African Diaspora Religions: African Spirits in the Americas

ANTH 360A (W Course)

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Semester: Fall 2010

Location: Asbury Hall 206

Time: 12:40-2:10 Monday and Wednesday

Office: Asbury Hall 219

**Office Hours:** 10am-Noon Monday and Wednesday; also by appointment

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*Like the spirit that animates them,*

*religions of the African diaspora are at once one and many.*

Joseph Murphy

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course is designed to explore the history, functions, and communities, which encompass religions of the African Diaspora such as Santería, Vodou, and Candomblé. Lectures, discussions, films, and a range of ethnographic literature will introduce students to these religious systems. Among the topics and themes to be addressed in relation to religion are issues of identity, ethnicity, gender, performance, and class. Case studies in Brazil, Cuba, Haiti and among Latinos in the U.S. will illuminate the multivocality of the religious beliefs and practices found in the African Diaspora. As a W course, we will also learn more about the craft of writing.

The success of this course will depend on the active participation of all its members. Everyone brings a different set of experiences and perspectives from which we will examine the readings and themes of this course. My objectives for this course are that you will:

1. Actively engage course material by working collaboratively with other students throughout the semester in the creation of a community of learning within the classroom.

2. Create well crafted and thought provoking written assignments that incorporate class material with your own voice and understanding of the material as you gain confidence and become a more effective writer.

3. Expand your knowledge and understanding of key anthropological terms such as syncretism and transculturation as well as various ethnographic methods of documentation that include life histories and participant observation.

4. Gain a broader appreciation of the religious and cultural diversity found in the communities of the African Diaspora.

REQUIRED READINGS:

Landes, Ruth.

1. *City of Women*. New York: Macmillan.

McCarthy-Brown, Karen

1. *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Murphy, Joseph M.

1. *Santería: African Spirits in America*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Polk, Patrick Arthur

1. *Botánica Los Angeles: Latino Popular Religious Art in the City of Angels*. Los Angeles: UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History.

There are also articles noted in your syllabus with an asterisk (\*). It is your responsibility to bring either a copy of the article and/or your notes to class on the day the article is assigned.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

1. **Class participation 10%**: In addition to consistent and punctual attendance, students are expected to come prepared to contribute to discussion having read the assigned texts. Along with your active class contributions, other areas of participation include:
   1. Discussion Leaders—students will be assigned to lead group discussion, which includes preparing discussion questions related to the assigned reading as well as leading discussion oriented class activities 10%.
2. **Written assignments 60%**: Students need to incorporate course related texts, lectures, films, and discussions along with their own interpretations into their written assignments.
   1. Review of *City of Women.* Write a formal review for an appropriate academic journal: 15%
   2. Comparative analysis. Compare and contrast the religious systems and methods of analysis/documentation in *Santería* and *Mama Lola*: 15%
   3. Creative writing assignment. Write an essay on Osun or Ogun utilizing the symbolic information from texts: 15%
   4. Mini-research paper. Choose a topic that interests you and articulate a clear set of questions on the topic that your paper will seek to answer with the use of different sources: 15%
3. **Exams 30%**: There will be two exams each worth 15%. The exams will consist of essay questions that will ask you to respond to and synthesize key themes from the course.

**GRADING:**

A note on graded materials—you must wait at least 24 hours (but no more than 1 week) before coming to see me about a grade you received on any class material. I am available for consultation regarding any graded assignment only after you have taken sufficient time to read through both your original work and my comments. Keep in mind that reviewing graded material means a possible increase OR decrease in the original grade, so be sure to look over your work carefully before bringing it to my attention for a second time.

Your final grade for the course will be based on the following:

* Participation ………………………………10%
* Four (4) writing assignments……………...60%
* Two (2) exams………………………….....30%

TOTAL 100%

**Grading Scale**:

A 94%+ A- 90-93%

B+ 87-89% B 84-86% B- 80-83%

C+ 77-79% C 74-76% C- 70-73%

D+ 67-69% D 64-66% D- 60-63%

F 59%-

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The following information will help you better understand the criteria for graded material:

A= exceptionally thought-provoking, original, creative in both content and manner of presentation, and a skillful use of concepts and/or materials which are fully supported.

B= presents a solid understanding of the subject matter and an ability to handle the issues and materials encountered in the subject with only minor errors.

C= demonstrates an adequate understanding of the subject matter with central ideas present, but too general, repetitious and not clearly supported or integrated with evidence and details.

D= a minimally acceptable performance with a confusing central idea and lacking details. Parts of the assignment are missing and/or incomplete.

F= shows lack of effort and minimal comprehension of material with major mechanical errors, no thesis, and misuse of key concepts.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

**Course Format:**

Methods used to cover class material include lectures, films, music, slides, guest lecturers and most importantly class discussion. The lectures will be used to introduce key concepts during each week’s topic, but they will also be less formal and very participatory. Films will also be used as texts to enhance the visual and performative nature of the course material. Periodically we will split-up into smaller discussion groups to review and analyze material more thoroughly. Students will occasionally be asked to reflect on films, classroom discussions, and readings in the form of in-class response papers. In order to achieve this cooperative learning experience, readings must be done as assigned and texts as well as notes brought to class.

**W Credit:**

This course is also a W course. This means that a large majority of the work we will be doing in class will include writing, and these writing assignments will vary in focus to allow the opportunity for students to gain a broader understanding of the craft of writing. These assignments will help you become more aware of successful writing techniques as well as allow you the opportunity to engage in various writing styles. In this W course, you will learn good writing habits that go along with writing as a process. At the end of this course, you will receive both a final letter grade and a competency mark (“W” or no “W”). In order to become certified as writing competent, you must produce W quality work on at least three out of four of your paper assignments with a C- or higher grade.

**Attendance:**

Regular attendance and active class participation is required. Late arrivals will not be tolerated. Class attendance will be taken at the beginning of the period, and it is your responsibility to make sure you receive credit for your attendance if you arrive after attendance is taken. Irregular attendance and repeated late arrivals will result in the lowering of the final course grade.

**Class Preparation:**

Your class preparation is essential to your required active participation in the course. You must complete assigned readings **before** the class period for which they are assigned. You must come to class with prepared questions and comments regarding the assigned readings (see participation in course requirements). This will help ensure your active participation in class.

**Things to think about regarding the readings: What was the author’s main point/thesis? How does this relate to the class topic? What connection can you make between the reading and your own life?**

**Assignment Policy:**

It is important that students pay close attention to the details on assignments, which will be provided in handouts. Hard copy assignments must be turned in **NUMBERED AND STAPLED** (electronic copies must also have page numbers—also it is the students responsibility to make sure their assignment is properly attached to the email). All assignments are due at the beginning of the class session, unless otherwise noted. Late assignments will not be accepted without a medical excuse or otherwise documented emergency. The instructor retains the right to lower the grade on any late assignment accepted. If you must miss class on the day an assignment is due, it is your responsibility to turn the assignment in early.

**Academic Dishonesty:**

All work must be **your own**. You must give credit to **any** information and/or ideas that you use that are not your own by citing it in your work. Failing to do so will be perceived as plagiarism resulting in a zero on the assignment and possible additional penalties to be decided by the instructor. If you are unfamiliar with proper citation procedures, you should consult the W center.

**Questions???**

I encourage all of my students to take advantage of my office hours, either for questions, concerns, or just “drop-in” discussions. Please feel free to stop by Asbury Hall 219, and if the “official” hours are not convenient or you would like to ensure yourself a specific block of time, we can set up an appointment (office phone x4372 or email [acastaneda@depauw.edu](mailto:acastaneda@depauw.edu)).

**TOPICAL OUTLINE and READING SCHEDULE**

**Week 1: COURSE INTRODUCTION & EXPECTATIONS**

**August 25th**

Review course syllabus, objective, and format—lets talk about writing…

**WEEK 2: SPIRITS FROM AFRICA TO THE AMERICAS**

**August 30th**

READINGS:

* Murrell, Nathaniel Samuel. “Yoruba, Fon-Ewe, Ashanti, and Kongo Cultural History” in *Afro-Caribbean Religions*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. Pp. 13-36\*
* Dos Santos, Juana Elbein and Deoscoredes M. Dos Santos. 1984 “Religion and Black Culture” in *Africa in Latin America: Essays on History, Culture, and Socialization*. ed. Manuel Moreno Fraginals. New York: Homes & Meier Publishers. Pp.61-82\*

W Center 1:30pm—introduction to writing services (Susan Hahn)

September 1st

MEET IN ROY O BASEMENT INSTRUCTION ROOM A BRING LAPTOP

READINGS:

* Rostas, Susanna and André Droogers. 1993 “The Popular Use of Popular Religion in Latin America” pp. 1-11\*
* Herskovits, Melville. 1937 “African Gods and Catholic Saints in New World Negro Belief.” *American Anthropologist* 39, no. 4, pp. 635-643\*

Roy O. West—information on journals, reviews, and researching the African Diaspora utilizing library resources.

FILM: *Bahia: Africa in the Americas*

WEEK 3: AFRICA IN BRAZIL—Candomblé

September 6th

READINGS:

* + - * Harding, Rachel E. 2000 *A Refuge in Thunder: Candomblé and Alternative Spaces of Blackness*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. Chapters 1 and 2 pp. 1-18\*
      * Johnson, Paul Christopher, “What is Candomblé?” pp. 35-56\*
* Landes, Ruth. *The City of Women*. Introduction and pages 1-39
* DISCUSSION LEADERS

September 8th

READINGS:

* Landes, Ruth. *The City of Women*. Pages 40-92
* Tentative Guest Lecture (Hayes, Read “Wicked Women and Femmes Fatales: Gender, Power, and Pomba Gira in Brazil” History of Religions 48 no. 1 (2008) 1-21)

FILM: *Ilé Aiyé*

WEEK 4: CANDOMBLE continued…

September 13th

READINGS:

* Landes, Ruth. *The City of Women*. Pages 92-207

September 15th

READINGS:

* + - * Landes, Ruth. *The City of Women*. Pages 208-248
      * DISCUSSION LEADERS

WEEK 5: PERFORMING THE SACRED

September 20th

* + - * PAPER DUE: Review of *City of Women*
      * FILM: *Odo ya Life with Aids*

September 22nd

* + - * Matory, J. Lorand. “Tradition, Transnationalism, and Gender in the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé” in *Cultural Agency in the Americas*, Doris Sommer ed. Pp. 121-145\*
      * Scott, Anna. “It’s All in the Timing: The Latest Moves, James Brown’s Grooves,

and the Seventies Race-Consciousness Movement in Salvador, Bahia-Brazil” in

*Soul: Black Power, Politics and Pleasure*, Monique Guillroy and Richard Green

eds. Pp. 9-22\*

WEEK 6: FROM BRAZIL TO CUBA—Santería

September 27th

READINGS:

* + - * Murphy, Joseph. *Santería.* Introduction and Part 1 pp. 1-69

September 29th

READINGS:

* + - * Murphy, Joseph. *Santería.* pp. 70-103
      * DISCUSSION LEADERS

WEEK 7: SANTERIA continued…

October 4th

READINGS:

* + - * Murphy, Joseph. *Santería.* pp. 104-144
      * Hagedorn, “Resolver and Religious Tourism in Cuba”\* pp. 203-230

October 6th

MIDTERM EXAM

WEEK 8: SPIRITS ON FILM

October 11th

FILM: *Voices of the Orishas*

FILM: *Legacy of the Spirits*

October 13th

* + - * McCarthy Brown, Karen. 1991 *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn.* Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 1-78.
      * DISCUSSION LEADERS

WEEK 9: FALL BREAK (read Mama Lola)

WEEK 10: FROM VOODOO TO VODOU—African Spirits in the U.S.

October 25th

READINGS:

* + - * McCarthy Brown, Karen. 1991 *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn.* Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 79-202.
* FILM: *Haitian Pilgrimage*

October 27th

READINGS:

* + - * McCarthy Brown, Karen. 1991 *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn.* Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 203-258.
      * DISCUSSION LEADERS

WEEK 11: VODOU continued…

November 1st

READINGS:

* + - * McCarthy Brown, Karen. 1991 *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn.* Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 259-328.

FILM: *Voodoo Secrets OR Public Vodun Ceremonies in Haiti*

November 3rd

* + - * McCarthy Brown, Karen. 1991 *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn.* Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 329-401.
      * DISCUSSION LEADERS
      * RESEARCH PAPER TOPIC DUE

WEEK 12: PORTRAIT OF OGUN

November 8th

READINGS:

* + - * Barnes, Sandra T. 1997 “The Many Faces of Ogun.” In *Africa’s Ogun: Old World and New*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp. 1-28\*
      * McCarthy Brown, Karen. 1997 “Systematic Remembering, Systematic Forgetting: Ogou in Haiti.” In *Africa’s Ogun: Old World and New*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp. 65-89\*
      * Mason, John. 1997 “Ogun: Builder of the Lukumi’s House” In Sandra T. Barnes (ed.) 1989 *Africa’s Ogun: Old World and New*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp. 353-367\*
      * DISCUSSION LEADERS

November 10th Ogun Pataki

* + - * **COMPARATIVE PAPER DUE**
      * Tentative Guest Lecture (Galvin)

WEEK 13: OSUN ACROSS THE WATERS

November 15th

READINGS:

* + - * Castellanos, Isabel. 2002 “A River of Many Turns: The Polysemy of Ochún in Afro-Cuban Tradition.” In Josephy M. Murphy & Mei-Mei Sanford (eds.) 2002 *Osun across the Waters: A Yoruba Goddess in Africa and the Americas*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp. 34-45\*
      * Murphy, Joseph M. 2002 “Yéyé Cachita: Ochún in a Cuban Mirror.” In *Osun across the Waters: A Yoruba Goddess in Africa and the Americas*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp. 87-101\*
      * Behar, “Yellow marigolds for Ochún”\*
      * DISCUSSION LEADERS

November 17th Oshun Pataki

* + - * Creative writing workshop in peer groups
      * FILM: Yoruba Andabo

WEEK 14: BOTANICAS & ALTARS—sacred public space

November 22nd

READINGS:

* + - * Polk, Patrick Arthur. *Botánica Los Angeles*. Chapters 1-3 pp. 13-55
      * CREATIVE PAPER DUE

November 24th

THANKSGIVING BREAK

WEEK 15: BOTANICAS continued…

November 29th

READINGS:

* + - * Polk, Patrick Arthur. *Botánica Los Angeles*. Chapters 4-10 pp. 56-130

December 1st

SECOND EXAM

WEEK 16: Concluding thoughts and discussion on what we have learned…

December 6th

Writing Conference (bring rough draft)

December 8th

RESEARCH PAPER DUE

NOTE: The professor reserves the right to make changes to this syllabus.