GENDER AND SEXUALITIES IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN CONTEXTS

AFS 3332*

Professor: Zablon Mgonja
Email: use blackboard message
Office: LC 307 A
Class time: T/Th 12:30-1:45
Room: OE 105
Phone: 305 348-8455

COURSE DESCRIPTION

* This course counts toward your global learning graduation requirement.

This course examines gender and sexuality in contemporary Sub-Saharan Africa, using a critique of Western conventional categories and a critical approach to the AIDS epidemic as frames for thinking about changes in African societies over the last two decades. Drawing primarily on ethnographic work and theoretical literature from the social sciences, the course examines notions of gendered and sexualized identifications in sub-Saharan Africa. Theoretically, the course asks how Sub-Saharan African contexts challenge Western or Global North conventional conceptualizations of gender and sexualities. More empirically, the course explores key aspects of personhood in Sub-Saharan African societies, including the consideration of the impact of the colonial legacy, conceptions and practices of reproduction, women’s rights, homosexuality and trans-sexual practices, constructions of masculinities and femininities, etc.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

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

• theorize gender and sexuality in African contexts.
• critically examine and assess the applicability or lack thereof of Western conventional theoretical approaches to gender and sexuality in African societies.
• demonstrate an understanding of how Sub-Saharan African contexts challenge the ways gendered identities, personhood, “love,” and intimacy are conceptualized (and sometimes universalized) in the West or Global North.
• demonstrate an expansion of their understanding of African contemporary issues.
• feel more engaged with African concerns related to gender and sexualities.

GLOBAL LEARNING STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

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

Global Awareness:
• demonstrate knowledge of how much local African gender constructs and sexualities are interrelated with global, international, and intercultural issues, movements, trends, and systems.

**Global Perspective:**

• Students will be able to take into consideration both African and Western feminist, queer studies, and other theoretical perspectives in their analyses of African sexualities and gender constructs as they are performed locally, and are influenced by global and international forces and laws, in ever growing intercultural contexts.

**Global Engagements:**

• Students will be able to propose solutions to specific cases of gender intolerance and rigid heteronorm activity in given local, global and intercultural African contexts.

**COURSE COMMUNICATION**

• Communication in this course will take place via messages.

**COURSE READINGS**

• Required Readings are indicated for each module. They can be found in pdf on the Blackboard site associated with this course. PLEASE READ THE ASSIGNED MATERIALS BEFORE COMING TO CLASS.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

**Group presentations (15 minutes)**

During the first week of class, you will identify a group partner with whom you are going to work throughout the semester. You will need to pick two articles to critique. You will present your reading in two different days. During your presentation, you will:

1) Give a summary of the article/chapter
2) What is the main argument(s) Why did the author(s) write the article or chapter?
3) What are the data used as evidence by the author to support the claims he/she makes in his/her argument?
4) What is useful about the reading(s)?
5) Were any of the points made questionable? If so, why?
6) What points, issues, or terms would you like to discuss or have clarified?
7) How do the various readings assigned inform each other? Contradict? Raise new questions?

**Class Discussion (15 Minutes)**

• After the presentation, the class will engage in the discussion of what has been presented, following the same questions listed above as guideline.
EXAMS

- There are four (4) exams based on assigned readings and films. These exams will be a combination of short answer and essay questions.

FILM REACTION PAPER

There is (1) film reaction paper (8-10 pages, 12 pt, double-spaced) which will be counted as your GL film reaction paper. Your paper grade will follow the order below:

A: outstanding analysis; solid examples and reasons are given to support your views; clearly written.
B: fulfilled the assignment adequately; few if any grammatical problems or unclear sentences.
C: fulfilled the assignment but either the analysis is insufficient or superficial and/or there were a number of grammatical mistakes.
D: the assignment was not adequately fulfilled and/or there were a substantial amount of grammatical errors and awkward and confusing sentences.
F: the assignment was not turned in within one week of the due date or was not completed according to the criteria listed above.

FINAL GRADE CALCULATION

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<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tr>
<td>Group presentations</td>
<td>200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance and participation</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exams @ 100 Points</td>
<td>400</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class assignments</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final GL Paper</td>
<td>200</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>900-870</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>890-870</td>
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<td>C+</td>
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• The total number of points that you can earn in this course is 1000. However, throughout the semester, you will have one and only one opportunity to earn extra credit through attending an event relevant to the course and writing a reaction paper.

GROUND RULES

- All assignments are to be uploaded onto turnitin.com. NO late papers will be accepted for full credit without a medical excuse. Each day late will result in the loss of 10% of the total possible points.
• Plagiarism is a serious offense. If you use the work of other authors without giving them credit, you will receive a ‘0’ for the assignment and you will be reported to Academic Affairs. To avoid plagiarism, all assignments will have to be uploaded onto turnitin.com.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES
Module 1

January 12

Introduction:

Critical Readings of:

January 14


Week 2 January 19

Film: “The Life and Times of Sara Baartman: The Hottentot Venus.”

January 21:


Week 3 Module 2:

Debating “African Sexuality”

January 26
January 28

Week 4: February 2


February 4

Exam 1: Covers Modules 1&2 posted on Thursday February 4th at 16:00 due on Sunday February 7th at 23:59

Module 3

Week 5: February 9

Exploring Same-Sex Practices and Discourses on Homosexuality (1)

Watch the BBC Debate entitled “Is Homosexuality Un-African.”

Critical Readings of

February 11


Kendall, L. 1999 Chapter 7 "Women in Lesotho and the (Western) Construction of Homophobia" in Evelyn Blackwood and Saskia Wieringa (eds), Female desires: same-sex relations and transgender practices across cultures.
WEEK 6 MODULE 4:

Exploring Recent Publications on Same-Sex Practices and Discourses on Homosexuality

February 16
Critical Reading of:

February 18

Week 7

February 23
**Due: Topics for your GL film paper**

February 25

Film: “Dakan”

Exam #2: Covers Module 3 and 4. Posted on Thursday February 25th at 4pm, Due on Sunday, February 28th at 11:59 PM

Week 8 Module 5:

Further discussion on Femininity, Feminism and Women’s Movements March 1st
Critical Readings of:
March 3rd


Week 9
March 8th


Due: Bibliography of at least 5 scholarly works to be used in your paper


March 10th

Film: “Karmen Gei”

March 14th to 19th (Spring Break- No classes)

Week 11: MODULE 6:
The Construction of Masculinity

March 22

Critical Readings of:
March 24th


**Exam #3: Covers Module 5&6 on Thursday, March 24 at 4pm due on Sunday, March 27th at 11:59 PM**

Week 12: Module 7

March 29th

**Changing Conceptions of African Intimacies in the Age of AIDS (1)**

Critical Readings of:


March 31st


**Week 13 Module 8 Changing Conceptions of African Intimacies in the Age of AIDS (2)**
April 5th
Critical Readings of:

April 7th

Week 14

April 12th

April 14th
Film: “Life, Above All” (GL Film)

Exam #4: Covers Modules 7 & 8 on Thursday, April 14th due Sunday, April 17th at 11:59 PM

Due on Wednesday April 20th Final Global Learning Paper
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