

## **ARH 4520 – African Art**

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This course provides a survey of African visual art from the traditional arts of Africa to the contemporary African art movements that are currently energizing global art markets and academic discourses. Students will engage history and aesthetics to comprehend the role that African art has played in both traditional and contemporary African societies. The course will also contextualize the importance of African art on a global scale. Lectures, readings, films, and images explore the breadth of African visual arts. Students will understand the role that African art has played in traditional, colonial, post-colonial and contemporary contexts, and they will understand how historical and geopolitical events have affected African visual arts.

Students will begin by interrogating their own notions of Africa and will be able to analyze the ways in which Africa has been constructed in the popular imagination. Through the study of African history and geography, students will gain a foundational knowledge of the continent and the many countries that comprise it, as well as the role and function of art in traditional African societies. Moving forward, students will study the impacts of colonialism on the African continent, reading both art historical and anthropological texts to deepen their understanding of colonialism's effects on African art. Students will explore issues such as concepts of authenticity, the art/artifact debates, and modernism's appropriation of African art. Particular emphasis will be placed on postcolonial realities in Africa as a result of African independence movements and their effects on African visual arts. The course then incorporates African visual arts in the diaspora, and finishes the semester examining contemporary African visual artists.

Readings available on the course site, unless listed as part of the **three required texts**:

Eisenhofer, Stefan. African Art. Los Angeles: Taschen Books, 2010.

Powell, Richard. Black Art: A Cultural History. London: Thames and Hudson World of Art, 2002.

Enwezor, Okwui and Chika Okeke-Agulu. Contemporary Art Since 1980. Bologna: Grafiche Damiani, 2009.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Identify critical historical moments and art movements in African art.
- Compare and contrast different styles and genres of African art.

- Understand the global and historical significance of African art.
- Evaluate the importance of African art in a global context.
- Synthesize the links between history and art making.
- Critically engage art historical texts.
- Understand how processes of globalization affect African art.
- Critique African art in the context of international global art movements.
- Appreciate art from the global African Diaspora, as well as continental Africa.
- Explain their personal positions, tastes, and opinions regarding African art.

### **GLOBAL LEARNING STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES**

- **GLOBAL AWARENESS**

Students will demonstrate their understanding of how world historical events affect African artists and how those artists, through their artistic choices, in turn, influence history.

- **GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE**

Students will develop an analysis of the short and long term effects of British and French systems of colonialism on African society, and particularly on traditional, modern, and contemporary African visual arts.

- **GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT**

Students will be tasked to engage in their communities to seek out and support African and African Diaspora arts initiatives. They will define problems facing African arts and find solutions to raise awareness of the importance and impact of African visual arts.

### **TEACHING METHODOLOGY**

Lectures, readings, films, and discussions are the core components of the course.

Student engagement and participation via discussion forums is a key part of the course. The instructor will regularly post relevant articles and encourage students to also post and interact with other students in the class.

Small group dialogs and chats will also be an important component of the class. Students will learn from each other's multivalent experiences as students from many different disciplines and walks of life.

Independent research and critical engagement with the course topics will be encouraged.

### **COMMUNICATING WITH INSTRUCTOR**

All messages should be sent through the Blackboard system. I will respond to messages quickly, so please do not hesitate to contact me. My virtual office hours are from 3pm-7pm each Monday evening, when I will be available for live chat to answer any of your

questions. If you would like to meet with me in person, please send me a Blackboard message and we can arrange for this.

### **VIDEO LECTURES AND COURSE CONTENTS**

Start each week by viewing the brief video lectures I have recorded summarizing the main ideas we are dealing with each week. These lectures will help to contextualize the course materials into the larger themes in the class, and will help you be successful on your weekly quizzes.

All of the materials provided to you to view and read on Blackboard are mandatory. Do not skip or skim the contents, the class has been carefully designed to maximize learning and your understanding of the materials.

### **GRADING**

Global Awareness Essay	100 points
Global Perspective Essay	100 points
GL Global Engagement Project/Essay	100 points
10 Quizzes worth 50 points each	500 points
Final Report on African Artist	100 points
Participation	100 points
<b>Total</b>	<b>1000 points</b>

<b>Letter</b>	<b>Range (%)</b>	<b>Letter</b>	<b>Range (%)</b>	<b>Letter</b>	<b>Range (%)</b>
A	Above 940	B-	800 - 839	D+	670 - 699
A-	900 - 939	C+	770 - 799	D	640 - 669
B+	870 - 899	C	740 - 769	D-	600 - 639
B	840 - 869	C-	700 - 739	F	< 599

### **QUIZZES**

Students will have 10 short-answer quizzes worth 50 points each over the course of the semester. This will establish a routine so that you can manage your time accordingly, and it also ensures that you are keeping up with the course materials.

Most quizzes will be composed of five questions, worth 10 points each, and should be answered as comprehensively as possible, usually within one long paragraph per question.

### **GLOBAL LEARNING ASSESSMENTS**

Students will write three Global Learning essays over the course of the semester using either MLA or Chicago style, depending on the student's discipline.

The three essays will assess: 1) global awareness 2) global perspective 3) global engagement. Each respective essay will have a prompt provided by the instructor that highlights the three core GL requirements.

### **FINAL REPORT ON AFRICAN ARTIST**

Students will write a final 5-page research paper on an African artist of their choice.

### **PARTICIPATION**

You will need to participate in the online class discussions each week, and are welcome to post links that are related to the course material.

### **COURSE CONTENT**

#### **Module 1: Traditional Arts of Africa**

##### **Week 1:**

- 1) View slideshow on African geography.
- 2) Read “Africa, Art, and History.” pp.14-23 in A History of Art in Africa. New York: Harry Abrams, Inc, 2001.

##### **Week 2:**

- 1) Ch 1, “Introducing Africa” and Ch 2, “The Development and Study of African Art.” Willet, Frank. African Art. New York: Thames and Hudson, 2002.
- 2) “Africans Live in Tribes, Don’t They?” in Keim, Curtis. Mistaking Africa: Curiosities and Inventions of the American Mind. Boulder: Westview Press, 2009.

QUIZ due by 11 PM Sunday

##### **Week 3:**

Required book – you must read this entire short, art-filled book this week.  
Eisenhofer, Stefan. African Art. Los Angeles: Taschen Books, 2010.

GLOBAL AWARENESS ESSAY DUE

#### **Module 2: Colonialism, Modernity, Anthropology, and ‘Authenticity’**

##### **Week 4:**

- 1) Ch 21, “The European ‘Scramble,’ colonial conquest, and African resistance in east, north-central, and West Africa.” Shillington, Kevin. History of Africa. New York: St Martin’s Press, 1995.
- 2) African Slave Trade – African Holocaust slideshow
- 3) FILM: “Boma – Tervuren, The Journey” by Francis Dujardin, 1999.

QUIZ due by 11 PM Sunday

**Week 5:**

- 1) “Europe, African Arts, and the Uncanny” by Henry Louis Gates, Jr.  
Phillips, Tom. Africa: The Art of a Continent. Munich: Prestel, 1995.
  - 2) “Why Africa? Why Art?” by Kwame Anthony Appiah
  - 3) “Introduction to Art/Artifact: African Art in Anthropology Collections” Susan Vogel  
Morphy, Howard and Morgan Perkins. The Anthropology of Art: A Reader.  
Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006.
  - 4) Slideshow: Picasso and Matisse – African Influences.
- QUIZ due by 11 PM Sunday

**Week 6:**

- 1) “The anthropology of African art in a transnational market” and “The quest for authenticity and the invention of African Art” by Christopher Steiner.  
Steiner, Christopher. African Art in Transit. Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- 2) FILM: “In and Out of Africa” produced by Ilisa Barbash and Lucien Taylor, 1993.

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE ESSAY DUE

**Module 3: Post-Colonial African Art****Week 7:**

- 1) Introduction to “The Short Century” by Okwui Enwezor  
Enwezor, Okwui. The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa: 1945-1994. Munich: Prestel, 2001.
  - 2) Olu Oguibe. “Into the Heart of Darkness.”
  - 3) Lumumba – a film by Raoul Peck
- QUIZ due by 11 PM Sunday

**Week 8:**

- 1) Intro, Chapter 1  
Kasfir, Sidney. Contemporary African Art. New York: Thames & Hudson, 1999.
  - 2) Chapter 2 – Kasfir
  - 3) Slideshow: Cheri Samba
- QUIZ due by 11 PM Sunday

**Week 9:**

- 1) “Colonial Imaginary, Tropes of Disruption: History, Culture, and Representation in the Works of African Photographers” by Okwui Enwezor in  
Guggenheim Museum. “In/sight: African Photographers, 1940 to Present.” 1996.
- 2) “The 1960’s Bamako: Malick Sidibé and James Brown” by Manthia Diawara in  
Elam, Harry and Kennell Jackson. Black Cultural Traffic: Crossroads in Global Performance and Popular Culture. Ann Arbor: U.Michigan Press, 2008.
- 3) Slideshow: Seydou Keita and Malick Sidibé

GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT ESSAY DUE

## **Module 4: Black (American) Art**

### **Week 10:**

- 1) Intro – Chapter 4 in required book  
Powell, Richard. Black Art: A Cultural History. London: Thames and Hudson  
World of Art, 2002.
  - 2) Slideshow: Barkley Hendricks
- QUIZ due by 11 PM Sunday

### **Week 11:** Film by Tamara Davis: Radiant Child, Jean Michel Basquait

QUIZ due by 11 PM Sunday

### **Week 12:**

- 1) Chapter 5 – conclusion of Black Art: A Cultural History.
  - 2) Fred Wilson profile on PBS Art 21
  - 3) Kara Walker profile on PBS Art 21
- QUIZ due by 11 PM Sunday

## **Module 5: Contemporary African Art**

### **Week 13:**

Chapters 1, 2, and 3 of required book Contemporary African Art Since 1980.  
Enwezor, Okwui and Chika Okeke-Agulu. Contemporary Art Since 1980.  
Bologna: Grafiche Damiani, 2009.

QUIZ due by 11 PM Sunday

### **Week 14:**

Chapters 4, 5, 6, 7 of required book: Contemporary African Art Since 1980.  
QUIZ due by 11 PM Sunday

### **Week 15:**

FINAL RESEARCH REPORT on one African contemporary artist.

**THERE IS NO FINAL EXAM FOR THIS CLASS.**