

Art History 2930 Introduction to African Art
Syllabus (Important—keep this with you and check it often!)
Robin Poynor, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus
(You can call me Dr. Poynor or Professor Poynor.)

University of Florida, Spring Semester, January 7–May 2, 2019 (3 credits)
 Monday Periods 3–4 (9:35–11:30) and Wednesday Period 4 (10:40–11:30) in FAC 201
 Final exam: Friday, December 14, 12:30–2:30 pm (in classroom)
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 Office: Fine Arts C 125 Office hours: Wednesdays Periods 3 (9:35 – 10:30) & 6 (12:50-1:40) or by appointment

Course Description (What the class is about!)

This course introduces the art and architecture of Africa, beginning some 8,000 years ago and continuing into the 1990s. We will begin with an overview of Ancient Peoples and Sacred Sites in Africa (8,000 BCE – 800 CE). We then follow with consideration of African Art and World Religions (450 – 1450). African Art and Global Trade (1450 – 1860) is the third section. Then we will look at Africa, Colonialism and the Modern World (1860 – 1957). Lastly, we will consider The Art of African Nations (1957 – 1994). The first evidence of an aesthetic impulse is about 75,000 years ago at Blombos Cave in South Africa. We will end the course by considering contemporary art coming into the 21st Century. Thus, we will investigate a span of art-making longer than any you have looked at so far. Our exploration will look at art forms that developed on the continent as well as those that were inspired from outside sources.

Expected Learning Outcomes (What I want you to get out of this class.)

Students will:

- Recall the geography and cultural characteristics of Africa as a continent.
- Apply art historical methods to describe, compare, and analyze works of African art orally and in writing, independently and in groups.
- Memorize the identifying information for selected works covered on exams.
- Identify the major features of ancient, traditional, colonial, and modern/contemporary African art.
- Be able to read scholarly analyses of this art and summarize them in their own words.

Required Materials:

- A new survey text will be on the market soon. The chapters that deal with Africa are written by Monica Blackmun Visonà, who has arranged for us to use those chapters by PDF. (I will provide the PDF files by email.)
- PowerPoint files of each lecture will be on reserve in the AFA Library.

Requirements (What you need to do to get a good grade!)

All students must:

- (1) attend class, including the class meetings at the Harn Museum of Art and other locations
- (2) do the assigned readings in advance of the class for which they are assigned and be prepared to respond or question
- (3) participate in discussion and group activities
- (4) visit the professor's office hours early to choose an object for your Harn paper (See below.)
- (5) visit the Harn Museum of Art on your own and write a short visual analysis of a work in the African exhibition (See below.)
- (6) write a 3 to 4-page paper on a work by an African artist currently on the display at the Harn Museum of Art (This may be from the African Gallery or the Contemporary Gallery.) (See below.)
- (7) take the in-class weekly quizzes, midterm, map quiz, and final examination. The midterm and final will consist of object identification, discussion of terms, short essays. Study images will be available as PowerPoint in AFA Reserve. Keep up with reviews consistently!

Grade Breakdown (So you know what to prioritize.)

Class attendance: 10%

Class participation: 10%

Office hours visit: 5%

Visual analysis of work in African exhibition: 10% (see below)

Weekly quizzes: 10%

Midterm examination: 10%

Map quiz: 5%

Harn piece paper: 20% (See below.)

Final examination: 20%

Attendance, Makeup, and Class Conduct Policies (Where I lay down the line...)

Because the lectures synthesize the text assignments but present additional information, it is vital that students attend class. The lectures will also provide images of many works that are not in the readings. Class is also a place for active learning—there will be

discussion, short writing activities, group activities and quizzes. Absences for exams and late papers will require documentation, i.e. a doctor's note, in order to be excused. Unexcused absences count against both the attendance and participation grades and are reflected in the final grade. Students who do not complete requirements 5–7(see above!) will fail the course. Written assignments should be completed as Word documents, printed, and turned in as instructed in class. Assignments are due at 9:00 am on the due dates. Students should arrive to class on time and ready to speak and should refrain from eating in class. Laptops should NOT be used for taking notes and can only be used to consult readings in electronic format or as instructed for group activities. During lectures all electronics should be stowed, and notes should be taken on paper. (No texting! No TV watching! No sleeping!) Students are encouraged to bring hard copies of the class readings to the appropriate class sessions. A 10-minute break will be given halfway through the long class period. Details of this syllabus are subject to change as needed. Other important information is at the end of this document in the Appendix.

Visual Analysis Paper (What is expected)

Choose an object from the Harn Museum. It may be in the African Gallery or an African piece in the Contemporary Gallery. The writing will be yours! (If more than one student writes on the same object, I will compare and determine what has happened in the analysis.) An analysis paper addresses the object itself, not the meaning or history or context. Be sure to address how you see the formal elements, the material, the size, the structure. How would you describe the composition? What do you perceive as the subject matter? Discuss how the formal elements have been used by the artist to create the object. You might consult Sylvan Barnet, Short Guide to Writing about Art. (It is in the AFA Library, or an online PDF is here:

<https://macaulay.cuny.edu/eportfolios/uchizon12/files/2012/09/Barnet-9th-Edition.pdf>). Another possible reference to look at for thinking about how to approach the assignment is this website: <https://owlcation.com/humanities/How-to-Write-a-Visual-Analysis-Paper> .

Harn piece paper: (How to approach the object and research)

You must choose an object on display at the Harn Museum that is not being written about by another member of the class. In order to do this, you must reserve your object with me by visiting me during office hours or by appointment. Be sure to select an object early so that you will have a good choice. It might also be wise to check with me at another time to discuss resource materials. Your paper should include a thesis statement that addresses the purpose of the object. Parts of the paper should include a visual analysis, a comparison to similar works that have been published in appropriate academic journals or appropriate web sites, and a discussion of the purpose of the object in the culture for which it was created. See if you can come up with a distinctive approach to writing your paper. In other words, have a point to make!

Quizzes: (Slay up-to-date)

Each week a short quiz will be given. These cannot be made-up, so be sure to be in class and on time. They will be given the first few minutes of class. They may involve identifying objects from previous lectures, discussing terminology, locating something on a map, comparing ideas or objects in a very short essay, etc.

Midterm and Final: (What to expect)

Identification of objects, discussion of terms, essays. Essays might involve discussing historical connections, development of style, purposes of art, comparisons of objects or any other topic pertinent to topics presented in the text or in class. Keep up, since dealing with the huge amount of information we will have covered cannot be mastered just before an exam. PowerPoints from class are on reserve in AFA. Take notes in class! Review PowerPoints on reserve regularly while class is fresh in your mind. If you need to, ask questions as they arise soon after reviewing. Always think in terms of comparisons. For example, how would our discussions of early Christian forms relate to forms discussed later when looking at the introduction of Islam. How would forms discussed in one section relate to those introduced in another section? Do not consider each lecture topic as a closed issue – think broadly and inclusively.

Studying: (Do you study better alone or in a group?)

I'd be happy to facilitate the organizing of study groups. Some find bouncing ideas off others clarifies information in their own minds and that another member of the class might introduce a topic that one has not focused on. Let me know if you'd like a group, and we'll see about getting you together.

Course Evaluation (Where you get to say how much you loved the class... or not)

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations on GatorRater at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu> . Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/> .

Communication (Email or call me! And use your ufl address.)

The principal form of communication for this course is email, using students' @ufl.edu addresses. Students should be sure to check their UF email often and use it to communicate with the professor, rpoynor@ufl.edu. (Note the spelling of Poynor.) Emails will be responded to within 48 hours. If you cannot come to office hours but would like to speak to the professor, feel free to call him at 352-213-5056. If you do, please identify yourself distinctly as a member of the class and then address your topic. Otherwise ask for an appointment to meet in person.

SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS

(Important! Check this at least weekly and add dates to your calendar.)

Month	Date	Topic	Assigned reading	Week
January	7 - 1		Ancient Peoples and Sacred Sites in Africa (8,000 BCE – 800 CE)	Week 1
	7 - 2			
	9	quiz	Read through "Rivers in an Age of Iron"	
	14-1			Week 2
	14-2			
	16	quiz	Read through end of section 1	
	21	Holiday		Week 3
	23		African Art and World Religions (450 – 1450)	
	28-1		Read through "Churches in the Rock"	Week 4
	28-2			
	30	quiz	Read through "Great Zimbabwe"	
February	4-1			Week 5
	4-2			
	6	quiz	Read through "The Rihla of Ibn Battuta"	
	11-1			Week 6
	11-2			
	13	quiz	Read through "Yoruba Cosmologies"	
	18-1			Week 7
	18-2			
	20	quiz	Review all readings to date and all lecture notes and PowerPoint files	
	25-1			Week 8
	25-2			
	27	Midterm	On sections 1 and 2	
March	2-9		SPRING BREAK	
	11-1		Read up to "Art as History for Asante and Kuba."	Week 9
	11-2			
	13		Read through end of chapter on African Art and Global Trade.	
	18-1			Week 10
	18-2			
	20		Read up to "Art, Architecture, and Colonial Expositions."	
	25-1			Week 11
	25-2			
	27		Read through entire chapter "Africa, Colonialism and the Modern World."	
April	1-1			Week 12
	1-2			
	3		Read up to "Spirit of Independence (1960s)."	
	8-1			Week 13
	8-2			
	10		Read up to "Gender Roles and Appropriation (1970s – 1980s)."	
	15-1			Week 14
	15-2			

	17		Read through rest of "Art of African Nations (1957-1994)."	
	22-1			Week 15
	22-2			
	24		Review all readings to date and all lecture notes and PowerPoint files	
May	2	EXAM	5/2/2019 @ 3:00 PM - 5:00 PM in FAC 201	

Appendix

Grading Scale

Grades are tabulated on a 100-point scale and a letter grade is assigned as follows:

94–100 A	74–76 C
90–93 A-	70–73 C-
87–89 B+	67–69 D+
84–86 B	64–66 D
80–83 B-	60–63 D-
77–79 C+	59 and below F

If you have questions about how grade points are assigned by the University, go to:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

Academic Honesty

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." The Honor Code (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor.

Students with Disabilities

I will make every attempt to accommodate students with disabilities. At the same time, anyone requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide you with the necessary documentation, which you must then provide to me when requesting accommodation. Please make your request at least one week before the needed accommodation.

University Counseling & Wellness Center

3190 Radio Road P.O. Box 112662

University of Florida

Gainesville, FL 32611-4100

Phone 352-392-1575

Web: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/>