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

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0 13 312 AFRICAN FOLKLORE AND MYTH - FALL 2020

Tuesday 1:10 PM - 2:30 PMAC
Thursday 1:10 PM - 2:30 PMAC

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 2 points.
- 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:**

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<td>A</td>
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**REQUIRED TEXTS**


**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.

- 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**

**Tues, Sept 1**

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

**Defining Africa and Storytelling Traditions: An Overview**

READ SAKAI: Bascom, W. The Fourth Functions of Folklore


**Thurs, Sept 3**

READ SAKAI: Bascom, W. The Fourth Functions of Folklore

**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:** 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**  

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  
Thurs, Nov 12  
**The Riddles in Africa**  
**Assignment:**
**Week 12**  
**Humor and Ridicule**  
**Tues, Nov 17**  

**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 and Storytelling**  
**Tues, Dec 1**  

**Documentary:** Ndebele Women’s Dance of Rebellion

**Assignment**

**Thurs, Dec 3**  
**African Food and Storytelling**  
Reading Wangari Maathai (pp. 1-18) 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!