

Religion 450: AFRICAN RELIGION

Dr. Katie G. Cannon
Tuesday 12:00 - 2:30 p.m.
Main Campus
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Temple University
2000 Fall Semester
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Course Description:

This seminar is designed to introduce students to some of the central aspects of African Traditional Religion(s) presented in selected, influential studies by African scholars of religion. Utilizing interdisciplinary and multi-methodological approaches, we will examine the profile of religious plurality in Africa and pursue reading in the literature of the field.

Course Requirements:

Regular class attendance and reading that is complete, careful and on schedule are essential for this seminar, since the format is one of discussion. To help promote lively, meaningful exchange, each student must be prepared to talk 3 - 5 minutes about the required reading each Tuesday, beginning September 12, 2000. Notice that assignments vary in length. Plan ahead so that you can keep up with the reading. If in any given week the entire assignment is too much, students should at least read the first one hundred pages in order to complete the required "talking paper."

Make two copies of each "talking paper." One copy is for the professor's files and the second copy is for a seminar colleague. The reader of the "talking paper" should write down her/his response to the reflections. The responses can include questions, ideas you liked, disagreements, analogies to other readings, bibliographical suggestions, etc. Include your signature at the end of your comments.

On the following class session, the reader should return the "talking paper" to the original author. The author should read the comments and respond in writing to any comments that serve as a catalyst for further development of ideas and refinement of thought. Ideally, each student should have responses from each member of the seminar by the end of the semester.

In addition, everyone must participate in the research paper updating process. The final draft of the research paper is due December 12, 2000 (in duplicates). The research paper should meet the usual formal requirements of term papers, on some aspect of African Traditional Religions. A cogent paper (20 pages well done) is desirable; the emphasis is on creative analysis and critical thinking, not copious writing.

Course Procedure:

This foundation seminar will meet weekly for a period of two and a half-hours. A discussion style will be used to place the reading into a "dance of redemption" framework. Each student will be responsible for writing a weekly "talking paper" which will include the following:

- a) *conscientization* - write a free-style, felt-sense response to the required reading, whatever that may be, without critical constraint;
- b) *emancipatory historiography* - identify a sentence with which you agree or a sentence that causes you to struggle, stumble, or resist and research the religious principle, norm, value or taboo implicit or explicit in the statement;
- c) *methodological investigation* - the questions that follow are representative of the questions that may be brought to any ethical research. The use of these questions will provide continuity in the study of

African Traditional Religions. However, not all of them are equally important for all thinkers. Students should answer questions 1, 2, and 3 each week, then choose at least five other questions that are most significant for each assignment. This list is aimed to suggest, not limit styles of methodological inquiry.

1. Who is the author and what is the author's thesis?
2. How did you discover this scholar's method? Does the author explain or did you find the methodology by analyzing the actual evidence used to substantiate her/his general approach to the subject? Briefly discuss.
3. What types of source material contribute to the scholar's overall argumentation?
4. What about these sources are distinctively African?
5. What constitutes authority for this writer?
6. What aspect of the author's viewpoint is intended to be persuasive regarding religious obligations?
7. Is there a difference between "we should" and "we ought"?
8. What contribution does the author make for adjustment to changing circumstances?
9. What does the author state about conflict?
10. Are there rewards and punishments in this text?
11. What are the writer's important unexpressed presuppositions?
12. What facts does the author ignore in order to promote her/his own scheme of organization?
13. Are there useful footnotes and bibliography?
14. Is the documentation convincing?
15. What difficulties do you find in this work?
16. What do you find helpful in this work?

d) *norm clarification* - What contribution does this scholar make to spark new considerations regarding African Religions? If the author were to visit our seminar, what questions would you like to address to her/him? After the second week of required reading, include hypothetical questions to today's author from other authors studied in the seminar.

Criteria for Evaluation:

- accuracy and precision of scholarship
- clarity of oral and written presentation
- completion of assignments on the due dates
- contribution to the group process of inquiry and discussion
- creativity, critical judgment, and imagination

Required Books:

Griaule, Marcel with an Introduction by Germaine Dieterlen. Conversations with Ogotemmeli: An Introduction to Dogon Religious Ideas. NY: Oxford Univ. Pr., 1975.

Hackett, Rosalind I. J. Art and Religion in Africa. NY: Cassell, 1996.

Magesa, Laurent. African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997.

Mbiti, John. African Religions and Philosophy. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1990.

Oduyoye, Mercy Amba. Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995.

Olupona, Jacob, and S. Nyang, eds. Religious Plurality in Africa, NY: Mouton De Gruyter, 1993.

Ray, Benjamin C. African Religions: Symbol, Ritual, and Community. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2000.

Some, Malidoma Patrice. Of Water and the Spirit: Ritual, Magic, and Initiation in the Life of an African Shaman. NY: Putnam Pr., 1994.

Recommended Books:

Baum, Robert M. Shrines of the Slave Trade: Diola Religion and Society in Pre-colonial Senegambia. NY: Oxford Univ. Pr., 1999.

Blake, Thomas, et. al. Religion in Africa. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1994.

Byaam, Edward B. The African Unconscious: Roots of Ancient Mysticism and Modern Psychology. NY: Teachers College Pr., 1999.

Some, Malidoma. Ritual: Power, Healing, and Community. NY: Penguin, 1997.

_____. The Healing Wisdom of Africa. NY: Putnam, 1998.

Some, Sobunfu. The Spirit of Intimacy: Ancient Teachings in the Ways of Relationships. Berkeley: Berkeley Hills Books, 1997.

Schedule of Readings and Assignments

September 5

INTRODUCTION TO THE SEMINAR

Documentary Film:

September 12

TRADITION and INITIATION

Required reading: Some, Malidoma Patrice. Of Water and the Spirit: Ritual, Magic, and Initiation in the Life of an African Shaman. NY: Putnam Pr., 1994.

or

Some, Malidoma. The Healing Wisdom of Africa. NY: Putnam, 1998.

*DUE: Talking Paper

Supplementary reading:

Adegbola, E.A., ed. Traditional Religion in West Africa. Ibadan: Daystar Pr., 1983.

Chidester, David, et al. African Traditional Religion in South Africa: An Annotated Bibliography. Westport, CT: Greenwood Pr., 1997.

Diop, Cheikh Anta. The African Origins of Civilization: Myth or Reality, ed. and trans., Mercer Cook. Westport, CT: Lawrence Hill and Co., 1974.

Ephrim-Donkor, Anthony. African Spirituality: On Becoming Ancestors. Trenton: African World Press, 1997.

Gaiya, Musa A.B. A Portrait of a Saint: The Life and Times of Pa Yohanna Gowan. Jos, Nigeria: Fab Ed. Books, 1998.

Idowu, E. Bolaji. African Traditional Religion: A Definition. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1975.

Imasogie, O. African Traditional Religion. Ibadan: Univ. Pr. Ltd. 1985.

Kratz, Corinne A. Affecting Performance: Meaning, Movement, and Experience in Okiek Women's Initiation. Wash., DC: Smithsonian Institution Pr., 1993.

Richards, Aubrey I. Chisungu: A Girl's Initiation Ceremony Among the Bemba of Northern Rhodesia. London: Faber & Faber, 1956.

September 19

AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY

Required reading: Mbiti, John. African Religions and Philosophy. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1990.

*DUE: Talking Paper

Supplementary reading:

Eze, Emmanuel Chukwudi. African Philosophy: An Anthology. Oxford: Blackwell, 1998.

Gbadegesin, Segun. African Philosophy: Traditional Yoruba Philosophy and Contemporary African Realities. NY: Peter Lang, 1991.

Gyekye, Kwame. Tradition and Modernity: Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience. NY:

Oxford Univ. Pr., 1997.
Ilesanmi, Simeon O. Religious Pluralism and the Nigerian State. Athens: Center for International Studies, Ohio Univ., 1997.
Makinde, Akin. African Philosophy, Culture, and Traditional Medicine. Ohio: Ohio Univ. Pr., 1986.
Mudimbe, V.Y. The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Pr., 1988.
Wiredu, Kwasi. Philosophy and an African Culture. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Pr., 1980.

September 26

ORAL SCRIPTURE/ARCHITECTONIC TEXTS

Required reading: Hackett, Rosalind I. J. Art and Religion in Africa. NY: Cassell, 1996.

*DUE: Talking Paper and Research Paper - draft - section 1 - Select an ethical category in African Traditional Religions which in your opinion presents an important research question for you to work on and write an abstract that clearly states the origin of the idea and the focus of your research investigation this semester.

Supplementary reading:

Barber, Karin and P.F. de Moraes-Farias. Discourse and Its Disguise: The Interpretation of African Oral Texts. Birmingham: Centre of West African Studies, Univ. of Birmingham, Eng., 1989.
Ben-Amos, Paula Girshick. The Art of Benin. Wash.DC: Smithsonian Institution Pr., 1995.
Blier, Suzanne Preston. The Royal Arts of Africa: The Majesty of Form. NY: Harry N. Abrams, 1998.
Clarke, Duncan and Joann Padgett, eds. The Art of African Textile. San Diego, CA: Thunder Bay Pr., 1997.
Courtney-Clarke, Margaret. African Canvas: The Art of West African Women. NY: Rizzoli, 1990.
D'Azevedo, Warren, ed. The Traditional Artist in African Societies. Bloomington: Indiana Univ., Pr., 1973.
Drewel, John and Margaret Thompson Drewel. Gelede: Art and Female Power Among the Yoruba. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Pr., 1983.
Heldman, Marilyn et al. African Zion: The Sacred Art of Ethiopia. New Haven: Yale Univ. Pr., 1996.
Powell, Ivor and Mark Lewis. Ndebele: A People and Their Art. NY: Cross River Pr., 1995.
Thompson, Robert Farris. Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy. NY: Random House, 1983.
Vogel, Susan M. Baule: African Art, Western Eyes. New Haven: Yale Univ. Pr. 1997.
Willett, Frank. African Art: An Introduction. Singapore: Thames and Hudson, 1993.

October 3

HUMAN EXPERIENCE

Required reading: Oduyoye, Mercy Amba. Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995.

* DUE: Talking Paper

Supplementary reading:

Amadiume, Ifi. Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society. London: Zed Books, 1987.
Gibbal, Jean-Marie. Genii of the River Niger trans. Beth G. Raps, Chicago: Univ. of Chicago pr., 1994.
Head, Bessie. A Question of Power. London: Heinemann, 1974.
Hoehler-Fatton, Cynthia. Women of Fire and Spirit: History, Faith, and Gender in Roho Religion in Nyanza. NY: Oxford Univ. Pr., 1996.
James, Wendy. The Listening Ebony: Moral Knowledge, Religion and Power Among the Uduk of Sudan. Oxford: Claredon Pr., 1988.
Lincoln, Bruce. Priests, Warriors, and Cattle: A Study in the Ecology of Religions. Berkeley: Univ. of CA Pr., 1981.
Mathabane, Mark. African Women: Three Generations. NY: Harper Collins, 1994.
Nwapa, Flora. Efuru. London: Heinemann, 1966.
Kuzwayo, Ellen. Call Me Woman. San Francisco: Spinster Ink, 1985.
Sicard, Grace Mesopirr. A Tale of a Maasai Girl. Sussex, England: The Book Guild, 1998.

October 10

NATURE OF REALITY

Required reading: Magesa, Laurent. African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997.

*DUE: Talking Paper and Research Paper -draft- sections 1 & 2 - State why your topic is worthy of responsible scholarly research and discuss significant prior research (at least three annotated sources).

Supplementary reading:

Ademoyega, Adewale. Why We Struck. Ibadan: Evans Brothers, 1981.

Bush, Barbara. Imperialism, Race, and Resistance: Africa and Britain, 1919-1945. NY: Routledge, 1999.

Dolphyne, Florence Abena. The Emancipation of Women: An African Perspective. Accra: Ghana Univ., 1991.

Hochschild, Adam. King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998.

Idowu, E. Bolaji. Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief. (1962) NY: Wazobia, 1994.

Karp, Ivan and Charles S. Bird, eds. Explorations in African Systems of Thought. Wash., DC: Smithsonian Institution Pr., 1987.

Lambek, Michael. Human Spirits: A Cultural Account of Trance in Mayotte. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Pr., 1981.

Lienhardt, Godfrey. Divinity and Experience: The Religion of the Dinka. Oxford: Clarendon Pr., 1961.

Schoffeleers, J. Matthew. River of Blood: The Genesis of a Martyr Cult in Southern Malawi, c. A.D. 1600. Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Pr., 1992.

October 17

COSMOLOGY

Required reading: Griaule, Marcel with an Introduction by Germaine Dieterlen. Conversations with Ogotemmel: An Introduction to Dogon Religious Ideas. NY: Oxford Univ. Pr., 1975.

*DUE: Talking Paper

Supplementary reading:

Arens, William and Ivan Karp, eds. The Creativity of Power: Essays on Cosmology and Action in African Societies. Wash.DC: Smithsonian Institution Pr., 1989.

Buxton, Jean. Religion and Healing in Mandari. Oxford: Clarendon Pr., 1973.

Horton, Robin. Patterns of Thought in Africa and the West. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Pr., 1993.

King, Noel Q. African Cosmos: An Introduction to Religion in Africa. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Pub., Co., 1986.

MacGaffey, Wyatt. Religion and Society in Central Africa: The Bakongo of Lower Zaire. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Pr., 1986.

Mudimbe, V.Y. Tales of Faith: Religion as Political Performance in Central Africa. London: The Athlone Pr., 1997.

Okpewho, Isidore. Myth in Africa. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ.Pr., 1983.

Sarpong, Peter. The Sacred Stools of the Akan. Accra-Tema, Ghana Pub. Corp., 1971.

Sindima, Harvey J. Drums of Redemption: An Introduction to African Christianity. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1999.

October 24

REVELATION

Required reading: Ray, Benjamin C. African Religions: Symbol, Ritual, Community. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2000.

*DUE: Talking Paper and Research Paper (draft - sections 1, 2, & 3 - a copy for each seminar participant) Define your scope, limitations, and key assumptions and list up to five bibliographical sources which you intend to use in your research paper.

Supplementary reading:

- Anderson, David and Douglas H. Johnson, eds. Revealing Prophets: Prophecy in Eastern African History. Athens: Univ. of Ohio Pr., 1995.
- Fardon, Richard. Between God, the Dead and the Wild: Chamba Interpretations of Religion and Ritual. Wash., DC: Smithsonian Institution Pr., 1990.
- Fernandez, James W. Bwiti: An Ethnography of the Religious Imagination in Africa. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Pr., 1982.
- Furniss, Graham. Poetry, Prose, and Popular Culture in Hausa. Wash., DC: Smithsonian Institution Pr., 1996.
- Kanyoro, Musimbi and Nyambura J. Njoroge, eds. Groaning in Faith: African Women in the Household of God. Nairobi: Acton Pub., 1996.
- Oduyoye, Mercy Amba. Transforming Power. Accra, Ghana: Sam Woode Ltd., 1997.
- Rasmussen, Susan J. Spirit Possession and Personhood Among Kel Ewey Tuareg. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Pr., 1995.
- Somjee, Sultan. Material Culture of Kenya. Nairobi: East African Educational Pub., 1993.
- Soyinka, Wole. Myth, Literature, and the African World. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Pr., 1976.
- Thomas, Linda E. Under the Canopy: Ritual Process and Spiritual Resilience in South Africa. Columbia: Univ. of SC, 1999.

October 31 **LOGICAL CONSISTENCY (Part I)**

Required reading: Olupona, Jacob, and S. Nyang, eds. Religious Plurality in Africa, NY: Mouton De Gruyter, 1993, pp. 1- 175.

*DUE: Talking Paper

November 7 **LOGICAL CONSISTENCY (Part II)**

Required reading: Olupona, Jacob, and S. Nyang, eds. Religious Plurality in Africa, NY: Mouton De Gruyter, 1993, pp. 179- 395.

*DUE: Talking Paper

November 14 *DUE: Research Paper (draft - sections 1, 2, 3, & 4 a copy for each seminar participant)
Write an outline and a discussion of your process of data analysis as precisely as possible.

November 21 Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature, Nashville, Tenn.

November 28 Documentary Film

December 5 Closure and Evaluation

December 12 *Due: Final Draft of Research Paper (in duplicate)