

Dartmouth College

Religion 14: Introduction to African Religions

Spring, 2013

2A

Professor Robert M. Baum

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces the study of Indigenous African Religions, their cosmologies, histories, ritual structures, and their relationships to other aspects of African cultures. Of particular importance will be ideas of gendered spiritual power, the spread of African-inspired religions to the Americas, and the nature of orally transmitted religious traditions. Conversion to Islam and Christianity and reconversion from these religions will also be studied. Finally, we examine the role of African religions in post-colonial African societies and the impact of globalization.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

It is expected that you attend this course on a regular basis and have completed the assigned readings prior to each session. Lectures and discussions will assume that you are familiar with the assigned readings and will build from those readings in order to raise important issues. One should keep in mind, however, that this is a course in the academic study of religion. Issues of personal belief and faith are beyond the competency of classroom discussion.

There will be a mid-term examination and a non-comprehensive final exam, both of which will emphasize essay questions. There will be a 3-5 page essay on an assigned topic. There will also be a short term paper (10 pages) to be written on a topic of your choice, but with approval of the instructor.

GRADING

Class Participation 15%

Short Essay 15%

Term Paper 25%

Mid Term Examination 20%

Final Examination 25%

TEXTBOOKS (on reserve at Baker Library and available at Wheelock Books) (Additional Readings on Blackboard)

Achebe, Chinua. *Arrow of God*.

Amadiume, Ifi. *Male Daughters, Female Husbands, Gender and Sex in an African Society*.

Griaule, Marcel. *Conversations with Ogotemmeli: An Introduction to Dogon Religious Ideas*.

Lan, David. *Guns and Rain, Guerillas and Spirit Mediums in Zimbabwe*.

Smith, James Howard. *Bewitching Development: Witchcraft and the Reinvention of Development in Neoliberal Kenya*.

COURSE SYLLABUS

3/26 Tuesday "Introduction to Africa"

3/28 Thursday "Studying African Religions"

Benjamin Ray, *African Religions* (first edition), p. 1-18.

Robert M. Baum "Indigenous Religions" in Oxtoby and Segal, editors, *A Concise Introduction to World Religions*, p. 10-32.

Robin Horton, "African Traditional Thought and Western Science," Robin Horton, Patterns of Thought in Africa and the West, p. 197-258.

4/2 Tuesday "In the Beginning: African Creation Myths"

Bill Paden, Religious Worlds: The Comparative Study of Religion, p. 69-92.

Griaule, pp. xi-xvii, 1-46

4/4 Thursday "Lebe and the Salvation of the Third Word among the Dogon of Mali"

Griaule, 47-122.

4/9 Tuesday "Sacrifice, Death, and the Religious Construction of Gender in Dogon Society"

Griaule, 123-223.

4/11 Thursday "Oracles and Shona Religion"

M. L. Daneel, God of the Matopo Hills, p. 15-35.

Lan, xii-xix, 1-82, 92-107.

4/16 Tuesday "The Role of Ancestors in Shona Religion"

Lan p. 112- 232.

SHORT PAPER DUE

4/18 Thursday "Diola Religion in the Borderlands between Rainforest and Savannah"

Baum, *Shrines of the Slave Trade: Diola Religion and Society in Precolonial Senegambia*, p. 24-61.

Olga Linares, *Power, Prayer, and Production*: p. 15-79.

4/23 Tuesday "The Atlantic Slave Trade and African Religions"

Baum, *Shrines*, p.108-129.

Rosalind Shaw, *Memories of the Slave Trade: Ritual and Historical Imagination in Sierra Leone*, p. 1-69.

Judy Rosenthal, *Possession, Ecstasy and Law in Ewe Voodoo*, p. 1-74.

4/25 Thursday MID TERM EXAMINATION

4/30 "Igbo Religion on the Eve of the Colonial Conquest"

Achebe, p. 1-109.

Robin Horton, "A Hundred Years of Change in Kalabari Religion" in John Middleton, editor, *Black Africa*, p. 192-211.

5/2 Thursday "Igbo Religion, Christianity, and Colonialism"

Achebe, p. 110-231.

5/7 Tuesday "Gender Fluidity in Igbo Religion"

Amadiume, p. 1-116

5/9 Thursday "Colonization, Evangelization, and the Marginalization of Igbo Women"

Amadiume, p. 117-210.

5/14 Tuesday "The Africanisms Debate: African Religious Influences in the Americas"

E. Franklin Frazier, The Negro Church in America p. 1-19.

Melville Herskovits, The Myth of the Negro Past, p. 207-260

Charles Joyner, Down by the Riverside: A South Carolina Slave Community, p. 141-171.

Joseph Holloway, editor, Africanisms in American Culture, p. 34-148.

5/16 Thursday "The Conversion Debate"

Horton, "On the Rationality of Conversion" *Africa*, "V. 45, 219-235, 373-399.

Fisher, "Conversion Reconsidered: Some Historical Aspects of Religious Conversion in Black Africa," *Africa*, V. 43, 1973, p. 27-40.

Robert M. Baum, "The Emergence of a Diola Christianity," *Africa*, 1990, p. 370-398.

5/21 Tuesday "African Witchcraft, Theodicy and Inequality"

Smith, p. vii-xv, 1-48, 58- 116.

Robert M. Baum, "Crimes of the Dream World: French Trials of Diola Witches in Colonial Senegal." *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, V. 37, 2004, p 201-228

5/23 Thursday "Witchcraft, Globalization, and the Failures of Post-Colonialism in Kenya,"

Smith, p. 117-247.

5/28 Tuesday

"Conclusion" Term Paper Due

Final Examination