues, Nov 3 READ: (Chap 7 -Bayo and Na'Allah), pp. 85-94
READ SAKAI: "If the Cap fits: Kanga Names and Women's Voices in Swahili Society" by Saida Yahya Othman
http://www.glcom.com/hassan/kanga/kanga1.html

Thurs, Nov 5 READ SAKAI: Female Personhood through Proverbial Jesting Author(s): Helen Yitah *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (Fall, 2009), pp. 74-95 (SAKAI) **Assignment**

Week 11 **Riddles and Jokes**
Tues, Nov 10 READ: (Chap 8 -Bayo and Na'Allah**),** pp. 95-100
READ SAKAI: Expressing a Swahili Sense of Humor: Siu Jokes by Carol M. Eastman *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 17, No. 4, Special Issue on Swahili Verbal Arts (Winter, 1986), pp. 474-495

Thurs, Nov 12 **The Riddles in Africa**
READ SAKAI: Harries, Lyndon *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 84, No. 334 (Oct. - Dec., 1971), pp. 377-393 **Assignment:**

Week 12 **Humor and Ridicule**

Tues, Nov 17 READ SAKAI: The Uses of Ridicule: Humour, 'Infrapolitics' and Civil Society in Nigeria by Ebenezer Obadare in *African Affairs*, 108/431, 241–261

Thurs, Nov 19 **PART II: African Material Folklore and Performance**
African Masks, Gender, Class and Masquerades
Film: *Becoming a Woman in Okrika* by Judith Gleason and Elisa Merghetti
READ: SAKAI
Assignment

Week 13 **Gender, Rites of Passage and Harvest festivals**

Tues, Nov 24 READ/SAKAI: **(Chapter 5) The Feast of the New Yam from** Achebe, Chinua, *Things Fall Apart*
READ/SAKAI: **Chapter 4: Rice Harvest Festival at Tindican, Guinea from Camara, Laye. *The Dark Child***
Assignment

Thurs, Nov 26 THANKSGIVING BREAK (Thursday, Nov 26, 2020)

Week 14 **Gender, Rites of passage and festivals: Space, Architecture, Fashion**

Tues, Dec 1 **and Storytelling**

READ: SAKAI: Gott, Suzanne "Onetouch" Quality and "Marriage Silver Cup": Performative Display, Cosmopolitanism, and Marital Poatwa in Kumasi Funerals. *Africa Today*, Vol. 54, No. 2, Visual Experience in Urban Africa (Winter, 2007), pp.79-106

READ: SAKAI "Sites of Identity and Resistance: Urban Community Murals and Rural Wall Decoration in South Africa" by Sabine Marschall: ***African Arts***, Vol. 35, No. 3 (Autumn, 2002), pp. 40-53
Documentary: **Ndebele Women's Dance of Rebellion**
Assignment

Thurs, Dec 3 **African Food and Storytelling**
Reading Wangari Maathai (pp.)and Ngugi Wa Thiongo, pp. 1-8 and pp. 92-114.
READ: Maathai, Wangari, *Unbowed:* Cultivation *(pp.17-26)*
READ: Ngugi Wa Thiongo, *Dreams in Time of War: A Childhood Memoir* (pp.26-29)
Assignment

Week 15

Tuesday, Dec 8 **Course Review**

Thursday, Dec 10 **Review and Conclusion**
Post Final Paper on SAKAI on Tuesday, Dec 15, 2020
THANK YOU – BEST WISHES!