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Library Video Conference
Office Hours MWF 10:40-11:30 & TTh 9:30-10:00
Spring 2002 Oxford College of Emory University

Cultures of Africa
Anthropology 150 K

AIMS OF COURSE: This course introduces students to the diverse cultures and civilizations of sub-Saharan Africa. We explore different models and intellectual traditions for thinking about African societies, and consider various genres (including ethnographies, novels and films) through which African culture and history have been represented. Particular attention is given to kinship and social organization, gender relations, symbolism and ritual, and power and resistance.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS: I expect that each student will do at least an two hours of careful, thoughtful reading in preparation for each hour of class meeting, and that you will post intelligent commentaries on LearnLink at least once every week. You should read critically. Feel free to challenge assertions or interpretations made in the readings, by the instructor, and by fellow students, provided your critiques are well reasoned and constructively framed.

Grading is based on the following criteria:

- ? In-class test: 20 percent
- ? One in-class midterm exam: 20 percent
- ? Final examination: 20 percent
- ? One short (5 page) essay: 20 percent
- ? Class participation (includes quizzes and weekly LearnLink postings): 10 percent
- ? African Studies Portfolio: 10 percent

Students are also expected to develop an African Studies Portfolio. This is your opportunity to demonstrate what you have learned in the course; it should include a mixture of reflective commentary (including some of your LearnLink postings about films and other cultural materials), journal writing, newspaper clippings about Africa, reflections on your class notes.

You are expected to come to class on time having read and thought carefully about the assigned readings. Please remember to bring hard copies of all the

assigned readings for that day (including those you have printed out from electronic reserve) and to bring your notes on those readings. I advise you to bring relevant LearnLink postings by fellow students as well. Pop quizzes may be given from time to time, without prior announcement.

SPECIAL NOTE: Attendance is also required at film screenings, which will usually be on Monday at 7:00 pm. (Place tba)

Note on Writing and Plagiarism. Plus/minus grading is used in this course and the Honor Code is always in course. Students must be scrupulous to avoid plagiarism, and to give very precise and complete citations for any work used in any way. Always make it precisely clear to the reader through the use of quotation marks and citations which words, if any, are taken from some other source. Be very careful if you draw on any Internet source to give the precise source of each and every word used. Lifting text from the web, without giving full and complete attribution, is considered an extremely serious violation of the honor code. Recycling your own work, without precise attribution, is also unacceptable.

In all essays, please make specific references, as appropriate, with internal citations: for example, "Lineage group is not restricted to segmentary societies" (Fortes: 12)." Avoid direct quotations from the text whenever possible; I am much more interested in your paraphrasing of, and commentary upon, the author's arguments than in your ability to quote directly.

Each paper must be typed, double-spaced and in 10 or 12 point. Please append a bibliography.

Attendance and Lateness Policy: Students are required to attend each class, on time. It is the student's responsibility to sign in on the sign in sheet at the front of the classroom. Missed in-class quizzes will not be re-administered, regardless of circumstances (including illness or family emergencies). Students will not be directly penalized for the first three classes that they miss (although they will miss the chance to take a quiz that day, if one is administered). For each subsequent class missed (regardless of cause) a grade level will be deducted from the student's course total (for example, a B+ will turn into a B). Eight absences will be regarded as grounds for failing the course. One or more points will be deducted for each lateness or for leaving class prematurely.

Some of the readings are on electronic reserve. The following books are available for sale in the College bookstore:

? The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions by E.E. Evans-Pritchard.

? Perspectives on Africa: A Reader in Culture, History, and Representation by Roy Richard Grinker (Editor), Christopher B. Steiner (Editor) Blackwell . 1996

? The Igbo of Southeast Nigeria by Victor Chikezie Uchendu International Thomson Publishing. 1965.

? Efuru by Flora Nwapa. Heinemann. 1965

1/16 Wednesday. Introduction: Conceptualizing African Societies.

Part I. Social Structure: The Case of the Nuer of the Southern Sudan

1/18 Friday. Meyer Fortes. "The Structure of Unilineal Descent Groups." in Perspectives on Africa (PoA, 11-23)

Post a Self-Introduction on LearnLink by Friday 1/18 at 5 p.m. Please tell us something about yourself and what "Africa" means to you. What images do you have of Africa and Africans? What major questions about Africa intrigue you?

1/21. Monday. No class (MLK holiday)

1/22. Tuesday. Strongly recommended: "Dream Deferred" opening on the Atlanta campus, 6:00 p.m. Cannon Chapel.

1/23. Wednesday. The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions by E.E. Evans-Pritchard. (Chapter One.)

1/25 Friday. The Nuer. Chapter Two.

Friday: Please post on Learnlink by 4:00 p.m. a response to chapters One and Two of the Nuer. What are major ecological constraints on Nuer society?

1/28 Monday. The Nuer. Chapter Three

7:00 p.m. Film screening: The Nuer.

1/30 Wednesday. The Nuer. Chapter Four

2/1 Friday. The Nuer. Chapters Five and Six.

Friday: Please post on Learnlink by 4:00 p.m. a response to final chapters of the Nuer and to the film. How do the film and Evans-Pritchard's book complement one another?

2/4 Monday. "Nuer Kinship," Kathleen Gough. (from The Translation of Culture)

2/6 Wednesday. Sharon Hutchinson. The Cattle of Money and the Cattle of Girls among the Nuer. PoA. Pp. 190-209

2/8 Friday. *No class: please use this time to review all the readings on the Nuer.*

2/11 Monday. First in-class examination. (Please bring a blue examination book to class)

Part II. Systems of Belief

2/13 Wednesday. E.E. Evans-Pritchard "The Notion of Witchcraft Explains Unfortunate Events." PoA pp. 303-311

2/15 Friday. Robin Horton, "African Traditional Thought and Western Science." PoA. pp. 327-339

Post on LearnLink: Do you agree with Robin Horton? Is African traditional thought a "closed system"?

2/18 Monday. Marcel Griaule. "Conversations with Ogotemmeli." PoA pp. 366-

2/20 Wednesday. Godfrey Lienhardt. "The Control of Experience: Symbolic Action" (selection from *Divinity and Experience*, in *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*, pp. 330-339

2/22. Friday. Beidelman. T.O. "Nuer Priests and Prophets. In: The Translation of Culture.

Post on LearnLink: Contrast how the three writers we've read this week approach religion and cosmology.

2/25. Monday. Janice Boddy, *Spirits and Selves in Northern Sudan: The Cultural Therapeutics of Possession and Trance*, A Reader in the Anthropology Religion, pp. 386-418.

2/27. Wednesday. Karin Barber. *How Man Makes God in West Africa: Yoruba Attitudes towards the Orisa*. PoA. Pp. 392-411.

3/1, Friday. Monica Wilson. *Witch Beliefs and Social Structure*.

LearnLink posting: How do Boddy, Barber and the Wilson understand the relationship between religion and society?

3/4. Monday. Peter Geschiere. *Kinship, Witchcraft and the Market*. PoA 340-358

3/6 Wednesday. Mark Auslander, *Open the Wombs: The Symbolic Politics of Modern Ngoni Witchfinding*. *Modernity and its Malcontents*.

3/8 Friday. Mid-term examination. (Please bring a blue exam book)

3/11-3/13-3/15. No classes: Spring Vacation

Part III. Case Study: The Igbo of Southeastern Nigeria

3/18 Monday. Victor Uchendu. The Igbo

3/20 Wednesday. Victor Uchendu. The Igbo

3/22 Friday. "Performing the Other: Mami Wata Worship in West Africa." Henry John Drewal. *TDR*. 1988. 32(2). 160-185.

"Practice and Agency in Mammy Wata Worship in Southern Nigeria." Charles Gore, and Joseph Nevadomski. *African Arts*. 1997. 30(2). 60-69.

"Mermaids, Mirrors, and Snake Charmers: Igbo Mami Wata Shrines." Henry J. Drewal. *African Arts*. 1988. 21(2). 38-45.

3/25 Monday. Movie: *Mammy Water: In Search of The Water Spirits in Nigeria*, an ethnographic film by Sabine Jell-Bahlsen.

3/27 Wednesday. Flora Nwapa. Efuru.

3/29 Friday. Flora Nwapa. Efuru.

4/1 Monday. Judith Van Allen. "Sitting on a Mani: Colonialism and the Lost Political Institutions of Igbo Women." PoA. 536-549

4/3 Wednesday. General discussion of Igbo culture

Part IV. Case Study: South Africa in Transformation.

4/5 Friday. Paper (5 page) due at start of class. Assess the relative value of different genres (ethnographic monograph, film, or fiction) in understanding Igbo culture. For example, to what extent does Nwapa's novel illustrate the dynamics of Igbo society and culture as explicated by Uchendu? To what extent is your understanding of Igbo culture and society deepened or altered by reading Nwapa or viewing of Hell-Bahlsen's film? Your discussion should give particular attention to the relationship between person and society in Igboland: does Igbo culture provide a clear blueprint for individual persons to follow through their lives, or does culture only provide a set of imaginative possibilities?

In class; Lecture on South African history and culture

4/8 Monday. "Eloquent Knowledge: Lesotho Migrants' Songs and the Anthropology of Experience." David Coplan

View Videos: Song of the Adventurers; The Colour of Gold (52 min.) [1992]

4/10 Wednesday. Jean and John Comaroff. 1999 Occult Economies and the Violence of Abstraction: Notes from the South African Postcolony. American Ethnologist. 26(3): 279-301.

4/12 Friday. Gary Minkley and Ciraj Rassool. "Orality, Memory and Social History in South African Autobiography since 1994." in Negotiating the Past: The Making of Memory in South Africa. Pp. 89-99

4/15 Monday. Njabulo Ndebele. "Memory, Metaphor and the Triumph of Narrative" in Negotiating the Past: The Making of Memory in South Africa.

7:00 p.m. Film: Gerrie and Louise (videocassette: 75 min.) [1997]

4/17 Wednesday. Harriet Deacon. "Remembering Tragedy, Constructing Modernity: Robben Island as a National Monument." In Negotiating the Past. Pp. 161-179.

4/19 Friday. Patricia Davison. "Museums and the Reshaping of Memory," in Negotiating the Past. Pp. 153-160.

4/22 M. Hylton White, "Marking Time: Family values and the possessions of a Post-Apartheid Countryside" (unpublished)

7:00 p.m. film: Songololo: Voices of Change (videocassette: 54 min.)

4/24 Wednesday. David Coplan. "In Township Tonight! South Africa's Black City Music and Theatre." Pp. 482-496

4/26 Friday. General Discussion of Southern Culture and Collective Memory.

4/29 Monday. Final class.

Final Examination (2 hour): See schedule.