

Instructor: Sharon Abramowitz  
Office Hours: Wednesdays 2-3:30, or by appointment.  
Office #: Grinter Hall #494, (352) 274-4763  
Email: [sabramowitz@ufl.edu](mailto:sabramowitz@ufl.edu), cell (617) 599-0191

Course Meetings: Tuesdays 1:55-2:45, Thursdays 1:55-3:50  
Class Location: Turlington 2333  
Course Website on Sakai.

## Synopsis

Women's lives and women's struggles worldwide raise questions that strike at the very heart of who we are culturally, socially, and politically – questions of freedom, social obligation, social roles, and personal and political transformation. By studying the lives of African women in memoirs, narratives, film, and ethnographies, this seminar applies a social science perspective to the examination of women's lives and women's struggles across Africa; and builds a comparative framework for considering the experience of women and families globally. This course is interdisciplinary in nature, and brings into conversation key themes from Women and Gender Studies, Anthropology, and African Studies. With those dialogues in mind we will use a critical gaze to examine frameworks of international development, humanitarianism, and the African state. We will address women's local experiences in political participation, urbanization, work and gender, familial roles, and health and illness; and consider controversial topics including genital excision, and conflict and displacement.

## Course Description

In this course, we draw upon anthropological, feminist, and post-colonial debates to inform our understanding of African women's lives, social experiences, and subjectivity in all their diversity. This course will use African women's narratives and ethnographies of gender in Africa as the foundation for providing an introduction to international development studies, feminist methodologies, and qualitative social sciences. As we progress through the course, we will move between a meta-level perspective that considers international development, global forces like human rights and international relations, and global feminism, and the level of intimate experience within families, sexual relationships, and communities to gain insight and understanding into the ways in which African women's experiences are the site of complex interplays of global and local forces. Our readings and conversations will serve as the springboard for a semester-long discussion about the meanings of agency, resistance, social freedom, and social control. Through this discussion, we will be challenged to reconsider some of our own taken-for-granted assumptions about the nature of gender domination, hegemony, culture, and global arrangements of development and underdevelopment.

Course assignments are reading intensive, and are designed to encourage students to build a capacity for integrating critical thinking about culture and post-colonial theory with critical thinking about gender, within the context of a systematic social science perspective. Towards this end, ethnographies, memoirs, and supporting materials on theory and qualitative methodologies will play an important role in our discussions, as well as films documenting women's lives produced by African filmmakers.

## Course Promises

- **By the end of the semester, you will have been exposed to the nuances of women's lives and experiences in the context of sub-Saharan Africa, through memoirs, films, and ethnographies. You will have insight into the nuances of culture, gender, and African identity, and you will be able to apply that kind of textured analysis to your own life and experiences.**
- **You will have been exposed to non-Western film and literary perspectives, and you will be able to situate those perspectives in world historical and anthropological context.**
- **You will understand the cultural, economic, kinship, and political issues that shape women's experiences. From this knowledge, you will be able to apply this insight to the analysis of real-world problems, including problems of international development, global health policy, gender inequality, and national and international politics.**
- **You will be able to read a film, interpret a memoir, analyze ethnographic writing, and synthesize insights from these materials. You will also be able to competently and professionally engage in the critique of someone else's creative work.**

## Requirements

Class Participation (30%)  
3 Response Papers (30%)  
Midterm Assignment (15%)  
Final Paper Assignment (25%)  
Extra Credit (+10 possible pts towards final grade)

## Class Participation

This class will be reading intensive, and all weekly readings must be completed by the start of our Tuesday meeting every week. During our Tuesday meetings, every student will be expected to participate in class discussion in a way that provokes thoughtful engagement with classmates. During our Thursday meetings, we will alternately be continuing lectures, holding discussions, or screening films. An online chat forum on Sakai and a Twitter feed (**#WOMENAFRICAUF11**) will also be available for weekly class discussions of materials, sharing extra-curricular materials, events, etc. You are expected to participate.

## Response Papers

Students are responsible for submitting 3 response papers consisting of 1-2 page single spaced summaries of the readings and films, and a brief critique or commentary by the student on the readings, relevant to the theme of the course. Students may choose the 2 classes/topics on which their response papers are based. Response papers must be submitted by 5pm Monday prior to class for the paper to count towards that week. Further information about response papers will be provided at first meeting.

## AMAZON.COM Mid-Term Assignment

As scholars, we are responsible for reviewing other people's work, engaging with it in thoughtful and critical ways, and sharing those ideas with a wider audience. For your midterm assignment, you are expected to produce a thoughtful book review examining a full-length novel, memoir, or ethnography of your choice on any issue pertaining to Women in Africa. Your book review should be about 500 words, and it should involve (a) thoughtful summary, (b) positive and negative critiques, and (c) some personal engagement with the textual material viz. the context of the themes of the class (womanhood, Africa, anthropology, struggle, biography). The excellent book review should be thoughtful and scholarly, and simultaneously pithy, readable and accessible to a broad reading audience. For stylistic guidance, you may want to look at book reviews available through JSTOR. However, to avoid any creeping risk of plagiarism, I would strongly encourage you NOT to look at book reviews for the texts you are reviewing.

### *Midterm Deadlines for submission and Amazon posting*

1. For the midterm to be counted as submitted on time, it must be submitted to me electronically by **Friday October 28<sup>th</sup>**.
2. To receive a grade, you must also "create your own review" of the book you have selected on the Amazon.com website by **October 28<sup>th</sup> at 10pm**. To do so, you will need to create a free personal account with Amazon > find the Amazon listing for the book you have selected > and click "create your own review" at the bottom of the webpage. Follow the directions from there.

## Final Paper

Final papers will be due on the last day of final exams, and will involve a thoughtful discussion of the themes and materials of the class. Alternative topics must be worked out in consultation with the Professor by November 16. The research paper is to be based on library research and to be 12-15 pages in length (double-spaced), exclusive of the bibliography. For reference format, please consult the journal *American Ethnologist*. Final Paper is due by 8:am on Thursday, December 15.

## Grades

Final grades will be based on the following scale: A (90-100), A- (87-89), B+ (84-86), B (80-83), B-(77-79), C+(74-76), C (70-76), C-(67-69), D+(64-66), D (60-63), D-(57-59), E (<57).

## Extra Credit

+1 point: Throughout the semester, I will give you the opportunity to attend topical events on-campus or off-campus and complete a 1-page essay, including summary and response, about the event.

+5 points: For an additional 5 points towards your final grade, you may write a book review following the guidelines of the midterm assignment for one of the following two books: *Onions Are My Husband* (by Gracia Clark – about women in markets), or *Men Own the Fields, Women Own the Crops* (by Miriam Goheen, about women, agriculture, and political participation).

### Course Conduct

- **Put your cellphones on vibrate.**
- **Try not to check email or play Angry Birds on your iPhones during class.**
- **Read a lot.**
- **Write a little.**
- **Ask questions.**
- **Talk to each other.**
- **Be nice.**
- **Talk to me.**
- **Pay attention to the world around you.**
- **Don't cheat. (see below)**

### Policy on Late Assignments

You are required to complete all assignments by the stated due dates. Late assignments will lose one half-letter grade for each day past the deadline. There are no make-up opportunities for any assignment, as you will have ample time to complete each requirement. I will not assign grades of "incomplete" except in the most unusual, extreme circumstances (i.e. alien abduction). You must provide documentation of such circumstances from an appropriate authority.

### Academic Honor Code

Students are expected to uphold the Academic Honor Code of the University of Florida. The Academic Honor Code is based on the premise that each student has the responsibility (1) to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity in the student's own work, (2) to refuse to tolerate violations of academic integrity in the University community, and (3) to foster a high sense of integrity and responsibility on the part of the University community. Please see the following website for a complete explanation of the Academic Honor Code: [www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/students.html](http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/students.html).

### Americans with Disabilities Act

Students with disabilities, who need reasonable modifications to complete assignments successfully and otherwise satisfy course criteria, are encouraged to meet with the instructor as early in the course as possible to identify and plan specific modifications. Students requesting accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office and then provide documentation to the instructor. For more information about services available to University of Florida students:

Dean of Students Office Disability Resource Center  
202 Peabody Hall or 0020 Reid Hall  
Phone: (352) 392-1261 Phone: (352) 392-8570

### University of Florida Counseling Services

Resources are available on-campus for students that feel like they are struggling in their personal or academic life. These resources include:

- University Counseling Center, 301 Peabody Hall, 392-1575, personal and career counseling
- Student Mental Health, Student Health Care Center, 392-1171, personal counseling
- Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS), Student Health Care Center, 392-1161, sexual counseling
- Career Resource Center, Reitz Union, 392-1601, career development assistance and counseling.

### Books

Bidwell, J. and K. Holloway (2007). *Monique And The Mango Rains: Two Years With A Midwife In Mali*. Waveland Press.  
Chernoff, J. M. (2005). *Hustling is not Stealing: stories of an African bar girl*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.  
Cooper, F. (2002). *Africa since 1940: The past of the present*. Cambridge, UK; New York, Cambridge University Press.  
Dangarembga, T. (2001). *Nervous conditions*. London, Women's Press.  
Katherine Dettwyler, *Dancing Skeletons: Life and Death in West Africa*  
Hodgson, D. L. (2005). *Once Intrepid Warriors: Gender, Ethnicity, and the Cultural Politics of Maasai Development*. Indiana U.P.  
Kassindja, F. and L. M. Bashir (1998). *Do they hear you when you cry?* London; New York, Bantam.  
Wangari Maathai, *Unbowed: A Memoir*  
Shostak, M. and Nisa (2000). *Nisa, the life and words of a !Kung woman*. Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press.  
Smith, M. (1981). *Baba of Karo, a woman of the Muslim Hausa*, Yale Univ Pr.

Women in Africa  
AFS 4935 : ANT 4930 : WST 4930  
Fall 2011

**Course Readings**

**EXCERPTS: How to Read a Film**

Additional readings will be posted at the course website at least one week prior to class.

Women in Africa  
AFS 4935 : ANT 4930 : WST 4930  
Fall 2011

**Overview of Course Topics**

| <b>Date</b>  | <b>Topic</b>                                                                   |
|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>8/23</b>  | Introduction: Women's Lives and Women's Struggles in Africa                    |
| <b>8/30</b>  | African Contexts, Feminist Frameworks                                          |
| <b>9/6</b>   | Outside Looking In: Post-colonial Theory and Post-colony Practice              |
| <b>9/13</b>  | African Women: Anthropological Versions and Visions                            |
| <b>9/20</b>  | Urban Experience                                                               |
| <b>9/27</b>  | Wealth in People: Women, Family, and Marital Negotiations in African Economies |
| <b>10/4</b>  | Wealth in People Part II                                                       |
| <b>10/11</b> | Between Tradition and Modernity: Women as Harbingers of Social Transformation  |
| <b>10/18</b> | Language and Representation                                                    |
| <b>10/25</b> | The African Woman in <i>the</i> African Body                                   |
| <b>10/28</b> | <b>Midterm Assignment Due</b>                                                  |
| <b>11/1</b>  | Body Politics: The Management of African Women's Sexualities                   |
| <b>11/8</b>  | Rape and Domestic Violence: The Politics of Intervention                       |
| <b>11/15</b> | Women in Wartime                                                               |
| <b>11/16</b> | <b>Final Paper Topic Approval Due</b>                                          |
| <b>11/22</b> | The Patrimonial African State                                                  |
| <b>11/29</b> | Fighting for the Earth                                                         |
| <b>12/5</b>  | Home-Lands                                                                     |
| <b>12/16</b> | <b>Final Papers Due</b>                                                        |

## Course Outline & Readings

\*\*\*\*\*Suggested Reading to accompany film viewings throughout course: How to Read a Film\*\*\*\*\*

### 8/23 Africa, Women, and Culture: The Start of a Dialogue

Kleinman, Arthur. "Experience and Its Moral Modes: Culture, Human Conditions, and Disorder," in *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values* (20), pp. 357-405.

Moore, Henrietta. "Gender and Status." *Feminism and Anthropology*. University of Minnesota Press.

Oyewumi, Oyeronke. (2000) "Family Bonds/Conceptual Binds: African Notes on Feminist Epistemologies. *Signs* Vol 25 No 4 (Summer 2000) pp 1093-1098

Léopold Sédar Senghor, "Negritude: A Humanism of the Twentieth Century"

### 8/30 Key Concepts: Economics, Kinship, Rights & Freedoms

Boserup, Ester. "The Economics of Polygamy." Pp.506-517.

Nussbaum, M. C., J. Glover, et al. (1995). "Human Capabilities: Female Human Beings." *Women, Culture, and Development: A Study of Human Capabilities*. pp. 61-105

Steady, Filomina C., "African Feminism: A Worldwide Perspective," *Women in Africa and the African Diaspora: A Reader*, 2nd ed. pp. 3-22

[www.savageminds.org](http://www.savageminds.org) "The Anthropology of Freedom" Parts 1-5 (anthropology blog)

THURSDAY FILM: XALA (Sembene Ousmane, 1983)

### 9/6 African Women: Anthropological Representations

Shostak, M. and Nisa (2000). *Nisa, the life and words of a !Kung woman*. Cambridge, Mass., Harvard U.P.

Lutz, C. and J. L. Collins (1993). *Reading National Geographic*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press. Pp. 89-117

### 9/13 Background: Nationalism, Liberalism, and "Development"

Frederick Cooper (2002). *Africa since 1940: The past of the present*. Cambridge, UK; Cambridge University Press. Selected Chapters.

Fred Cooper and Randall Packard, 2005. "The History and Politics of Development Knowledge," in *The Anthropology of Development and Globalization*, M. Edelman and A. Haugerud eds, Blackwell, pp. 127-139.

Fanon, Frantz. "On National Culture." Pp.657-753.

### 9/20 Urban Experience

Chernoff, J. M. (s2005). *Hustling is Not Stealing*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press. Excerpts.

THURSDAY FILM: "Faat Kine" by Sembène Ousmane (2000)

### 9/27 Wealth in People: Women, Family, and Marital Negotiations in African Economies

Smith, M. (1981). *Baba of Karo, a woman of the Muslim Hausa*, Yale Univ Pr. Selected Chapters.

*Thursday 9/29: Class cancelled.*

### 10/4 Wealth in People Part II: Women, Family, and Marital Negotiations in African Economies

Bledsoe, C. (1976). "Women's marital strategies among the Kpelle of Liberia." *Journal of Anthropological Research*: 372-389.

Guyer, J. (1981). "Household and community in African studies." *African Studies Review* 24(2/3): 87-137.

THURSDAY FILM: "Asante Market Women" (1982)

### 10/11 Production and Reproduction

Katherine Dettwyler, *Dancing Skeletons: Life and Death in West Africa*

### 10/18 Between 'Tradition' and Modernity

Hodgson, D. L. (2004). *Once Intrepid Warriors: Gender, Ethnicity, and the Cultural Politics of Maasai Development*.

### 10/25 The African Woman in the African Body

Bidwell, J. and K. Holloway (2007). *Monique And The Mango Rains: Two Years With A Midwife In Mali*. Scheper-Hughes, Nancy, and Margaret M. Lock (1987) *The Mindful Body: A Prolegomenon to Future Work in Medical Anthropology*. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 1(1):6.

**11/1 Body Politics: The Management of African Women's Sexualities**

Kassindja, F. and L. M. Bashir (1998). *Do they hear you when you cry?* London; New York, Bantam. P.11-275

Piot, Charles. (Representing Africa in the Kasinga Asylum Case, by Charles Piot)

**THURSDAY FILM:**

**Warrior marks. New York, NY, distributed by Women Make Movies.**

**"Monday's Girls" by Ngozi Onwurah.**

**11/8 Rape and Domestic Violence**

Abramowitz, S. "Social Suffering, Psychosocial Intervention, and the GBV Proxy." From *Psychosocial Liberia: Managing Suffering in Post-Conflict Life*

Merry, S. E. (2006). Chapter 5: Legal Rights and Cultural Translation: Making Human Rights in the Vernacular. *Human rights and gender violence: translating international law into local justice*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

Nussbaum, M. C., J. Glover, et al. (1995). *Women and Development*. Oxford: New York, Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press. Chapter 4 "Love, Care, and Dignity." Pp. 241-297

**THURSDAY FILM: (2001). Sia [videorecording] : le reve du python = the dream of the python**

**11/15 Women in Wartime**

"A Trader Caught in Ethnic Violence"... WWA: West Africa and the Sahel pp. 393-402

Turshen, M. and C. Twagiramariya (1998). *What women do in wartime: gender and conflict in Africa*. London; New York, Zed Books. Excerpts.

Utas, M. (2005). "Victimcy, Girlfriending, Soldiering: Tactic Agency in a Young Woman's Social Navigation of the Liberian War Zone." *Anthropological Quarterly* 78.2: 403-430.

**11/22 Gender Politics and the Patrimonial African State**

Sirleaf, Ellen Johnson. *This Child Will Be Great: Memoir of a Remarkable Life by Africa's First Woman President*. Harper Perennial. Selected Chapters.

**THURSDAY FILM: Pray the Devil Back to Hell**

**11/29 Fighting for the Earth**

Wangari Maathai, *Unbowed: A Memoir*

**12/5 Women and their Home-Lands**

Dangarembga, T. (2001). *Nervous conditions*.

**12/16 Final Papers Due**

**Recommended Readings:**

- Abusharaf, R. (2006). *Female circumcision: multicultural perspectives*, University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Comaroff, J. and J. L. Comaroff (1991). *Of revelation and revolution*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press. Introduction, Chapter 6 "Conversion and Conversation"
- Ferguson, J. (1999). *Expectations of modernity: myths and meanings of urban life on the Zambian Copperbelt*. Berkeley, University of California Press.
- Guyer, J. (1981). "Household and community in African studies." *African Studies Review* 24(2/3): 87-137.
- Hansen, K. (1994). "Dealing with used clothing: Salaula and the construction of identity in Zambia's Third Republic." *Public Culture* 6(3): 503.
- Howson, CP; Harrison, PF; Hotra, D and Law, M (eds.) 1996. *In Her Lifetime: female morbidity and mortality in sub-Saharan Africa*. National Academy Press, Washington DC.
- Leclerc-Madlala, S. (1997). "Infect one, infect all: Zulu youth response to the AIDS epidemic in South Africa." *Medical Anthropology* 17(4): 363.
- Leclerc-Madlala, S. (2001). "Virginity testing: Managing sexuality in a maturing HIV/AIDS epidemic." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*: 533-552.
- Meintjes, S., A. Pillay, et al. (2001). *The aftermath: women in post-war transformation*. London; New York, New York, Zed Books; Distributed in the USA exclusively by Palgrave.
- Kamene Okonjo, "Igbo Women and Community Politics," *Women in Africa*. Stanford. 1976. pp. 45-58
- Sherry Ortner (1984). "Theory in Anthropology Since the Sixties." *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. Vol 26 No. 1. Pp. 126-166
- Ortner, S. B. (1995). "Resistance and the Problem of Ethnographic Refusal." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 37(1): 173-193.
- Terence Ranger, "The Invention of tradition in colonial Africa" in *The Invention of Tradition*, E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger eds. 1983. pp. 211-263.
- Filomina Chioma Steady. (2005). "An investigative framework for gender research in Africa in the new millennium." *African gender studies reader*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Steady, F. C. (2006). *Women and collective action in Africa: development, democratization, and empowerment, with special focus on Sierra Leone*. New York, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Turshen, M (ed.) 1991. *Women and Health in Africa*. Trenton, NY Africa World Press.
- Judith Van Allen, *Aba Riots or Ibo Womens war*. *Women in Africa*. Stanford. 1976. pp. 59-85. P
- Women Writing Africa (4 volume series)*

**Recommended Films:**

- Absa, M. S. and N. California (1997). *Tableau ferraille* [videorecording]. Library of African cinema. San Francisco, CA, California Newsreel: 1 videocassette (88 min., 40 sec.).
- Disney and Reticker, "Pray the Devil Back to Hell"
- Drabo, A., F. Berete, et al. (1997). *Taafe fanga* [videorecording] = *Pouvoir de pagne = Skirt power*. un film de Adama Drabo ; une coproduction Taare Films. The Library of African cinema. San Francisco, Calif., California Newsreel: 1 videocassette (95 min.)
- Kouyate, Dani. *Sia* [videorecording] : *le reve du python = the dream of the python* ArtMattan Productions ; Sahelis Productions ; Les Productions de la Lanterne ; la direction de la Cinematographie Nationale de Burkina; un film de Dani Kouyate. New York, NY, Distributed by ArtMattan Productions: 1 videocassette (96 min.).