

**UMBC UGC New Course Request: AFST 439, GWST 439: Women in Africa and the Diaspora**

Date Submitted: 10/12/09

Proposed Effective Date: Spring 2010

	Name	Email	Phone	Dept
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**COURSE INFORMATION:**

Course Number(s)	AFST 439, GWST 439
Formal Title	Women in Africa and the Diaspora
Transcript Title (≤24c)	Same as above
Recommended Course Preparation	
Prerequisite	AFST/GWST 100 or 200 level course, and junior or senior standing, or permission of the instructor
Credits	3
Repeatable?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes xx <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Max. Total Credits	NONE
If yes, how many total credits?	
Grading Method(s)	xx <input type="checkbox"/> Reg (A-F) <input type="checkbox"/> Audit <input type="checkbox"/> Pass-Fail

**PROPOSED CATALOG DESCRIPTION:**

This course uses the comparative approach to examine the experiences of women of African descent from the era of the trans-Atlantic slave trade to the present. It will introduce students to interdisciplinary and comparative theories and materials that will enable them to explore the economic, cultural, social and political roles of women in Africa and African descended women in the United States. Using comparative gender analysis as its theoretical focus with a global perspective, the course emphasizes the diverse, shared historical experiences of women of African descent as enslaved persons, colonial subjects and victims of all forms of oppression as well as agents of social change. Examined as well are their roles in society as mothers, daughters, wives and workers along with their participation in social and political movements since the abolition era. The course also highlights how such other social indexes as class, race, ethnic, national and religious backgrounds affect women's lives and roles in society. Problems and issues that directly affect them and how to improve their status in the face of increased globalization will be explored.

**RATIONALE FOR NEW COURSE:**

This course has been successfully taught as a topics course and we want to make it a permanent offering to provide more and diverse course offerings to students at the senior level. The course is designed to provide an understanding of the complex lives of women of African descent and their diverse contributions to the shaping of the history of Africa and the African diasporic community of the United States of America from the era of the trans-Atlantic slave trade to the present. It provides a global perspective on women's lived experiences and the dynamics of gender relations in different societies. Through lectures, readings, book reviews, written essays, documentary videos and class discussion, students will be challenged to the interdisciplinary and comparative tools necessary for the interpretation and analysis of women's roles and gender relations in Africa and the United States. In addition, students will be challenged to evaluate and compare the experiences of African-descended women with their counterparts in other parts of the world.

The course will primarily serve AFST and GWST majors, but may be of interest to non-majors in the social sciences and humanities. This course will be taught every 1 or 2 years as need demands. As with other topics courses of this nature with substantial reading and writing, the university has designated this 400-level course.

**ATTACH COURSE OUTLINE (mandatory):**

**UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, BALTIMORE COUNTY**

**AFRICANA STUDIES DEPARTMENT**

**AFST 439/GWST 439: Women in Africa and the Diaspora**

**Spring 2010**

**3 Credits**

**Course Description**

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**Course Rationale**

The course is designed to provide an understanding of the complex lives of women of African descent and their diverse contributions to the shaping of the history of Africa and the African diasporic community of the United States of America from the era of the trans-Atlantic slave trade to the present. It provides a global perspective on women's lived experiences and the dynamics of gender relations in different societies. Through lectures, readings, book reviews, written essays, documentary videos and class discussion, students will be challenged to the interdisciplinary and comparative tools necessary for the interpretation and analysis of women's roles and gender relations in Africa and the United States. In addition, students will be challenged to evaluate and compare the experiences of African-descended women with their counterparts in other parts of the world.

**Course Competencies and Outcomes**

Upon completion of this course, a diligent student will be able to:

1. Discuss various theoretical questions and methodological paradigms concerning the study of women and gender in Africa and the Diaspora.
2. Critically reexamine certain "traditional" ideas and assumptions about women and men in society that have been characterized by patterns of gender and racial stereotyping.
3. Engage in critical comparative examination of the diverse, shared historical experiences of African and African descended women as enslaved persons, colonial subjects, victims of oppressive conditions as well as agents of social change.
4. Comparatively analyze how their diverse environmental and other forces have helped to shape their roles as mothers, daughters, wives and workers.
5. Articulate major obstacles facing them and suggest how to improve their status in society.
6. Formulate a historical research question and an explanatory thesis on any aspects of the historical experiences of African women in the continent and their counterparts in the United States.

7. Demonstrate evidence of enhanced critical and analytical reading and writing skills through the analysis and synthesis of the course materials for oral discussion and written examinations.

## Course Policies and Requirements

### ■ Class Attendance Policy

- Class attendance is required and expected. Any student with more than **THREE unexcused absences** will likely get a poor grade in this course. I will be passing around a sign-in sheet each day—it is YOUR responsibility to make sure you sign in, especially if you arrive late.
- Lateness to classes will not be tolerated.
- There will be no make-up assignments or exams, and no late submission of papers will be accepted except in rare circumstances and at the discretion of the professor. In such occasions, documentary evidence will be required, and make-ups must be scheduled before papers are returned to the class (normally the next class meeting). Do not wait until the end of the semester. There will be no incomplete grades unless in **extreme circumstances**.

### ■ Academic Conduct and Integrity Policy

- You are expected to abide by the University policies on academic honesty and integrity as given in the *UMBC Student Handbook*. Violations of these policies will not be tolerated and are subject to severe sanctions.

### ■ Students with Disabilities

- Efforts will be made to accommodate students with disabilities who have been diagnosed as having physical or mental limitations and require special needs. In addition to contacting the Learning Resources Center at 410-455-2444, such students should let me know at the beginning of the semester if there are things I can do to make it easier for them.
- It is your responsibility and in your interests to regularly check your university email accounts for course-related information.

## Class Evaluation and Grades

1. Students are considered participants and producers of knowledge in this course. Hence, class preparation and participation will account for **5% bonus points**. This will be determined during lectures, discussions and class activities. To facilitate active participation, each student is required to submit a **two-page analytical summary** of salient issues raised in the assigned readings with **3-4 questions** that capture them. A **5-minute oral presentation** will be given to each student for this purpose. Always produce two copies: submit one to me and keep the other for your presentation. **(20%)**. You are encouraged to read beyond the assigned texts.
2. To further facilitate understanding of issues discussed in this course, audiovisual materials will be used. Students are expected to watch the documentary videos, jot down notes, and participate in the discussion that will follow after each of the videos. Watching and participation in video discussions is graded **5%**.
3. You are required to review two books, each carrying **10% (totaling 20%)**
  - a. Review in **not more than three pages, double-spaced**, the novel by Buchi Emecheta, *The Slave Girl*, focusing on the ambiguity of enslavement, class, and gender relations in the African society that is captured in the novel. Explain the impact of Western presence on the main characters and their society. The review is due in class on **February TBA**.
  - b. Also read and critically review in not more than **four pages, double-spaced**, the book: *African Women's Movements: Changing Political Landscapes*. In your review, pay attention to the following questions: In what ways have African women demonstrated their new engagement with politics? What factors were responsible for their increased visibility and transformative leadership in politics and policymaking? How have they fared in this endeavor? That is, what are the gains made and

obstacles to be tackled? In what ways do you think the book contributes to the discourse on and the study of gender politics? What are its strengths and weaknesses? The review is due in class on **April TBA**

4. There will be **one debate on the practice of female circumcision** in some African societies. In addition to showing the class a documentary on female circumcision, you are required to do some research in preparation for the debate. The class will be divided into two opposing groups: **While Group 1 will argue in support of the practice as presented by the African practitioners, Group 2 will oppose the practice.** This exercise carries **5%**
5. You are required to **write a 15- to 20-page individual research paper** that will be based on any topic of your interest that relates to African women and African descended women in the United States. This will carry **25%**
  - a. Submit a **two-page abstract** of paper including research question, a preliminary thesis statement, significance of study and not less than **six published references** relevant to your topic (only books and journal articles) and confirm approval with me. Remember to include the title of your research paper. This exercise will carry **5%** and is due on **February 26**.
  - b. You are required to **peer review one another's papers**, assess the strengths and weaknesses of such papers and offer constructive criticism. Every student is required to send me a draft hard copy of his/her paper and share the same to the entire class via email attachment on **April TBA**. Only students who meet this requirement will participate in the peer review. Each of the reviewers must submit to me **a copy** of their comments on the papers reviewed on the day of presentation on **April TBA**. This carries **5%**
  - c. There will be a **10-minute class presentation** of final paper, focusing on your research findings, scope, argument, significance and difficulties encountered. Due on **May TBA (5%)**
  - d. Submission of revised copy of final paper at **10.30 AM - 12.30 PM on May TBA. (10%)**
6. There will be a take-home exam toward the end of the semester, which will carry **25%**. The exam questions, which will be distributed at **least four days** before the submission date, will definitely reflect knowledge and skills you are expected to acquire from the entire course. Submission of exam papers is on **May TBA**.
7. You are required to submit hard copies of all papers on their due dates.
8. **Grading Criteria for Written Papers**

**Adherence to the questions asked and the instructions given is a key to writing successful papers. It is equally important that you pay serious attention to the following components of a solid essay/paper:**

- a. **Content:** A clear argument/thesis in the first paragraph or two; develop the argument into paragraphs with supporting points (from lectures, audiovisual materials, readings, class presentations and discussions ); link specific points chronologically and/or thematically; be very clear when you are making your own specific points and distinguish them from supportive/contrasting views from others. **Originality and critical thinking and analysis** will be rewarded. **(50%)**
- b. **Organization:** A good paper/essay starts with a clear introductory paragraph where you state your thesis or argument and the overview of the content; support your thesis with points/themes developed in paragraphs where each paragraph should have at least three to four sentences; a conclusion in a paragraph, tying together the points made earlier. **(20%)**
- c. **Writing Style:** Correct sentence structure, with a noun or a verb; avoid long sentences to reduce the risk of wrong tenses; correct spelling; it's advisable to do spell-check and go over the essay again; appropriate

punctuation; appropriate verb tense, past/present, and not past and present; singular/plural nouns to correspond with the verbs. (15%)

- d. Documentation:** To avoid any charge of plagiarism, you must acknowledge authors you used their ideas and sentences through footnotes or endnotes, with page citations; References at the end organized in alphabetical order of the authors' last names; distinguish between books, journal/magazine/newspaper articles, and unpublished works; it's not advisable to use internet sources except in such cases as online journals, country-website, institutional or associations and other related web sites; always provide full information of your citations (such as author's name, title, publication/ accessing dates and full site address). It is important you use *The Chicago Manual of Style* for your documentations. Consult our library resources for assistance on how to use this style. (15%)

Another important tip to a very good paper is editing. Read and proofread your paper as many times as possible. Ask someone to go through the paper for you.

- 9. All papers must be typed, double-spaced, number 12 Times New Roman Font, 1" margin all around and printed with black ink.**

### Assessment and Grade Breakdown

Analytical summaries of required reading	20%
Video discussions	5%
Two book reviews	20%
Participation in group debate	5%
Individual Research paper with component	
Activities (abstract, peer review, presentation)	25%
Take-home Examination	25%

### Grading System

- A = 90 – 100%
- B = 80 – 89%
- C = 70 – 79
- D = 60 – 69
- F = below 60%

I do not curve the grading scale either up or down. Grades are earned by the student, and are non-negotiable. I do not give students grades they have not earned.

### Required Texts

- Rosalyn Terborg-Penn & Andrea B. Rushing, eds. *Women in Africa and the African Diaspora: A Reader* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1996)
- Aili Mari Tripp & others, *African Women's Movements: Changing Political Landscapes* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009)
- Pamela E. Brooks, *Boycotts, Buses, and Passes: Black Women's Resistance in the U.S. South and South Africa* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008)
- Buchi Emecheta, *The Slave Girl* (A novel) (New York: George Braziller, 1977)

### Recommended Texts

- Marie Griffith & Barbara D. Savage, eds. *Women and Religion in the African Diaspora: Knowledge, Power, and Performance* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006)
- Andrea Cornwall, ed. *Readings in Gender in Africa* (Oxford: James Currey Ltd., 2005)
- Davis W. Houck and David E. Dixon, eds., *Women and the Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1965* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2009)

Duchess Harris, *Black Feminist Politics from Kennedy to Clinton* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009)

### **General Texts**

Stephanie Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women & Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004)

Clenora Hudson-Weems, *Africana Womanist Literary Theory* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2004)

Filomina Chioma Steady, ed. *Black Women, Globalization and Economic Justice* (Rochester, VT: Schenkman Books, 2002)

W. O. Maloba, *African Women in Revolution* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2007)

Meredeth Turshen, ed. *African Women's Health* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2000)

\_\_\_\_\_. *Women and Health in Africa* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1991)

Obioma Nnaemeka, ed. *Sisterhood, Feminisms and Power: From Africa to the Diaspora* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1998)

Darlene Clark Hine & Kathleen Thompson, eds. *A Shining Thread of Hope: The History of Black Women in America* (New York: Broadway Books, 1998)

LaVerne McCain Gill, *African American Women in Congress: Forming and Transforming History* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997)

Claire C. Robertson & Martin Klein, eds. *Women and Slavery in Africa* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1997)

David Barry Gaspar & Darlene Clark Hine, eds. *More than Chattel: Black Women and Slavery in the Americas* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996)

Gloria Thomas-Emeagwali, ed. *Women Pay the Price: Structural Adjustment in Africa and the Caribbean* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1995)

Stanlie M. James & Abena P. Busia, eds. *Theorizing Black Feminisms: The Visionary Pragmatism of Black Women* (London: Routledge, 1993)

Vicki L. Crawford & Others, eds. *Women in the Civil Rights Movement: Trailblazers and Torchbearers, 1941-1965* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1993)

## **CLASS SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNED READINGS**

### **Weeks 1- 2: Introductory Class: Theoretical and Methodological Framework**

- What do we know about African and African descended women in the continent and the diaspora? How do we know it?
- Images and perceptions of “Black” women
- **Theoretical and Methodological Framework**

### **Weeks 3-4: Women and Slavery in Africa and the Diaspora**

- Conditions of servitude
- Survival strategies

**February TBA: Review of *The Slave Girl* due in class**

### **Weeks 5-6: Women and Religion in Africa & the Diaspora**

- Indigenous Religions, Islam, Christianity & African-Initiated Religious Movements
- Living in a multi-religious society

**February TBA: Submission of Research Abstract with six references.**

## **Week 8: Spring Break**

### **Weeks 7 & 9: Women in Nationalist and Civil Rights Movements**

- Anti-colonial movements in Africa & Civil Rights Movements in the US
- **Documentary Video: “Mama Awethu”**
- **Documentary Video: “Freedom Bags”**

### **Weeks 10-11: Women in the Economy and Globalization**

### **Weeks 11-12: Women in Politics and Policymaking**

- **Book review of *African Women’s Movements* on April TBA**
- Lecture on African American Women in Politics
- **Documentary video: “Shirley Chisom’72: Unbought and Unbossed”**

**April TBA: Drafts of research papers due** in class and for distribution to peer reviewers

### **Weeks 13-14: Women, Wars and Oppressive Conditions**

- In combats; victims of violent acts, as refugees
- **Documentary Video: “To Serve My Country, To Serve My Race”**
- **Documentary video: “Flame”**

**April TBA: Peer Review Presentation**

### **Week 15: Women and Health Issues**

- Reproductive health; HIV/AIDS and others
- **Documentary on Female Circumcision: “Fighting Femininity: Fight against Female Circumcision”**
- **Group Debate on Female Circumcision**
- **Group I:** Argue in support of the practice, making a case for the practitioners
- **Group 2:** Argue in opposition to the practice

**May TBA: Distribution of take-home exam questions**

**Week 16: Presentation of Research Papers and last day of class**

October 12, 2009

TO: Undergraduate Council:

FROM: Carole McCann, Director  
Gender and Women's Studies

RE: New Course Request GWST 439

I am writing to give enthusiastic support for approval of the new course proposed by Dr. Gloria Chuku and Africana Studies, AFST/GWST 439: Women in Africa and the Diaspora. The GWST Coordinating Committee has reviewed the course and unanimously endorsed its approval. GWST supports the request for the course to be cross-listed between GWST and AFST. Dr. Chuku has developed a course syllabus that very effectively incorporates a rich array of the scholarship on gender analysis by and about African feminist scholars. The course will add a substantially to the curricular offerings in Gender and Women's Studies and will help the Program to meet its goal of providing students with more opportunities to explore gender issues in global context.