**GHANA COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY UNIVERSITY**

**COURSE: AFRICAN STUDIES COURSE: NOTES**

**COURSE OUTLINE NO 1: CULTURE AND DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA**

**Overview**

You are warmly welcome to the study of this very interesting and important subject called African Studies. In this course you are going to examine very important issues that affect the lives of every African. Although the course is titled African Studies, its scope is not limited to the African continent, people and their activities, but it also touches on the lives and activities of people of African descent who live in the diasporan world, be it Asia, Europe, America and the Caribbeans (Latin America).

The course is divided into eight sessions. The session one examines culture and development in the African setting. The second session explains African morale values and their effect on the people of the continent and beyond. Next is the session three which analyses African popular culture and festivals. The fourth session discusses religion and worldview in Africa and beyond. The fifth session examines Africa’s role in the contemporary world. Session six talks about traditional and modern leadership in Africa. Gender roles, marriage and family are discussed in the seventh session. The last session which is the eight, explains agriculture and its contributions to development in Africa.

At this juncture we are beginning with the first topic titled **Culture and Development.**

**Objectives of the Study**

By the end of this session students should be able to:

1. Define the concept of culture from the African perspective
2. Define development from the African perspective
3. List the culture areas of Africa
4. Explain the importance of culture to the development of Africa
5. Explain the importance of culture to development of technology

**A brief History of African Studies**

The study of Africa has gone through several challenges that resulted in the late development of Arican Studies as an academic discipline. The late development of African Studies as an academic discipline has been attributed to several reasons including the following:

1. **Philosophical Reasons:** The first factor that caused the delay of introducing African Studies as an academic discipline was the attitude of Europeans towards Africa. For example, some European historians including J. D. Fage, Arnold Toynbee, John Burgess, William Summer, Josiah Strong and James MacQueen described Africans as an uncivilised people whose culture does not deserve to be studied in academia. They indicated that Africa has no history and thus has nothing to offer the civilised world. They claimed that if Britain for example, wanted to develop Africa, she must teach Africans that the Whiteman is superior to the Blackman and thus Africa is the Whiteman’s burden.

However, there are contradictory evidence to prove that Africa is not inferior to Europe and therefore the Blackman is not Second-Class human to the Whiteman. For example, before the coming of the European, there were several developments Africa had made which amazed the Whiteman. Kingdoms such as Asante, Benin, Egypt, Ethiopia, Nubia, Sudan and Nuk artistic achievements can be mentioned for example. These Kingdoms had their records documented and kept in the European Libraries and Archives prior to the coming of the Europeans.

1. **The Historical Reasons:** During the nineteenth century, **s**ome Western historians argued that Africa has no history, and therefore has nothing to contribute to the history and development of the world. For example, George Hegel, posits that Africa does not form part of the history of the world. In view of this thinking about Africa, the Europeans definition of history was narrow, because they defined history as only written records constitute sources of historical knowledge.

However, according to Basil Davidson, the development and growth in Africa really contradicted the European views on Africa as an uncivilised continent and people. His assertion indicates that the fact that Africa had much illiterate societies and therefore its history had been documented prior to the coming of the Europeans does not means it had no history. Historians have established that oral history is an authentic source of historical knowledge, and thus there are historians who did their Ph.D. on oral history. The Europeans made this claim to justify colonialism and slave trade. It is improbable for any society to exists without its history. Thus, in the African context history exists in various forms, including music, drum-beats, proverbs, stories, dance, festivals, naming ceremonies, burial rites and enstoolment of chiefs.

1. **The Coming of the Missionaries:** Another factor is the coming of the European missionaries. They denounced anything African including music, dance sculpture, language, history, religion, culture and names. They made Africans believe that their culture was not good enough and therefore they must adopt that of the Whiteman. This perception contributed to the marginalisation of African Studies. The establishment of churches, coupled with the preaching of the Christian gospel relegated African traditional religion and practices to the background. Islam also had some negative impact on African traditional religion and practices. The teachings of Islam also focused on Islamic beliefs and practices which sometimes conflicted with the African traditional beliefs and practices.
2. **The Role of Africans:** Prior to colonialism in Africa, the Africans themselves had not been able to tell their own story to the rest of the world. Also, killing the little confidence in the African was colonisation which devastated the continent of Africa. To worsen the situation, the Africans played a major role in the success of the slave trade by clearing pathways, creating market centres and getting slaves ready for the Whiteman to buy. Some fathers, uncles and chiefs from West and Central Africa raided slaves and sold their own people to the Whiteman. Some chiefs acted as collaborators in formulation and implementation of colonial policies in Africa, which was commonly known as indirect rule. This created antagonism between the chiefs and their subjects, particularly in Ghana.

The general effects of the misrepresentation on African as an uncivilised society contributed to the late development and introduction of African Studies as an academic discipline.

**Definition of Strands in African Studies**

**African Studies:** African Studies is generally defined as “The Study of anything African.” In a broader sense it is an interdisciplinary area that focuses on the study of Africa, its Culture, the African Diaspora, the History of Africa, the position of the African continent in the affairs of the world.

African Studies cuts across all subjects including technology, archaeology, history, religions, literature, geography, linguistics, economics, sociology, anthropology, politics science, music, philosophy, arts, biology, physics, chemistry and classics. Africans must adopt Afro-centric approach in solving African problems both on the continent of Africa and the African Diaspora. Afro-centric approach means we must look at the solutions from the African perspective, not European. For this reason, we need to understand the term culture.

**Culture:** According to Onwuejeoguu, (2007:9), culture is the way of life of a people living in a community, country or continent who are mindful of their beliefs, rituals, norms and practices. Every culture thrives in an area and also the activities carried out by the people in the area. In view of this the notes discusses some culture areas in Africa, and the activities carried out by the people to foster development in Africa.

**What is Culture Area:** A culture area is therefore defined as a geographical location occupied by interdependent ethnic-groups who have similar identities including religious, economic, social, architecture, political, linguistics. For example, the Gảs, Akans and Ewes in Ghana have different ethnic-groups among them, yet they share some common practices such as festivals, funerals, marriage and taboos. Although there may be some minor differences in the practice, the general picture is usually the same.

**A brief History of Culture:** Several researchers have attested to the fact that culture is dynamic and thus can be transferred from one person or society to another. Therefore, from the origin of humans, cultural practices have been transferred from one society or generation to the other. In spite of the modifications, there are cultural traits that can found in people who occupy a culture area that can be traced to the beginning of the first human on earth. Philosopher Herskovits and his colleagues are of the view that culture cannot spread without human contact, and therefore if one can account for human contacts then cultural diffusion is justified. When migrants settle in an area, they leave their cultural traits which are usually adopted by the people in the area.

**Types of Culture Traits:** There are two types of culture traits, namely, material culture and non-material culture. The material culture refers to tangible items made by humans that can be felt even years after. For example, buildings, machines, vehicles, paintings and carvings. People can see and feel these things and make value judgements on even years after. However, the non-material culture constitutes speeches, songs, proverbs, language, habits, beliefs, norms, emotions, love, body-language. Non-material culture can easily fade away as different cultures come into contact with each other, and as a result a new non-material culture emerges. These two types of culture traits intertwine to foster development in African societies/communities.

In Africa, there are over thousand ethnic groups, each with distinctive cultures and development. These ethnic groups exhibit both material and non-material traits. However, in this lecture premium is placed on material culture more than non-material culture as the development of Africa is concerned. To this end, we are going to discuss a few of the African societies and their development in relation to their material culture:

**1. The Hottentot**

The Hottentot are found at the southern tip of the African continent. Presently, their territory has been taken over by the white Boers. The white Boers are farmers from Europe, particularly Spain who settled in South Africa during the colonial era.

**Material Culture of the Hottentot**

* A herding people
* Premium is placed on cattle
* They drink sweet milk not sour
* They utilise animals as beast of burden and sustenance
* Their huts are better shelter than the Bushman
* They have a complicated social life compared to the Bushman
* Cattle are given in marriage to furnish the wedding feast
* They have a good sound for their language click

**2. Bushman**

The Bushman is believed to be an indigenous people who settled on the continent of African and occupied the central part of Southern Africa, between the Hottentot and the Congo.

**Material Culture of the Bushman**

* Poor material culture
* They have very early stratum of African cultural life
* Agriculture and herding are lacking
* They are hunter-gatherers
* The dog is the only domesticated animal they use for their food

**3. East** **Africa Cattle Area**

The area covers Eastern coast to the Great Lakes region and beyond, where the Bantu and the Nilotic languages are widely spoken. The region places more emphasis on cattle in their social and economic lives. Researchers have identified the area and isolated it as *the cattle complex* is a major component of their material life. The area is so called *the cattle complex* because the existence of cattle, their place in the life of the owners and their part in the culture of the people are significant. Important roles played by cattle in their culture are listed below:

* Cattle serves as a means of capital accumulation
* Cattle determines a man’s social position and prestige
* Cattle are used in special ceremonies associated with life such as birth, marriage, puberty, death, funeral and festival
* It is a privilege for owners of cattle to take good care of them and to know them by name
* Cattle milk is precious to them
* Women are prohibited in most of the areas to care for cattle

Much as cattle play a major role in the daily life of the people in the East Africa Cattle Area, there are also some economic activities they carry out to complement their living. This takes us to the economic organisation of the people:

**Economic Organisation**

The following are some of economic activities the people embarked on:

* Clans owned family lands which are free for every family member to move his cattle on to graze
* The right to work tracks of land for agricultural purposes is highly recognised
* Food is obtained from the produce of the field but remains the work of women
* Iron and wood working are pursued by men who specialised in the craft
* Bows and Arrows are important hunting tools and also a protection for humans and animals
* Hoes are the regular farming implement for producing food, although it is not valued like cattle

The well-planned economic activities of the people allowed them to organise their political system effectively and efficiently. We then move on to their political organisation

**Political Organisation**

The following are the political systems of the people of East Africa Cattle Area:

* Gerontocracy is practiced where the adult is given the prominence to rule in society and lead in ritual practices. In this society the young are always in subject.
* The political system is organised in such a way that roles are assigned to individuals based on their age limit
* In some part of the northern area in the region chiefs are appointed to rule over cattle instead of humans
* The Zulu have a centralised political system and standing army with a formidable military organisation

Complementing the political system is the social organisation, which is our next point of discussion.

**Social Organisation**

The social organisation of the people took the following pattern.

* The society practice both patrilineal and matrilineal succession system, but dominated by patrilineal
* Polygamy is allowed and the number of wives a man has depends on his wealth, particularly number of cattle
* Dowry is given in the form of cattle, although other items are accepted
* Land is held by the head of the “tribe” in trust for the rest of the people
* Individuals do not own absolute ownership of land, but tracks of land can be allocated to capable men to work on base on arrangement.
* Grazing land is free
* The people live in villages usually along cattle kraals
* Thatched and mud plastered houses are found in almost every part of the community
* Houses in the south are round shaped, while those in the north rectangular
* Bantu is spoken south of the Lake Victoria to the north where the Nilotic languages are spoken

Religious activities play important roles in the cultural practices of the people of East Africa as discussed under the following heading.

**Religious Organisation**

The religious activities are as follows:

* Ancestral worship is at the centre of their religious practices
* The ancestors mediate between the people and the supreme being
* Belief in ancestor worship is a demonstration of the fact that the people believe in life, death and hereafter
* Various rituals and events are performed on daily and specific days to appease the gods and to seek their protection.
* Use of charms and amulets for protection purposes is common in the society
* The use of magic and divination are part of their daily life of the people

**4.** **West Africa Sub-Area**

This is small very area occupied by the Ovaherero, Ovambo and Ovimbunda among others in modern day Namibia. Their material culture is similar to that of the East Africa Cattle Area. The following are the basis of their material culture:

**Material Culture**

* They have the cattle complex which serves as economic, social and ritual power
* They have locations to house their pens and ensures good health and prosperity
* Women are forbidden to touch and handle cattle
* Their clothing and housing are distinct from that the Congo, the Bushman and Hottentot

**5. The Congo**

The Congo culture area covers the vast region of modern Central Africa, including areas such as the basin of Congo River which comprises Gabon, Central African Republic, Angola, Zimbabwe and Democratic Republic of Congo.

**Material Culture**

* The presence of tsetse fly has resulted in the absence of cattle
* Abundant rainfall supports agriculture
* The slash and burn method of tilling land is known in the area
* Shifting cultivation in agriculture allows the land to regain its fertility for replanting
* Iron tools including knives use for protection and major occupations are fashioned out by smelting
* The variety of animals in the area encourages the people do hunting as a by product
* Fishing in the Congo River is done as an economic activity
* The people specialise in trades such as basketry, wood carving, pottery, mat weaving and metal works.

Couple with the economic activities in their social organisation which is discussed as follows.

**Social Organisation**

* Majority of the people practice matrilineal descent
* Their marital system is uxorilocal where the husband resides in the family house of the wife
* In the matrilineal system the dominant man in the family of a wife has control over the children of the wife, but not the biological father of the children
* Polygamy is an acceptable practice in the society
* Dowry price is considered a token and does not necessarily stabilise the marriage because the loyalty of the wife is to the dominant man of her family but not the husband
* The people live in a rectangular house
* Raffia weaving is a common occupation in the Congo basin
* Market days which are scheduled on special days are present.
* Barta system and exchange promoted inter-ethnic coexistence and respect

The next to be discussed is the religious organisation.

**Religious Organisation**

* Masks are used in rituals and ceremonies to represent the ancestors
* Marks and tattoos are made in the human body to signify religious reasons, ethnic identity and beautification
* They carve images in the form of humans to represent their deities
* They preserve their culture through rituals, religious life and sacrifices
* Charms are significant in their religious life
* The formation of secret societies is allowed to protect societies
* Ancestral worship is a very important aspect of their religious life

**Political Organisation**

* There were proliferation of political groupings and activities in the area
* There was a mixture of centralised and decentralised political system of government
* The Suku people of Congo are centralised and have a monarchy
* There were several paraphernalia for the political elite
* The Zulu King *MeniKongo* was surrounded by a number of taboos and was not to die a natural death
* The formation of warrior groups was based on age limit of which the Zulus were noted for their bravery and fighting spirit
* Courtiers assisted the monarch at court, while the elderly in society held powers of adjudication and political authority

**6.** **The Guinea Coast Sub-area**

This area is on the bend of the West Coast of modern-day West Africa.

**Material Culture**

* Their social and political organisation is more complex than the Congo area
* Distinctive art is the characteristic of the area
* Larger animals were domesticated
* There is the presence of bi-lateral system of descent
* The principle of exogamy is practiced
* There are differences in the languages spoken by the ethnic groups

**7.** **The East Horn of Africa**

This area is connecting to East Africa and stretches to the north-east of Africa.

**Material Culture**

* The practice of age classes in common in the area
* Horse and camel are equally important as the cattle
* Common languages spoken by the people are Danakil, Somali and Galla
* Women care for cattle
* Animal skin is used in making clothing
* The spread of Islam has influenced the culture of the people
* The family lineage is patrilineal
* Iron working employment are lowly occupations

**7. The Eastern Sudan**

The Eastern Sudan region situated just above the Equator.

**Material Culture**

* They are nomadic people who live in a hard desert condition
* Their culture is organised around their livestock ensuring that their animals are properly fed and watered
* Islam is their religion
* They practice paternal culture
* Milk from camel is the principal source of sustenance
* Camel is given as a marriage gift
* The use of clothing is popular in the area
* The people are nomadic and mostly live in tents
* The head of each group is the Sheikh who controls the movement of the group

**8. The Western Sudan**

This area lies in the Sahel dominated by Islam. The area is made up of great kingdoms such as Benin, Bornu, Hausa, Fulbe and Yoruba.

**Material Culture**

* Flowering political organisation ruled by powerful dynasties with rich historical background and internal conflict
* Economic life depends on herding, agriculture and trade
* There is divergent language spoken similar to the Guinea sub-area
* Arts works are famous particularly the use of terra-cotta and wood carving

**8. The Desert**

The area is made up of present-day Sahara-desert.

**Material Culture**

* The majority of the population are nomadic
* Trading is a major occupation
* Camel and horses are used for economic purposes
* Islam remains the dominant religion in the area.

**9. Egyptian Area**

The area runs through the Nile basin of present-day Egypt.

**Material Culture**

* The Hamitic cultural practices make Egypt distinct from other area
* The area is the cradle of African civilisation
* The ancient history, pyramids, architecture remain a proud heritage of African historians

The notes above show how cultural practices in some African countries portray their social, economic and political activities. These activities indicate the level of civilisations enjoyed by the people who lived in those territories. Their social, political, economic and religious practices also contributed to the development in the area.

**Self-Assessment Questions**

1. Briefly explain what development means to the African.
2. Mention three of the typical African societies you know.
3. Mention five of the tangible material culture of the East Africans.
4. State five of the features of the political organisation of the Congo.
5. Mention five of the material culture of Sudan.

**COURSE OUTLINE NO 2: AFRICAN MORAL VALUES**

**Overview**

Anthropologists have defined culture and moral values in various forms. Each definition is in line with different cultural and moral values that pertain to different social and ethnic group around the world, particularly Africa. However, the significance of moral values differs from society to society. However, this session of the notes explores some moral values practiced in Africa and their significance to the development of Africa, and by extension the world.

**Objectives of the Study**

At the end of the study students should be able to explain

1. What constitute moral values in Africa
2. How has Modernity Influence African Moral Values
3. Identify Specific Issues that Constitute Morality
4. How can African Moral Values Foster Development in Africa

**Definition of morals:** They are the accepted practices in a society of which the offender is usually punished by fine, banishment, or to the extreme execution, (Tylor 1958).

**Definition of values:** Values refer to attitude, beliefs, behaviours and actions that are acceptable in a society, Falade *et. al.,* (2009).

**African Moral Values:** The Traditional Africans have different moral and societal values that govern the behaviour of the people. These values are meant for the smooth running and development of the community. They are to prevent members of the community from becoming rebellious and to endanger the society. Some of the traditional societal/moral values/laws are as follows:

1. Respect and Honour for the Elderly
2. Regard and Appreciation for one’s Family and Sponsors
3. Self-control and Politeness
4. Forgiveness, Harmony and Peaceful-co-existence
5. Diligence and Industry
6. Truth and Honesty
7. Unity and Co-operation
8. Love and Best wishes
9. Selflessness and Support for One-Another
10. Care for One’s Family

Besides the individual moral values/laws outlined above, there are several African proverbs that teach moral lessons in the African societies.

1. Failure to give regard to other is the fundamental cause of societal abnormality.
2. We should not point at our father’s house with the left hand
3. Mind your own business
4. Unless we overlook the past misdeeds, we will not able to relate
5. Hard work is the cure for poverty
6. Truth does not make mistake, falsehood lead astray
7. One hand cannot lift a heavy load to the head
8. Beauty does not pay up a debt
9. It is when a chief has good counselors that his reign becomes peaceful
10. There is no wealth where there are no children
11. The reasons two dear walk together is that one has to take the mole from the other’s eye
12. Goodness is the prime characteristics of God
13. Humility has no boundary
14. When a person dies, he is not really dead
15. It is by individual effort that we can struggle for our head
16. Knowledge is like a garden, if it is not cultivated, it cannot be harvested
17. Life is mutual aid
18. Absence does not bring up a child
19. He who gets blisters from the hoe handle will not die of hunger
20. Only he who goes into the forest comes back with firewood
21. What one cultivates is what one harvests
22. Good character is a person’s guide.
23. An unpleasant truth is better than a pleasant falsehood
24. When wealth comes and passes by nothing comes after
25. The wise person is spoken to in proverbs
26. The beauty of a woman is due to her husband
27. Treat your guest as a guest for two days, on the third day give him a hoe
28. There is nothing you get out of laziness than poverty

**African Moral Values and Modernity**

In spite of the long lived African Moral Values, the Modern Africans continue to observe them in the modern trend of events. We can conveniently discuss some of the traditional African moral values that are harmonious with the modern cultures. A few of them are as follows:

**Humility and Brotherhood:** The traditional Africans recognise the dignity and integrity of humans as the creature of God, and thus there is only one common family to which all humans belong. This trend can commonly be found in Modern Africa.

**Communalism and individualism:** Africans believe in the sharing of a common social life for the good of the community, appreciation of mutual obligation, caring for others, independence and solidarity. The efforts of individuals are recognised, but extreme individualism is abhorred.

**Morality:** In this field the interest of the community supersedes that of the individual. Good character traits are esteemed as the well-being of the society is always ensured.

**The Family:** Marriage is considered very important because it is through that family is produce. Without family kinship systems can not be established. The family life is to be enjoyed by husband, wife and children if any. However, the extended family members are also respected and they share in the responsibility of training the children and the joy accrued aftermath.

**Economic Life:** The African is required to be industrious and to own property. The African society is communal one and thus economic gains are supposed to be shared by all in the community because resources are owned by the entire community. Even though communal property is the practice, individual ownership of property is also recognised.

**Political System:** Tue chief does a lot of consultation during his administration of policies and justice. The governance system is seen as community responsibility and hence the people must have a say on issues affecting the entire community. The community work through the council of elders who primary serve as the advisory body to the chief.

**Human Right:** The principles of human right in enshrined in individual responsibility, dignity, integrity, the use of family property, access to food and security, fair trail, own property.

**Acquisition of Knowledge:** Knowledge is acquired through observation and experience. Acquired knowledge is supposed to be seen the practical life of every member of the society.

**Aesthetics:** Beauty is supposed to be seen not only in words, but more in conduct such as humility and respect.

The above moral values complement other important characteristics in Africa to foster social, political, economic and religious development both in traditional and the modern African societies.

**Self-Assessment Questions**

1. Briefly explain what constitute morality if Africa.
2. Mention ten African Moral Values you know.
3. Give five of the Modern African Moral Values in Africa
4. In your own assessment in two pages describe the importance of the African Moral Values to the development of technology in Africa.

**COURSE OUTLINE NO 3: AFRICAN POPULAR CULTURE AND FESTIVALS**

**Overview**

The session deals with specific cultural practices and festivals that are common in Africa, and their influence on the people of the African continent and beyond. We will examine each of the popular culture and their effects on the continent of Africa and the rest of the diasporan Africa.

**Objectives of the Study**

The study will offer students the opportunity to understand

1. The Definition of African Popular Culture
2. Types of African Popular Culture
3. The Relevance of African Popular Culture to Africans
4. The Effects of Social Change on African Popular Culture

**Definition of African Popular Culture**

Summing the definitions of E.B Tylor, Sarpong and Ember and Ember define African Popular Culture as “*the sum total of the way of life of a people including learned and acquired behaviours and traits that enable them to master and live in their society in a more meaningful way”.* This definition shows that culture influences the way of life of a people in a society

African popular culture is used to explain African cultural activities where large numbers of people in African communities are involved. There are a number of African popular culture such as **dance, drama, festivals, music and funerals**. The study will further explain each of these cultural practices. The following are features of African Popular Culture

**Features of African Popular Culture**

The following are some features of African popular culture:

1. It is learned because we are not born with it. Societies share their cultural values among themselves which is usually referred to as cultural traits
2. Culture is distinctive in nature as individuals master their culture to make livelihood
3. Culture is a shared responsibility of every member of the society
4. Culture is dynamic and it takes strong will for a society to change its cultural values
5. Culture satisfies the common needs of the society practicing it

To this end we want to discuss in details specific popular cultures practiced in Africa.

1. **African Dance**

Dance is an important aspect of the life of an African community. To African dance is a way of life, way of thinking, way of living and way of communication. During rites of passage such as birth, puberty, marriage and death, dance permeates the fabrics of the society. In the events like recreation, sorrow, love, hatred, war, peace, sowing, harvesting, divination and other ritual practices Africans dance as part of the cultural heritage.

The African dance is always accompanied with singing, clapping, acrobatic display, drumming and stamping. Children are taught the goodness of traditional African dance from infancy. The African dance is made public and it is owned by the entire society and has both social and economic benefits to the people in the community.

**Types of African Dance**

**Recreational Dance:** Examples are *Adakam (Akan of Ghana), Adoa (Akan of Ghana), Gobi (Banda of Ghana), Lalba (Acholi of Uganda).* These dances are usually performed for entertainment.

**War Dance:** They are used to direct the formation of the battle troops. For example, how to carry weapons, how to retreat, how to advance, how to crouch, how to slaughter and how to surrender. Some war dances are *Atsiagbekor dance (Ewe of Ghana), Fontofrom (Akan of Ghana), Asafo (Fante of Ghana) and the Tutsi (Rwanda).*

**Ritual Dance:** According to Mbiti (1991: 67-68), Africans enjoy celebrating life, therefore when people meet together for public worship they dance and this may last a whole day or several days. The nature of the dance will depend on the demand by the object of worship. There are several ritual dances found in Africa including *Damba (Mole Dagbani of Ghana), Kundum (Nzema of Ghana), San trance (Bushman of Botswana), Akom and Abofo (Akan of Ghana), Zande beer (Sudan), M’Deup (Senegal), Bakweri Elephant (Cameroon), Turu harvest (Tanzania), Zangbeto (Porto Novo), Egungun and Oro (Yoruba), Mmo and Ekpo (Ibo Nigeria), Poro and Sande (Sierra Leone).* These ritual dances have several functions as have been outlined below:

**Functions of Dance**

1. Individuals demonstrate their creative art.
2. They build self-esteem.
3. They communicate ideas of love, geniality, goodwill, solidarity and security.
4. They serve as public speech and social control.
5. They have an entertainment value.
6. They call for blessings from the supernatural.
7. Individuals who communicate with the spirit medium become possessed.
8. Spiritual churches display their spirituality during the process.
9. They serve as a sign of protection from the spirit of wild animals, particular for hunters.
10. They promote cohesion and harmonious living among members of the society.
11. They serve as curative process and spiritual relief for the spiritually afflicted in society.
12. They tell the history of the society, for example, victories and defeats.
13. They signify the unique identity of the society.
14. They promote healthy conditions among the living.

The following is another Popular African Culture

1. **African Drama**

African Drama is another key popular culture among the African societies. Among the Greeks, drama is defined as an enactment which people enjoy when they see it. Thus, drama occurs when one or more humans isolate themselves in an imaginative act to one another of before others. Therefore, elements in drama are: enactment, one or more actors, imitative representative, stories, with or without music, entertaining to audience(s). A typical African drama is the Concert Party play and the Akan Dramas in Ghana. Elsewhere, for example, the Yoruba of Eastern Nigeria has the *Okumkpa, Kote Koma Nyanga* (Sierra Leonne), *Gemshok* (Khomani Bushman).

**Features of African Drama**

African drama has the following features:

* The musical prelude that precedes the play is short and serves as an entertainment to the audience.
* Comedies and jokes are performed to wet the appetite of the audience.
* The third stage is the play itself with a prologue by a narrator who announces the title of the play. The sources of the paly numerous such as marriage, domestic struggles, polygamous homes, historical events, childlessness and funerals.
* The last part is the concluding remarks and music.

**Functions and importance of African Drama**

* It is a source of entertainment to the performers, observers and the entire community.
* The participation of the audience, for example, applauds motivate the performers to do more to add value to the play
* It is a medium of communication that educates both the participants and the observers.
* It also tells the history and portrays the cultural values of the community involved.
* It serves as a period for the community to reflect and do self-assessment for corrections and enhance good behaviour.
* Satire and comic plays give the people some psychological relief as people are able to go through emotional changes by learning from life experiences.

1. **African Festivals**

**What is a festival?** It is a ceremony when a community/communities come(s) together to showcase the cultural values of the society. The ceremony involves purification, drumming, dancing, singing, recital of societal values and the history of the community.

**Types of Traditional Festivals**

* Harvest festival
* Commemorative
* Ritual festival or Festival for the gods
* Recreational festival
* Religious festival

**Features of African Festivals**

* They tell the history of the community involved
* They give a sense of reconning time
* Some of festivals bring a peaceful period in the society which is good for planning. For example, the ban on drumming during the Homowo festivals of the Gả people of Ghana, Accra.
* There is the ritual cleansing and purification during the period.
* There is also the period of mourning the dead loved ones.
* There is the drumming and the dancing period which bring entertainment to the actors and the audience.
* There is the durbar of chiefs, renewal of allegiance and payment of tribute to the overlord.
* There is fund raising in aid of economic and social development.
* The spiritual fathers of the community perform rituals to the determine the future of the community.
* The gods receive thanksgiving from the people in appreciation of what they have done for them.
* They create an opportunity for people to engage in economic activities such as trading, transportation and showcasing creativity.
* They bring family reunion.
* They bring tourists to communities and this sometimes foster economic and social growth.
* They portray the material culture of the people.
* They bring unity, sense of belonginess and solidarity into the community.
* Settlement of family and clan disputes bring peace and mutual co-existence to the community.
* They serve as training sessions for the young ones who will take up community responsibility in future.
* They serve as research grounds for anthropologies and others.
* They have the potentials of attracting foreigners into Africa.

Generally, the above discussions also serve as the importance of all African Popular Cultures.

**Self-Assessment Questions**

1. What do you understand by African popular Culture?
2. Mention the three types of African Popular Culture.
3. In your own assessment, why do you think we should study African Traditional Popular Culture in the university circles?
4. Summarise five features of three African festivals you know.
5. What is the didactic purpose of African Popular Culture to the development of technology in Africa?

**COURSE OUTLINE NO 4: THE AFRICAN BELIEVE IN RELIGION AND WORLDVIEW**

**Overview**

This topic examines and introduces students to the religious beliefs and experiences of Africans, eighter on the continent of Africa or the African diaspora. The religious beliefs, rituals and practices of the African has been an interest area of western scholars and missionaries over several years in the history of Africa. The study of religions gas been part of the academic disciplines of many universities across the globe, of which Ghana Communication Technology University is part.

**Objectives**

1. Distinguish between rituals, beliefs and practices of African peoples
2. Name the various supernatural powers Africans believe in
3. Mention some name of the God among the Akans in Ghana
4. State some of the attributes of God in Africa
5. Explain some of the challenges facing the study of religions in Africa

**The importance of Religious Rituals and Practices in Africa**

1. They remain the core of African religion and define the religious aspirations of the people of Africa
2. They manifest the African religion to the outside world and make the African conscious of the religious tenets

**Elements of spiritual powers in Africa**

In the African setting there are some elements that possess spiritual powers and thus deserved to be worshiped.

1. The Supreme Being
2. Lesser gods
3. Ancestors
4. Deities

**The Supreme Being**

According Mbiti, all Africans believe in the existence of the God the Supreme Being. The believe in God originated form three sources: (a) the observation of the universe, (b) observation of forces of nature, and (c) the limitations of human efforts in doing things.

**Names of God (Supreme Being) in the African setting**

The concept of God as known among the African people can be traced from the various names given to him:

1. *Olodumare (Yoruba, Nigeria)*
2. *Chuku (Ibo, Nigeria)*
3. *Nyankopon (Akan, Ghana)*
4. *Uwmbwar (Konkomba, Ghana)*
5. *Eboone-Nyame (Gonja, Ghana)*
6. *Mawu (Ewe, Ghana)*
7. *Ngewo (Mende, Sierra Leone)*
8. *Nkulunkulu (Zulu, South Africa)*
9. *Leza (Bemba, ambia)*
10. *Rubenga (Acholi, South Sudan)*
11. *Nuer (Jok. Uganda)*

**Attributes of God (Supreme Being)**

To complement the high standards of God are his attributes, some of which can found in the African context.

1. The creator of the universe
2. The controller of the universe
3. The one brought into being all spirits that worship him
4. The one who does not share his glory with anyone
5. Omnipotent
6. Omniscient
7. The being with limitless life
8. Omnipresent
9. The Invisible one
10. The Immoral
11. The Merciful
12. Ever Loyal
13. The provider and sustainer of life

Based on the above attributes, the African believe that God is the only one to **receive our** **prayers and spiritual attention**. He is the supreme being **who judges righteously and abhors immorality.** The spirit powers are mere **channels through whom worship and sacrifices are offered to God** the ultimate recipient.

**Oral Connotations that show that the Africans believe in the Existence of God**

1. **Proverbs-**God’s name is usually mentioned in African proverbs
2. **Everyday speech-**In response to questions and greetings the Africans usually use the name of God
3. **Theophorous Names-**Such as *Mawuli* (God is alive, Ewe in Ghana), *Ebere-Chukwu* (God’s mercy, Igbo in Nigeria), *Oghenedjakpokohwo* (Urhobo, Delta State in Nigeria), *Gatkwoth* (Nuer in Southern Sudan)

**Belief in Divinities**

The Africans by birth is religious. The religious nature of the people is identified by their believe in divinities (lesser gods). It is believed that the divinities reside in natural objects such as sea, mountains, trees, forest, rivers, rocks, stones, caves and animals.

There are generic names given to these divinities in various African settings. For example, the Akans of Ghana called them *abosom, the Ewes called them vodu,* the Yoruba called them *orisha,* the Igbo called them *chi*. Per the spiritual arrangement, some of the divinities are closer to God than others because they have more experience.

**Believe in Ancestors**

Anthropologies have classified the human spirit into two sections; the long dead (ghost) and the recently dead. These two spirits occupy the ancestral world and they have direct contacts with humans either in a positive way or negative way. They still live in the memory of the surviving family. It is also believed that they are reborn in different forms including trees, animals, stones and objects. As a sign of respect for them sacrifices are offered to them periodically. They are seen as the custodians of morality and givers of prosperity in the African society.

**Qualifications for Ancestorship**

For the dead to qualify as an ancestor he/she must have attained the following status while alive.

1. Live an exemplary live on earth
2. To have lived a ripe old age
3. Married with children
4. Must have died natural life.

**Believe in Charms, Amulets and Magic**

Beside the believe in the Supreme Being, Divinities and Ancestors, the African also believe in Charms and Amulets. It is believed that charms and amulets also offer protection to the people in the absence of the other spirit beings. Local names given to charms and amulets in Africa include; Suman (Akan), *Gbo* (Ewe), *Ogwu* (Igbo) and *Ogun* (Yoruba). Charms are used for various purposes in Africa including personal protection, public protection, offensive (return to sender).

**Types of Magic**

The following are some of the types of magic practiced in Africa:

1. **Sympathetic magic**-this type indicates that there is a relationship between the afflicted person and the remedy prescribed
2. **Contagious magic**-the powers work through things that are in contact or have once been in contact with the person.
3. **Homeopathic magic**-the powers work through the likeness image of the person. Thus your image can be molded and whatever afflicted to the image will automatically affect you.

**Ritual Performances**

Rituals are usually performed to communicate with the spirits to invite their protection. The various ritual performances in Africa include: 1. **Personal rituals**, 2. **Agricultural rituals**, 3. **Health rituals**, 4. **Business rituals**, 5. **Festival rituals**, and 6. **Coronation rituals**.

**Order of hierarchy in the spiritual world**

The religious dynamism of the Africa is primarily based on his/her strong believe in the supernatural, thus powers beyond human strength. Therefore, the supernatural in organised in hierarchical order. The order of hierarchy is follows:

1. The Supreme Being
2. The Ancestors/Spirits
3. The Ancestors

**COURSE OUTLINE NO 5: AFRICA IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD**

As part of the global village, the African continent cannot insulate itself from the happenings of the world. Thus, it is important to study events in Africa in line with the global phenomenon. Over the years the world has experienced some major challenges that have affected social, political, economic and religious activities in Africa, and one of such challenges is the Cold War. The Cold War emanated from what the world refers to as the East-West Conflict.

**What is the East-West Conflict?**

It was a period (1945-1991) of high tension, hatred and competition between western bloc countries, led by the United States of America on one side and eastern bloc countries led by Russia also on one side. The East-West conflict is also referred to as the Cold War.

**Origin of the Cold War**

The Cold War was a war of words/ideas propagated by the USA and Russia for years prior to the outbreak of both the First and Second World Wars. In the modern world, the Cold War resurfaced intensely after the Second World War in 1945. It was given the name Cold War because it was without the use of weapons, in other words not a hot or aggressive war. It was basically war of economic and political ideas in the bait of each of the two countries to take over the governance of the world. Each of the two countries proposed diametrically opposed economic and political ideas under the names: Communism for Russia and Capitalism for the USA. The contents of each of the two policies can be found bellow:

**Capitalism**

The communist policies included:

1. People should be free to make as much money as they can.
2. Factories and other property should be owned by individuals and companies.
3. The government should interfere as little as possible in the lives of the people.
4. People should be free to choose their leaders at elections
5. The press should be able to criticise the government constructively
6. The government should not interfere in religion.

**Communism**

Capitalism was in opposite direction as follows:

1. Rich people are wicked and thus they should be forced to share their wealth.
2. Factories and other property should be owned by the state on behalf of the people.
3. A communist government should get involved in every aspect of the life of the people.
4. Only communists should be chosen to govern the country.
5. The press should never criticise the communist government.
6. Religious belief is nonsense and should be wiped out by the government.

To protect her interest, the USA together with some European countries formed the security organisation called NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) in 1949. The organisation is to provide security for any member country that comes under any attack.

**The Cold War and Africa**

Most African countries became independent after the Second World War in 1945, in the heat of the moment when the Cold War had its intensive beginning. It was the period when the USA and Russia had introduced capitalism and communism policies respectively. Coincidentally, these newly independent African countries were caught between these two policies; namely, capitalism and communism. The countries had no choice than to follow any of these two policies. The first president of Ghana, for example, adopted the communist ideas and thus most of the Convention Peoples Party (CPP) Government’s policies were in line with communist ideas.

**Effects of the Cold War on Africa**

Between 1945 and 1991, the Cold War affected Africa in a number of ways including the following:

1. Formation of one-party states-many leaders took advantage of the political turmoil to entrenched themselves in power by enacting laws to form one-party government. For example, in 1964, parliament passed a law to make the CPP the only political party in Ghana, with Nkrumah as life president.
2. Frequent coup d’état-there were several military interventions in the political landscape of Africa. Once again Ghana can be used as a classic example. In 1966, the **first military coup** under the name National Liberation Council (NLC). In 1972, **the second coup**, under the name Supreme Military Council 1 (SMC 1). 1977, the **third coup,** under the name Supreme Military Council 2 (SMC 2). The **fourth coup** 1979, under the name Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC). The **fifth coup** 1981, Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC).
3. Delay of independence for many African countries-as a result of the power struggle between the USA and Russia, many countries did not gain their independence early enough.
4. The emergence of dictators in Africa-both the USA and Russia supported dictators in Africa to entrench themselves in power. This was to inure to the benefit of each of the two superpowers.
5. It led to the emergence and strength of the apartheid system in South Africa. The apartheid system was a political system that fostered racism in South Africa. It separated black South Africans from white South Africans from each other, to the extent that the two races became enemy to each other.

**Effects of the end of the Cold War on Africa**

However, the Cold War ended in 1991. That notwithstanding, there were some effects Africa experienced after the collapse of the Cold War. The following a few of them:

1. The end of bi-polarisation of the world. Due to the Cold War the world got divided into two political and economic lines, namely, capitalism and communism. But as the Cold War ended, the division also partially ended.
2. Libralisation of the media. After the end of the Cold War, many media houses sprang up including newspapers.
3. There was the decline in financial and other assistance the USA and Russia gave to Africa.
4. There was the resurgence of multiparty democracy. Many countries in Africa began to practice democracy by allowing free and fair elections of which citizens had the opportunity to elect their leaders. This is what is described as participatory or liberal democracy.
5. The military interventions in the political landscape became more and more less rampant.
6. The apartheid system in South African which created enmity between the blacks and whites in that country ended. Free and fair elections were held, and for the first time a black man by name Nelson Mandela became a president.
7. Globalisation became intensified. African countries became more and more involved in world social, political and economic affairs. Distinguished African countries and individuals gained representations in international bodies such as the UN, ECOWAS and AU.

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