

**EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY**  
**African American Studies Program**

Syllabus for *AFR3300.001 CRN #93792 African Cinema* Fall 2009

Class meeting times: Wednesdays, 4:00-6:30 PM.  
Class Venue: Room 2103 Blair Hall

Instructor: Klevor Abo, Ph. D

Email: [kabo@eiu.edu](mailto:kabo@eiu.edu)

Office: 1125 McAfee Hall

Tel: (217) 581-5917

Office hours: Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays 9:00-11:30AM and by appointment

**Course description**

This writing-intensive course defines African cinema as the totality of the production and distribution of motion pictures dealing with continental and diasporan African subject matters and themes. These films are mostly the work of continental and diasporan African casts and movie directors.

The course will analyze the different kinds of Africanist cinematic treatment that have been, and continue to be, given historical processes of change in the indigenous and contemporary Global Africa world as a result of the continent and its diasporas' encounter with external influences.

The course will address three principal issues:

- the artistic and technical challenges of crafting cinematic narratives, strategies and styles that are culturally appropriate for the treatment Africanist subject matter,
- the socio-economic, political and cultural challenges of actually making the films and getting the cinematic end-products to reach target audiences on the continent and beyond,
- the cinematic representation of the relationship between the African continent and its diasporas.

The course has been designed to follow the cardinal principles of General Education as laid out in the *Undergraduate Catalog* of Eastern Illinois University. Such education prepares its recipients for the world of work, for reasoned socio-cultural and political engagement as well as for personal growth and edification. It also calls for an understanding and promotion of cultural diversity as well as for the enhancement of its recipients' development of communication skills through the application of the protocols of critical and reflexive thinking. Consequently, writing assignments, group and individual class presentations, quizzes and a midterm examination will be designed to test students' aptitude for "responsible global citizenship" and "mindful scholarship."

**Student learning objectives**

It is expected that at the end of the course, students will

- have a broad understanding of the cultural, material and technical challenges of the Global Africa world's cinematic experience,

- be able to appreciate the complexities of the relationship between Africanist and other cinemas.

Additionally, these learning objectives have been designed to meet required scholastic outcomes for students pursuing the EIU Major/Minor in African American Studies. Upon graduation, EIU African American Studies Majors/Minors will be expected to develop

- critical thinking about and intellectual appreciation of Black life in the United States, the African continent and elsewhere in the African diaspora
- a clear understanding of the historical factors that have led to the emergence, growth and maturation of the field of African American Studies in the United States academy
- a awareness of the political, social and cultural contributions of Africans and people of African descent in the service of humanity
- proficiency in clear and critical written and oral communication about the field of Africana Studies

Since this is a writing-intensive course, these learning objectives will be tested through a variety of writing assignments as well as through group and individual presentations. Guidelines for these assignments and presentations will be issued separately.

### **DISABILITIES STATEMENT**

Students with documented disabilities are encouraged to contact the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) if they wish to discuss any necessary academic accommodations.

### **Required Textbook**

Shaka, Femi Okiremuete. *Modernity and the African Cinema*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2004.

### **Supplementary Texts on reserve at Booth Library**

Bakari, Imruh and Mbye Cham. *African Experiences of Cinema*. London: British Film Institute, 1996.

Barsam, Richard. *Looking at Movies: an introduction to film*. 2nd Edition. New York: W. W. Norton, 2007

Corrigan, Timothy. *A Short Guide to Writing About Film*. New York: Pearson Longman, 2004.

Diawara, Manthia. *African Cinema: politics and culture*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992.

Givani, June. *Symbolic Narratives/African: audiences, theory and the moving image*. London: British Film Institute, 2000.

Gugler, Joseph. *African Film: re-imagining a continent*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003

Mamer, Bruce. *Film Production Technique: creating the accomplished image*. London: Wadsworth Publishing Company. 1996.

Pfaff, Françoise. *Twenty-five Black African Filmmakers*. New York, NY: Greenwood Press, 1988.

-- *Focus on African Films*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004.

Thackway, Melissa. *Africa Shoots Back: alternative perspectives in Sub-Saharan Francophone African Film*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003.

Ukadike, Nwachukwu Frank. *Black African Cinema*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994.

-- *Questioning African Cinema: conversations with filmmakers*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2002.

In addition to these texts, handouts and audio-visual materials will be used to illustrate key scholastic elements in the course with a view to enhancing the learning experience.

### **Evaluation of student learning**

Grades will be assigned based on points earned from writing assignments, oral presentations, and a final project. There will be no final examination.

### **GRADING POINTS**

First exam	10%
Practical video project	10%
Writing assignments	20 %
Midterm examination	20 %
Attendance/class participation	10%
Final project	20 %
Final Examination	10 %
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>

A= 100-90%, B = 89-80%, C=79-70%, D= 69-60%, F= 59% and below.

### **Tentative Class Schedule Liable to Change**

#### Week 1

**August 26.** Introduction to Class. Movie, *Sankofa*

#### Week 2

**September 2:** Class discussion of the making of *Sankofa* from political, cultural and technical/artistic perspectives. Reading Assignment Due (RAD) *Looking at Movies*, 1-50.

#### Week 3

**September 9. Labor Day. No class.**

#### Week 4

**September 16 RAD:** *Shaka, Modernity and the African Cinema*, 1-57  
Screening of Ferrid Boughedir's documentaries about African cinema  
*Camera d'Afrique* and *Camera Arab*

Week 5

**September 23. Take-home Exam due.**

RAD Shaka, *Modernity and the African Cinema*, 73-124

Week 6

**September 30:** Screening of DW Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* and Oscar Micheaux's *Within Our Gates*.

RAD. Shaka, *Modernity and the African Cinema*, 125-154

Week 7

**October 7:** Screening of Sembene Ousmane's *Borom Saret*. RAD. Shaka, *Modernity and the African Cinema*, 155-212.

Week 8

**October 14: Mid-Term Break. No Classes**

Week 9

**October 21:** RAD: Shaka, *Modernity and the African Cinema*, 213-277

Screening of Iddrisa Ouedraogo's *Yaaba*.

**Take-home Mid-term Exams due**

Week 10

**October 28:** RAD: Shaka, *Modernity and the African Cinema*, 278-342

Screening of Baskin Kobio's *Le Grand Blanc de Lambaréné*

Final project proposals due.

Week 11

November 4: RAD: Shaka, *Modernity and the African Cinema*, 343-414

Screening of Sembene Ousmane's *Camp de Thiaroye*

Week 12

November 11: RAD, To be announced

Screening of Med Hondo's *Sarraounia*

Week 13

November 18: John Akomfra's *Testament* and *Seven Songs for Malcolm X*

RAD, To be announced

Week 14

November **25 THANKSGIVING BREAK**

Week 15

December **2** Screening of Souleymane Cissé's *Yeelen*

RAD: To be announced

Final projects due.

Week 16

December **9:** Screening of *Herskovits at the Heart of Blackness*

RAD, To be announced.

**FINAL EXAMS: WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 16<sup>TH</sup> 5:15-7:15 PM.**