

WEST AFRICAN CULTURES AND SOCIETY

Instructor: Dr. E. Kwadwo O. Beeko

Course Number: AFRCNA 1024

Days & Times: Mon – Fri, 9:00am–10:30am

Location: CIEE Room, UG Legon

Term: Summer 2018

Phone: 233-(0)50-965-1600

Email: erb16@pitt.edu

Course fulfills Social Science, and Foreign Culture/International Requirement.

I. Course Description

The course is intended to provide students with a basic understanding and appreciation of some of the distinctive elements and features of West African cultures and society. Presented from interdisciplinary framework, the course will introduce students to the diversity, dynamism and complexity of the many cultures and societies of West Africa, both past and present. It first provides a brief background of the region by exploring its geological and geographical nature, and the multi-linguistic peoples living in the region. It follows with the nature of West African societies' social systems and organization; their indigenous political and economic institutions; and their cultural arts and aesthetic. The course further discusses about West Africans' interaction with the world, and the subsequent emergence of slavery and colonization; and the rise of cultural emancipation, nationalism, pan-Africanism that eventually led to decolonization in the region. In addition, since the discipline of Africana Studies sustains comprehensive immersion of African world content to guide effort to study, to define, to critically interpret, to map and to comparatively engage the multi-directional continuum of African experience, the course finally shows, in conclusion, how these West African traditions have historically and culturally become part of the heritage of the Black communities in the Diaspora—Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Latino, African American, and Afro-European traditions.

II. Course Objectives

Students after the course will:

- (a) Gain better understanding and appreciation of the brief history and oral traditions of the West African societies.
- (b) Gain better understanding and appreciation of the uniqueness about the people's cultural traditions, and the relevance of these traditions in the context of expression.
- (c) Gain better understanding and appreciation of the diversity and complexity of the West African peoples' experience, and the commonalities that they share in their way of life, beliefs, customs and traditions.
- (d) Gain better understanding and appreciation of West African peoples' worldview, beliefs, and systems of thought as displayed in their daily lives.
- (e) Gain better understanding and appreciation of how West African people have been able to blend their traditions with modernity, without destroying their culture.

III. Course Requirements

Students will be expected:

1. To finish all weekly reading assignments;
2. To participate actively in class discussions, and selected events;
3. To participate in the following trips and excursions, which relate to the course: *a visit to the Dubois Centre and Kwame Nkrumah Mausoleum, Great Accra Region; a visit to the Asante Paramount Chief House in Kumasi, Ashanti Region; and a field trip to the historical slave dungeons on the coast of Ghana, Central Region;*).
4. To present and submit Final paper on what they would have learned and experienced at the end of the term

IV. Evaluation/Grading

Grading will be based on an aggregate of (1) *Class Participation and Presentations* – 15%; (2) *Two Examinations* – 30% (each 15%); (3) *Submission of Field Report* – 15%; and (4) *Submission of Final Papers/Project* – 40%.

The Submission of the Final Paper will be June 20, 2018, after returning to the U.S.A.

V. Students with Disabilities

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and the Office of Disability Resources and Services, 140 William Pitt Union, 412-648-7890/412-383-3346 (Fax), as early as possible in the term. Disability Resources and Services will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

VI. Academic Integrity Policy

Cheating/plagiarism will not be tolerated. Students suspected of violating the University of Pittsburgh Policy on Academic Integrity, noted below, will be required to participate in the outlined procedural process as initiated by the instructor. A minimum sanction of a zero score for the quiz, exam or paper will be imposed. (For the full Academic Integrity policy, go to www.provost.pitt.edu/info/ai1.html.)

VII. E-Mail Communication Policy

Each student is issued a University e-mail address (username@pitt.edu) upon admittance. This e-mail address may be used by the University for official communication with students. Students are expected to read e-mail sent to this account on a regular basis. Failure to read and react to University communications in a timely manner does not absolve the student from knowing and complying with the content of the communications. The University provides an e-mail forwarding service that allows students to read their e-mail via other service providers (*e.g., Hotmail, AOL, Yahoo*).

VIII. Required Texts

Manuh, Takyiwa and Esi Sutherland-Addy, edit. 2013. Africa in Contemporary Perspectives: A Textbook for Undergraduate Students. Accra, Ghana: Sub Saharan Publishers.

♣ **Handouts** (to be provided in class or through email for further readings)

IX. Course Outline

In the U.S.A.

Week One

INTRODUCTION: LAND AND PEOPLES OF WEST AFRICA

Monday, 05/07

First Meeting with Students: An Introduction to the Program and the Two Courses involved!

Tuesday, 05/08

Session 1: The Contemporary Map of West Africa

● *West Africa's Physical Landscape*; ● *The Major Physiographic Features of the Region*; ● *Land and Its Surrounding Atlantic Ocean*; ● *West African Climate Zones (Heat, Rain and Wind)*; ● *Inter-Tropical Convergence Zones (ITCZ)*; ● *West African Vegetation Zones (Forests and Grasslands; Soils and Minerals)*.

Session 2: The West African Peoples and Languages

● *The Principal Physical Types of West African Peoples, and their Distribution*; ● *Traditions, Origin, and Migration of West African peoples*; ● *The Linguistic Divisions, and Regional Distribution of the Language Groups*; ● *Cultural Mapping: Diversity and Division; and Similarities/Commonalities in West African Cultures*.

1:30pm – 3:00pm

■ **DVD/Video #1 – *Social and Cultural Institutions!***

Wednesday, 05/09
(Performing Arts)

Thursday, 05/10

Final Meetings and Discussion on Logistics

Friday, 05/11

Free day for Students

♣ **Weekly Readings: Ajayi & Crowder, 1972: 1-32****

In Ghana

Week Two

WEST AFRICAN SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND SOCIAL SYSTEMS

Monday, 05/14

The Social Organization – I

- *West African Social Structure and Organization*; • *Gender, Sex and Marriage*; • *The Family – Types and Function, Work and Livelihood*; • *Complex Family Structure: Kinship, Household & Lineage*.

Tuesday, 05/15

The Social Organization – II

- *West African Descent Systems: Inheritance and Succession; Dynamics of Kingship Terminology*; • *Non-Familiar Kinship Groups*; • *Occupation and Social Status*; • *Mechanics of Social Adjustment*.

Wednesday, 05/16

The Social Systems – I

- *West African Worldview: Significance of Worldview, Religious Worldview, and Moral Values*; • *West African Systems of Thought*; • *The Logic of Ritual Practices and Taboo; Festivals and Ceremonies*.

Thursday, 05/17

LECTURE – I: “West African Beliefs and Custom;” by Professor Kofi Asari Opoku, African University of Communication, Accra, Ghana.

Friday, 05/18

The Social Systems – II

- *West African Islamic and Christian Traditions: Historical and Socio-Cultural factors*; • *The Encounter between Islam and Traditional culture; and between Christianity and Traditional Culture*

Saturday, 05/19

♠ ***Volunteering with FLUCC***

♣ **Weekly Readings: Manuh & Addy 2013:94-115, 151-164.**

Ayisi 1979:6-12, 13-27, 28-31, 32-35, 36-45, 46-54, 71-81, 82-88, 89-93 **

Week Three

WEST AFRICAN POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SYSTEMS

Monday, 05/21

The Political Systems - I

- *West African Traditional African Government and Society*; • *Leadership, Politics and Citizenship*; • *Chieftaincy Systems*; • *Judicial Processes*; • *Law and the Society*; • *Native Courts and Customary Law*.

Tuesday, 05/22

The Political Systems - II

- *Traditional and Modern Leadership: Definition and Characteristics*; • *Colonial Impact on Traditional Political Systems*; • *Features and Roles of Modern Leadership in West Africa*.

Wednesday, 05/23

The Economic Systems - I

- *Economic Life in West African Societies: Food Productions, Fishing, Herders, the Family Household;*
- *The Techniques of Agriculture;* ● *Agricultural Development in West Africa;* ● *Marketing and Trading.*

Thursday, 05/24

The Economic System – I

- **LECTURE 2: “West African Regional and International Economic Cooperation and Integration;”** by Professor Kwame Boafo-Arthur, Department of Political Science, University of Ghana, Legon.

Friday, 05/25

- ♠ **Transfer to KUMASI (King’s Palace, Museum and Traditional Homes; Bonwire Kente, Markets, etc.)**

Saturday, 05/26

- **LECTURE 3: “Role of Traditional Authority in Contemporary Democratic Governance”** by a Traditional Ruler in Kumasi, Ashanti Region.

- ♣ **Weekly Readings: Manuh & Addy 2013:181-197, 221-247, 226-280.**

*Ayisi 1979:55-63, 64-70**; Martin & O’Meara 1995:190-210***

Week Four

WEST AFRICAN CULTURAL ARTS; AND SOCIO-CULTURAL CHANGE

Monday, 05/28

The Traditional Arts – I

- *West African Arts: Styles and Ethnicity, Materials and Techniques, and their Use;* ● *Art and Initiation;*
- *The Role of Arts in Religion* ● *The Artists and their Role;* ● *Traditional Arts in Performance.*

Tuesday, 05/29

The Traditional Arts – II

- *West African Popular Arts and the Role of the Artists;* ● *West African Contemporary Arts and the Role of the Artists;* ● *The Arts and the Dynamics of Change;* ● *The New Arts and the Society*

Wednesday, 05/30

- **A Visit to Accra Art Shop for a Showcase/ Display of West African Arts (Painting, Sculpture, etc.)**

Thursday, 05/31

Modern West Africa: Social and Cultural Change - I

- *Modern West Africa;* ● *The Dimension of Social, Cultural, Political and Economic Changes in West Africa;* ● *Nation-Building and Economic Development;* ● *Africa and the World;* ● *Africa in World Affair.*

Friday, 06/01

Communications and Media in West Africa

- *Literacy, the Press, and Print Culture in W.A.*; • *Film and the Electronic Media*; • *National and Regional Cinemas: A Brief Historical Survey*; • *West African Cinema as a 'Tool for Revolution';* • *Changing Faces of West African Cinema*; • *Future Directions*.

Saturday, 06/02

Free Day!

♣ **Weekly Readings: Manuh & Addy 2013:199-220.**

*Ayisi 1979:94-114**; Azevedo 2005:189-205***

Week Five

WEST AFRICA AND THE WORLD

Monday, 06/04

West African External Contact, Slavery and Colonization - I

- **LECTURE 6: "The Origin and Impact of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, and African Development;"** by Dr. Kofi Baku, Department of History, University of Ghana, Legon.

Tuesday, 06/05

West African External Contact, Slavery and Colonization - II

- *The Era of Colonization in West Africa*; • *The Decolonization, and the Winning of Independence in the West African Countries*.

Wednesday, 06/06

Cultural Emancipation: Nationalism, Pan-Africanism and Decolonization - I

- **LECTURE 7: "Pan-Africanism or Perish;"** by Dr. Michael Williams, Professor of Sociology and Academic Director, Webster University, Ghana Campus. **

Thursday, 06/07

Cultural Emancipation: Nationalism, Pan-Africanism and Decolonization - II

- *The Post-Colonial Era/ After Colonization*; • *Current West African conditions in the Post-Colonial Era*; • *West African Relations with the West*.

Friday, 06/08

Cultural Emancipation: Nationalism, Pan-Africanism and Decolonization - III

- *Contemporary Diaspora and Future: African Americans; Afro-Caribbean; Afro-Latino; Afro-Europeans*

Saturday, 06/09

♣ ***Transfer to Cape Coast!***

♣ **Weekly Readings: Manuh & Addy 2013:116-130.**

*Azevedo 2005:173-185; 207-223***

Week Six:

FINAL ACTIVITIES

Monday, 06/11/18

No Class; Students' meetings with UG Professors on their Final Papers at Legon.

Tuesday, 06/12/18

No Class; Students' meetings with UG Professors on their Final Papers at Legon.

Wednesday, 06/13/18

No Class; Students' meetings with UG Professors on their Final Papers at Legon.

Thursday, 06/14

No Class; Students' meetings with UG Professors on their Final Papers at Legon.

Friday, 06/15

Holiday for Students

- Students will be free to have personal Interaction with the people and friends in the communities.

Saturday, 06/16

A Return to the U.S.A.

- Students will return to the U.S.A.