

Art History 28. UCLA Department of Art History, Fall Quarter 2015.

Introduction to the Arts of Africa

Instructor:

Steven Nelson, Dodd 212C, 310-825-2322, email: nelsons@humnet.ucla.edu.

Office Hours: Tuesday, 10:00 am – Noon, and by appointment.

Meetings: MW, 11:00 am – 12:15 pm, Dodd 147.

Course Description:

This course is an introduction to the rich art and architectural history of the African continent, seeking at once to provide an overview of key themes in the arts and architecture of Africa as well as to discuss in a critical fashion what these forms reveal about social and cultural concerns more generally. Among the topics that the class will explore this quarter include: myths of African art, the articulation of royal power, art and religion, art and didacticism, the interplay of art and architectural media, as well as connections between the African continent and the wider world. Quite simply, this course explores a wide range of “Africas.”

Course lectures are arranged both thematically and geographically. As the quarter progresses students will notice that similar issues are underscored at different periods in African histories and in different places on the continent. Such an approach uses visual and architectural production to dismantle preconceived notions of Africa and Africans, showing that the continent is neither a single, unified entity (or a single country for that matter) nor a hodgepodge of small-scale, isolated, timeless societies.

Course assignments are designed so that students will improve their written and analytical skills as well as their visual acuity while learning more about the arts and architecture of Africa.

Course Requirements:

1. Class attendance, and completion of weekly readings.
2. Discussion Section attendance and participation.
3. A formal analysis (2-3 typewritten, double-spaced pages and sketch) of a work of African art on display at the UCLA Fowler exhibition *Intersections: World Arts, Local Lives*.
Due Monday, October 12 (students are to submit papers to turnitin.com and bring a hard copy to class).
4. 1-hour Midterm Examination. **Monday, October 26.**
Format: quick map identifications, quick image identifications, image comparisons.
5. A paper (6-8 typewritten, double-spaced pages). The specifics of this assignment will be determined by your TA.
Due Monday, November 16 (students are to submit papers to turnitin.com and bring a hard copy to class).

6. 2-hour Final Examination. Thursday, December 10, 3:00 pm – 6:00 pm, Dodd 147.

Format: quick map identifications, quick image identifications, image comparisons, and essay.

Grading:

Discussion section attendance and participation: 20%

Formal Analysis: 10%

Midterm Examination: 20%

Longer Writing Assignment: 25%

Final Examination: 25%

NOTE: Please make a note of the above dates and plan accordingly. Late assignments will be accepted only in the case of documented illness or emergency. Writing assignments will not be accepted by email. Midterm and Final Examinations can only be made up in the case of documented illness or emergency.

Readings:

All course readings are either in the required texts or linked to the course website. Textbooks are available for purchase at the UCLA Bookstore and beyond. They are also on reserve at the Arts Library (Public Policy Building, 1st floor). We expect that you will have your reading for the week completed by Monday's lecture. For example, the reading for the week of October 5 should be completed by October 5.

Required Books:

Suzanne Preston Blier, *The Royal Arts of Africa: The Majesty of Form* (London: Lawrence King Publishing, 2012). There is also 1998 edition of this book. You may purchase either of them.

Robert Farris Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit* (New York: Vintage, 1984).

Course Website:

<https://ccle.ucla.edu/course/view/15F-ARTHIS28-1>

Week of September 28: Introduction to the Issues/Benin

Required Reading:

Blier, 11-77.

Paula Girshick Ben-Amos, "Art, History, and Politics," *The Art of Benin*, rev. ed. (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1995), 20-63.

Week of October 5: Yoruba/Fon

Required Reading:

Blier, 79-123.

Thompson, 3-99.

Week of October 12: Akan

Hard copy of Formal Analysis due Monday, October 12 in class. You are also to submit an electronic copy (without the sketch) on turnitin.com.

Required Reading:

Blier, 125-163.

Doran H. Ross, "The Verbal Art of Akan Linguist Staffs," *African Arts* 16:1 (Nov., 1982): 56-67+95-96. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3335937>

Tobias Wendl, "Entangled Traditions: Photography and the History of Media in Southern Ghana," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 39 (Spring 2001): 78-101.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20167524>

Week of October 19: Cameroon Grassfields

No Class Monday, October 19 (SDN out of town).

Required Reading:

Blier, 165-199.

Christraud Geary, "A Myth Comes to Life: King Njoya in Photographs," *Images from Bamum: German Colonial Photography in the Court of King Njoya, Cameroon, West Africa, 1902-1915* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1988), 47-61.

Steven Nelson, "Collection and Context in a Cameroonian Village," *Museums International*, no. 235 (September 2007): 22-30.

Week of October 26: Cross River

In-class Midterm Examination Monday, October 26.

Required Reading:

Thompson, 227-268.

Keith Nicklin and Jill Salmons, "Cross River Art Styles," *African Arts*, 18:1 (Nov., 1984): 28-43; 93-94. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3336095>

Week of November 2: Bamana/Senufo

Required Reading:

Jean Paul Colley, excerpts from *Bamana* (Milan: 5 Continents Editions, 2009), 6-21, 32-46.

Patrick R. MacNaughton, excerpt from *Secret Sculptures of Komo: Art and Power in Bamana (Bambara) initiation Associations* (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1979), 23-28.

Anja Veirman, "The Art of Living: Some Aspects of the Art and Culture of the Senufo," *Forms of Wonderment: The History and Collection of the Afrika Museum, Berg en Dal*, edited by Jan-Lodewijk Grootaers and Ineke Eisenburger (Berg en Dal: Afrika Museum, 2002), 108-131.

Week of November 9: Eastern Congo Basin: Luba/Pende

No Class Wednesday, November 11: Veterans Day Holiday

Required Reading:

Mary Nooter Roberts & Allen F. Roberts, excerpts from *Luba* (Milan: 5 Continents Editions, 2007), 7-41.

Z.S. Strother, excerpts from *Pende* (Milan: 5 Continents Editions, 2008), 7-28.

Week of November 16: Christianity and Islam

Hard Copy of the Second Writing Project due Monday, November 16 in class. You are also to submit an electronic copy on turnitin.com.

Required Reading:

Girma Kidane and Elisabeth-Dorothea Hecht, "Ethiopia's Rock-Hewn Churches of Lalibela," *Ambio*, vol. 12, no. 3/4 (1983): 210-212. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4312914>

Marilyn Heldman, "Maryam Seyon: Mary of Zion," *African Zion: The Sacred Art of Ethiopia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 71-100.

Mark Horton, "East Africa," *The Mosque*, Martin Frishman and Hasan-Uddin Khan, eds. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994), 194-207.

Labelle Prussin, "Sub-Saharan West Africa," *The Mosque*, 181-193.

Week of November 23: Central Africa: Kongo/Kuba

Required Reading:

Blier, 201-248.

Thompson, 101-159.

Cécile Fromont, "Dance, Image, Myth, and Conversion in the Kingdom of Kongo, 1500-1800," *African Arts*, vol. 44, no. 4 (Winter 2011): 52-63.

Week of November 30: "Modern" and "Contemporary" Formations

Required Reading:

Okwui Enwezor, "The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa, 1945-1994," Okwui Enwezor, ed., *The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa, 1945-1994* (Munich, Prestel: 2001), 10-16.

Okwui Enwezor and Chika Okeke-Agulu, *Contemporary African Art Since 1980* (Bologna: Damiani, 2009), Chapters 1-3, 10-27.

Chika Okeke, "Modern African Art," in *Short Century*, 29-36.