

Do not copy without the express written consent of the instructor.

## **ARH 4520 – African Art**

Global Learning course

Instructor: Noelle Theard

[ntheard@fiu.edu](mailto:ntheard@fiu.edu)

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.

**This is a Discipline-specific Global Learning course that counts toward your graduation requirement.**

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 art. 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**:

Eisenberg, Steven. African Art. Los Angeles: Taschen Books, 2010.

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

World of Art, 2009.

Enwezor, Okwui and Chika Okeke-Agulu. Contemporary Art Since 1980. Bologna: Grafica 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.

Do not copy without the express written consent of the instructor.

- 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 and support African and African Diaspora arts initiatives. They will develop problems facing African arts and find solutions to raise awareness of the importance and impact of African visual arts.

### **ACTIVE LEARNING STRATEGIES**

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

Discussion boards will be central to maintaining an active learning environment in this 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 dialogues 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 work/life.

Independent research and critical engagement with the course topics will be encouraged and students will be encouraged to share their research with their peers in the discussion forums.

### **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.

Do not copy without the express written consent of the instructor.

## 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

12 Weekly Assignments worth 50 points each	600 points
10 discussion points worth 25 points each	250 points
Final Global Learning Essay	150 points
Total	1000 points

Letter	Range (%)	Letter	Range (%)	Letter	Range (%)
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 12 weekly assignments made up of short essay questions 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 weekly assignments 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 a final Global Learning essay over the course of the semester using either MLA or Chicago style, depending on the student's discipline. The essay will assess: 1) global awareness 2) global perspective 3) global engagement.

In addition, weekly assignments will have at least one question that will assess student's global awareness, global perspective, and global engagements.

Being that the content of the course is very much aligned with global learning initiatives, students will have ample opportunities to demonstrate their understanding of the principles of global learning throughout the semester.

Do not copy without the express written consent of the instructor.

## COURSE CONTENT

### Module 1: Traditional Arts of Africa

**Week 1: This week we will explore an overview of Africa and African art.**

- 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: Focused on the foundation, this week we will read a foundation text on African art, as well as a text on mitigating the common blindspots many have when thinking about Africa.**

- 1) Ch 1, “Introducing Africa” and Ch 2, “The Development and Study of African Art.” Gillet, 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.

Weekly assignment and discussion due by Sunday 11pm.

**Week 3: Book will provide a visual reference for traditional African art.**

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

Weekly assignment and discussion due by Sunday 11pm.

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

**Week 4: Better understanding the role that colonialism played in Africa will help students understand the role that art played in context.**

- 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: “Borana – Tesfayen, The Journey” by Francis Dujardin, 1999.

Weekly assignment and discussion due by Sunday 11pm.

**Week 5: This week we will read inspired essays that bring to light new ways to think about African art.**

- 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.

Weekly assignment and discussion due by Sunday 11pm.

Do not copy without the express written consent of the instructor.

**Week 6: Understanding the links between the disciplines of art and anthropology is of critical importance to understanding African art - this week we explore further.**

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.

Weekly assignment and discussion due by Sunday 11pm.

### **Module 3: Post-Colonial African Art**

**Week 7: Looking at African independence movements, we will analyze how postcolonialism had major effects on African societies, including their art.**

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

Weekly assignment and discussion due by Sunday 11pm.

**Week 8: This week we will better understand African contemporary art through case studies of artists.**

1) Intro, Chapter 1

Kasfir, Sidney. Contemporary African Art. New York: Thames & Hudson, 1999.

2) Chapter 2 – Kasfir

3) Slideshow: Cheri Samba

Weekly assignment and discussion due by Sunday 11pm.

**Week 9: This week, we will look at the role that photography played in the postcolonial imagination.**

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 Punks: Malick Sidibé and James Brown" by Manthia Diawara in

Elam, Barry 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

Weekly assignment and discussion due by Sunday 11pm.

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

**Week 10: Understanding that Black American art is also a part of African diaspora art, we will learn more about developments on this side of the Atlantic.**

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

Do not copy without the express written consent of the instructor.

3) Film by Tamara Davis: Radiant Child, Jean Michel Basquait  
Weekly assignment and discussion due by Sunday 11pm.

**Week 11: Continuing our analysis of Black American art, we will look at artist case studies.**

- 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
- Weekly assignment and discussion due by Sunday 11pm.

**Module 5: Contemporary African Art**

**Week 12: This week we will focus squarely on contemporary art on the African continent.**  
Chapters 1, 2, and 3 of required book Contemporary African Art Since 1980.  
Enwezor, Okwui and Chika Okeke-Agulu. Contemporary African Art Since 1980. Bologna:  
Grafiche Damiani, 2009.

Weekly assignment and discussion due by Sunday 11pm.

**Week 13: This week we will continue our focus on contemporary art on the African continent.**

Chapters 4, 5, 6, 7 of required book: Contemporary African Art Since 1980.  
Weekly assignment and discussion due by Sunday 11pm.

**Week 14:**

Work on final Global Learning Essays

**Week 15:**

Final Global Learning Essay due

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

Do not copy