

**EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY**  
**AFRI 3100 SECTION # 001 AFRICAN AESTHETICS AND COSMOLOGY**  
**Meeting Times: Mon, Wed & Fri: Time 3:00-3:50PM**  
**Blair Room # 2165**  
**Office Hours: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 10:00-11:45AM**  
**Other times by Appointment**  
**Fall 2009**

**INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Rosemary Onyango**  
**OFFICE: BLAIR HALL Room 3165**  
**Office Hours: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 10:00-11:30AM;**  
**Other times by Appointment**  
**PHONE: 581-7114**  
**E-mail: raonyango@eiu.edu**

**Required Readings:** (A number of these are reserved at Booth Library)  
Ali, Zaccheus S., Asiwaju, Anthony Ijaola & Oloruntimehin Benjamin Olatunji (eds.)  
*African unity: the cultural foundations* Edited by (pp. 11-25; 111-118) Lagos:  
Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization, c1988.  
Asante, Molefi Kete & Asante Kariamuwelsh (eds.) *African culture: the rhythms of  
unity* (pp. 4-12; 83-90), 1991. **RESERVE**  
Chinua. *Things Fall Apart*. New York: Knopf: Distributed by Random House, 1992.  
**RESERVE**  
Holloway, Joseph E.(ed.). *Africanisms in American culture*. Bloomington: Indiana  
University Press, c2005. **RESERVE**  
Karenga, Maulana *Introduction to Black Studies* (Chapter 5). Los Angeles California:  
University of Sankore Press, 2002. **RESERVE**  
Mazama, Ama *The Afrocentric paradigm*.(p. 3-34). Trenton, NJ.: Africa World Press,  
2003. **RESERVE**  
Mazrui, Ali A., Levine; Toby Kleban Carrier, Tracy Burke, Lindfield, Frieda Werden  
(eds.). *The Africans: a reader* edited by (pp. xv-29). New York, N.Y.: Praeger,  
1986.  
Mbiti, John. *African Religions and Philosophy*. Oxford; Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann,  
1990. **RESERVE**  
Reagan, Timothy. *Non-Western educational traditions alternative approaches to  
educational thought and practice*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum  
Associates, Publishers, 2003. **RESERVE; also available as an Electronic  
Resource.**  
Rodney, Walter. *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (p. 33-71). Howard University,  
1981.

**Additional Readings:** Handouts provided by the instructor.

**Some Useful Websites:**

*Africa Files*, <http://www.africafiles.org/index.asp>

**African Studies Association at:** <http://www.africanstudies.org/p/cm/ld/fid=8>

Jane Guyer. *African Studies in the United States: A Perspective*. **ONLINE at:**

[http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~callasa/guyer\\_index.html](http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~callasa/guyer_index.html)

## **Course Description**

This introductory survey course provides students with an overview of the cosmology, worldview, and culture of Africans, on the continent and throughout the Diaspora. The course will examine the aspects of African culture that distinguish it from European view of aesthetics. Some stereotypes of Africans that have persisted are that Africans are rhythmic people, with great dexterity in the areas of song, dance and sports. This course goes beyond simplified generalizations by emphasis that Africans and people of African descent regardless of geographic location are intertwined culturally in complex ways with respect to spirituality, music, language, dance, and history among others. By exploring readings, films and other relevant sources students will begin to understand African aesthetics from an African centered perspective and gain a broader and better understanding about aesthetic concepts and values as manifestations of African cosmology and the African worldview. Further, students will recognize that the complex forms of African aesthetics that are expressed in the continent and those that have found themselves in the Diaspora are not merely retentions, but salient points within the African cultural continuum.

## **Course Objectives:**

1. To introduce students to aspects of African aesthetics cosmology/worldview
2. To encourage students to write, discuss and write analytically about expressions of African aesthetics and cosmology as diverse and complex expressions of the worldview of people of African descent

To encourage students to develop the ability to relate ideas and knowledge across academic disciplinary boundaries

**Course Requirements:** Class attendance and active classroom participation are essential. There will be attendance sign-in sheets for every class session. Excessive absences will lower your grades and jeopardize your overall performance and success. Please inform me if you need to be excused from class. Everyone is expected to complete assigned readings on time and participate in class discussions. We are expected create a courteous and intellectually stimulating learning environment in which we show respect for and appreciation of the rigors of academic culture. All written exams, a midterm, class presentation, research paper and regular attendance will be taken into account for the final grade. Critical response papers will be turned in on specified dates. A research paper will be due Dec. 4th. All exams are from materials previously covered. No make-up exams without prior notification of and approval by me, arising from emergency situations fully documented by the student.

## **WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS AND EXAMS**

Each student is required to complete and submit three written assignments, two critical response papers (1-3 pages) expressing the student's reaction to the central theme or argument and backed up using material covered. These assignments will be averaged in with Mid-term Exams, Research paper and, attendance and participation. You are expected to sit for the exam on the day and time it is offered. In case of an avoidable

emergency, you must show documented proof of that emergency in order to be considered for a make-up exam.

**PRESENTATION OF READINGS:**

Each student is expected to sign up for readings and give a brief presentation of the main points of the assigned chapter and suggest relevant questions that can generate whole class discussion.

**RESEARCH PAPER:**

Topics for research paper will be specified by instructor. Your paper (10-15 pages) must be typed, well organized with all the requirements of an academic research paper (i.e. references, endnotes or footnotes, bibliography, and e.t.c).

**ACADEMIC HONESTY:**

Cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, and sharing work on assignments that is intended for individual completion is not allowed. Students found cheating on any portion/exam of this course will receive a zero grade for that portion/exam in addition to any disciplinary action that may be taken by the university. Please refer to Eastern Illinois University Academic Regulations at:

[http://catalog.eiu.edu/content.php?catoid=16&navoid=372#acad\\_inte](http://catalog.eiu.edu/content.php?catoid=16&navoid=372#acad_inte)

**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.

**GRADING:**

Written Assignments (three)	100%
Critical Response Papers (two)	100%
Midterm Exam	100%
Presentation	100%
Class Participation (includes attendance)	100%
Research Paper	100%
Final Exam	100%

A final percentage will be determined as follows:

90%-100%	A
80%-89%	B
70%-79%	C
60%-69%	D
0%-59%	F

## TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE AND READINGS

**NOTE: Reasonable changes may be made to this schedule as the semester proceeds.**

### PART I DEFINING AFRICANS AND AFRICAN STUDIES

#### **WEEK 1 Introduction**

**Aug. 24.** Course Overview

**Aug. 26-28.** Africans and Black America in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

What are the realities for people of African descent in the continent of Africa and other parts of the world in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?

What factors have contributed to our perception of Africans, African Americans and people of African descent?

#### **WEEK 2 Definition of Key Terms**

**Aug. 31.** What is the meaning of African Worldview and Cosmology?

What does Afrocentricity mean? How does it impact our understanding of African culture?

Readings: (Handout)

Asante, Molefi Kete. Afrocentricity and Culture. *In African culture: the rhythms of unity* (pp. 4-12) / edited by Molefi Kete Asante and Kariamu Welsh Asante, 1991.

**Sept. 2-4. Excavating Africa in Scholarly Discourse**

Why Africana/African American Studies?

Jane Guyer. African Studies in the United States: A Perspective.

Available online at:

[http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~callasa/guyer\\_index.html](http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~callasa/guyer_index.html)

Handout: Walter Rodney, "How Africa Developed Before the Coming of the Europeans-Up to the 15<sup>th</sup> Century," from Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (p. 33-71). Howard University, 1981.

Discussion: Was Africa the Birth Place of Humanity?

What is the contribution of Africa to Human History?

#### **WEEK 3 The Afrocentric Paradigm and African Cosmology and Worldview**

**Sept. 7: Labor Day Observance/No Classes**

Readings (Sept 9, 11):

*The Afrocentric paradigm* / Ama Mazama, editor Trenton, NJ : Africa World Press, 2003.

Chap. 1. Mazama, Ama. The Afrocentric Paradigm (pp. 3-34)

Chap. 2. The Afrocentric Idea (pp. 37-53)

Video Clips: Wonders of the African World by Gates

Discussion: How does applying the Afrocentric paradigm to the study of African culture enhance/limit our understanding?

**Written Assignment # 1 Due: Sept. 9**

## **PART II: FOUNDATIONS OF AFRICAN CULTURE, WORLDVIEW AND COSMOLOGY**

### **WEEK 4: Indigenous Africa**

Readings:

**Sept. 14-16.** Christopher-Davis Roberts. "Indigenous Africa" In *The Africans: a reader* edited by Ali A. Mazrui, Toby Kleban Levine; Tracy Burke Carrier, Frieda Lindfield Werden (pp. xv-29). New York, N.Y.: Praeger, 1986.

**Sept. 18.** Handout Cheik Anta Diop, "Modern Falsification of History, from Cheik Anta Diop *The African Origin of Civilization*, Lawrence Hill, 1974.

**Critical Response Paper # 1 Due ( Sept. 18)**

### **WEEK 5 Religious Traditions: Beliefs and Practice**

Readings:

Overview: Plurality of African Religious Practice

Mbiti, John. *African Religions and Philosophy*. New York: Anchor Books, 1970, c1969.

**Sept. 21.** Introduction (p. 1-7)

**Sept. 23.** Chapter. 2-3

**Sept. 25.** Chapter 4-7

Discussion: African Views of the Universe,  
Belief in God and Religious practices

### **WEEK 6 Religious Traditions: Specific Examples**

Readings: **Sept. 28-Oct 2.**

Maulana Karenga *Introduction to Black Studies* (Chapter 5). Los Angeles California: University of Sankore Press, 2002

The Dogon Tradition

Maat: Ancient Egyptian Tradition (p241-254

Ifa: Yoruba Tradition: (p.254-262

Discussion:

What is the significance of rituals and symbols in African Cosmology

**Assignment #2 Due (Oct. 2)**

### **WEEK 7: Traditional Education**

**Oct. 9: Fall Break/No Classes**

Readings:

**Oct. 5.** Reagan, Timothy. "A Wise Child is Talked to in Proverbs" Traditional African Educational Thought and Practice. In *Non-Western educational traditions alternative approaches to educational thought and practice* / Timothy Reagan, 2003.

**Oct. 7.** Chapter 5: Boadu, Samuel. African Oral Artistry and the New Social Order. In *African culture: the rhythms of unity* (pp. 83-90) edited by Molefi Kete Asante and Kariamuwelsh Asante, 1991.

## PART III AFRICAN COSMOLOGY IN ART, MUSIC AND DANCE

### WEEK 8: Artistic Traditions

Readings:

**Oct. 12.** Mid-Term Review

**Oct 16.** Chapter. 13 Enekwe, Onuora Ossie. The Mask as an Interactive Element in African Culture. *In African unity: the cultural foundations* Edited by Zaccheus Sunday Ali Anthony Ijaola Asiwaju, Benjamin Olatunji Oloruntimehin (pp. 111-118) Lagos: Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization, c1988.

**Oct. 14: MIDTERM EXAMS**

### WEEK 9: Aesthetics of Body Adornment and Hairstyles

Readings:

**Oct. 19.** Drewal, John. African artistry: technique and aesthetics in Yoruba sculpture / by Henry Atlanta: The High Museum of Art, 1980. Overview: Style and Beauty in Ancient Africa.

**Oct. 21.** Aradeon, Susan B. The Enduring Vitality of West Africa Dress. *In African unity: the cultural foundations* Edited by Zaccheus Sunday Ali Anthony Ijaola Asiwaju, Benjamin Olatunji Oloruntimehin Chap. 12 (pp. 133-142) Lagos : Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization, c1988.

**Oct. 23. DVD:** Sacred waters: arts for Mami Wata and other divinities in Africa and the Diaspora / based on book edited by Henry John Drewal.

### WEEK 10: African Music

Readings **Oct 26:** Vidal, Tunji. Music and Musical Instruments as Modes of Communication. *In African unity: the cultural foundations* Edited by Zaccheus Sunday Ali Anthony Ijaola Asiwaju, Benjamin Olatunji Oloruntimehin Chap. 13 (pp. 143-152) Lagos: Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization, c1988.

**Oct. 28.** Welsh, Asante. Commonalities in African Dance: An Aesthetic Foundation. *In African culture: the rhythms of unity* (pp. 71-82, 1991.

**Assignment # 3 Due (Oct.30)**

## PART IV: AFRICAN WORLDVIEW IN A CHANGING SOCIETY

### WEEK: 11 Nov. 2, 4 & 6 Cultural Domination and Mixing

Readings:

**Nov. 2.** Ajayi, J.F. Ade. Resilience of African Traditional Institutions and Cultures. *In African unity: the cultural foundations* Edited by Zaccheus Sunday Ali Anthony Ijaola Asiwaju, Benjamin Olatunji Oloruntimehin (pp. 11-25) Lagos: Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization, c1988.

**Nov. 4. Guidelines for Research Paper.**

**Nov. 6.** Video: The Africans: A Triple Heritage by Mazrui

**WEEK 12: African Worldview in Fiction**

Readings:

**Nov. 9-13:** Achebe, Chinua. *Things Fall Apart*.

**Handout:** on Toni Morrison's Writing and African Worldview  
**Critical Response Paper # 2 Due (Nov. 13)**

**PART V AFRICANISMS IN AMERICAN CULTURE**

**WEEK: 13 Enduring Cultural Connections and Change**

Readings:

*Africanisms in American culture* / edited by Joseph E. Holloway.

Bloomington: Indiana University Press, c2005.

**Nov. 16.** Chap.1: Holloway, Joseph. Origins of African American Culture. (p. 18-34)

**Nov. 18.** Chap. 2. Holloway, Joseph. "What Africa Has Given America": African Continuities in the North American Diaspora (p. 39-64).

**Nov. 20.** Chap. 3. Asante, M. African Elements in African-American English p. (65-81).

**WEEK 14 NOV. 23-27: THANKSGIVING BREAK/NO CLASSES**

**WEEK 15 Enduring Cultural Connections and Change Continue**

Readings:

**Nov. 30.** Chap. 4. Asante, Molefi. "Africanism in African American Names in the US. (p. 82-100).

**Dec. 2.** Chap. 5. Washington, Margaret Gullah Attitudes toward Life and Death (p.152-186).

**Dec. 4.** Chap. 8. Hall, Robert. African Religious Retentions in Florida (p. 224-248).

**Research Paper Due. Dec. 4<sup>th</sup>.**

**WEEK 16 Enduring Cultural Connections and Change Continue**

Readings:

Dec. 7: Chap. 10. Thompson, Robert Farris. Kongo influences on African American Artistic Culture (p. 283-326).

Dec. 9: Chap. 13. Philips, John Edward. The African Heritage of White America. (p. 357-371).

**Dec. 11 FINALS REVIEW LAST DAY OF CLASS**

**WEEK 17 FINAL EXAMS: 3100 Section # 001 THURSDAY, Dec. 17, 2:45-4:45pm.**