



**The University of Western Ontario**  
**HISTORY 4607**  
**History of Women and Gender Relations in Africa**  
**Fall/Winter 2019-20**  
**Wednesday 4:30-7:30, Stevenson 3101**

**Instructor: Prof. Katherine McKenna**

Office Hours: Monday 2-3 pm Lawson 3246 and Wednesday 2-3 pm Lawson 1204 or by  
appointment

Department of History, Office: Lawson Hall 1204

Email: kmckenna@uwo.ca

---

**Course Description:**

In the past African women were powerful leaders, strong economic contributors and respected members of their extended families. This course will examine these historical roles as well as factors that undermined African women's status and changed gender relations, such as slavery, economic forces and colonialism.

***Prerequisite(s):***

2.0 courses in History or Women's Studies, taken at the 2200 level or above if they are History courses or at the 2000 level or above if they are Women's Studies courses.

This course counts as a History credit in the International Relations module.

Unless you have either the prerequisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. The decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

***Antirequisite(s):***

Women's Studies 4607F/G.

**Course Syllabus:**

Women in Africa today are exceedingly diverse and accomplished, despite the negative news we read every day about violence, disease and poverty. Even those who recognize this often assume that women's growing influence in African societies is a recent development due to the influence of modern liberal values. Contrary to this, in the past African women were not the victims of male domination, but held powerful leadership roles, were strong economic contributors and respected members of their extended families. African feminists today draw upon these traditions as a source of empowerment. This course will examine African women's roles in the past as well as factors that undermined their status and changed gender relations such as slavery, economic forces and colonialism.

## Course Objectives

- Develop a knowledge of how gender is an important factor in understanding history
- Learn about the variety of sources that allow us to reconstruct a history that was not always present in official written records such as linguistics, oral history, archaeology, anthropology and material history
- Examine the variety of important roles that African women fulfilled in the past
- Trace the shifts that occurred over time that changed gender relations and undermined women's roles such as slavery, economic forces and colonialism
- Come to an understanding of how their traditions have empowered African women today

## Course Materials:

All course information and readings will be posted on the course website at <https://owl.uwo.ca/portal>

## Methods of Evaluation:

This course will be conducted as a seminar. Readings will be assigned every week and students will be expected to come prepared to discuss them. Class participation grade will be assessed on the basis of attendance and demonstrated engagement with the assigned reading. Each student will be required to give an introduction to course reading for one class which will raise questions for discussion. The following week, they will be required to submit a paper based on all the reading for the class (5-6 pages). The major assignment in this course will be a research paper on a topic dealing with an aspect of the history of women and gender in Africa. Students are required to discuss this with the professor before the essay proposal is due in week 8 of the course. This will consist of one or two paragraphs describing the topic and the approach or thesis the student plans to present, plus an annotated bibliography of 8-10 scholarly sources that will be used. The proposal should be 6-7 pages. The final essay will be due in the last class and will be 12-15 pages long. Students will be required to submit this paper to turnitin.

## Mark Breakdown:

Class Participation	15%
Class Presentation	10% (dates will be determined in the first class)
Class Reading Essay	20% (due the week after your class presentation)
Research Essay Proposal	20% (due October 30)
Research Essay	35% (due December 4)

## Course Schedule and Readings:

Subject to revision by September 2019 with possible updates from recent publications.

## **1. September 11 Introduction**

Reading:

Kelly Askew. "Unmoja: No Men Allowed Dr. By Elizabeth Tadic (review)." *African Studies Review*. 57, No. 3, (2014) 271-273.

Video: Umoja: No Men Allowed

Background Reading:

Cheryl Johnson-Odim. "Women and Gender in the History of Sub-Saharan Africa." in Bonnie G. Smith, ed. *Women's History on Global Perspective Vol. 3*. (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005) 9-67.

### **Pre-Colonial History:**

## **2. September 18 Pre-history: Gender Roles and Matriarchy**

Reading:

Ifi Amadiume. *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society*. (London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1989) 13-23.

Wairimu Ngaruiya Njambi and William E. O'Brien. "Revisiting 'Woman-Woman Marriage': Notes on Gikuyu Women." in Oyeronke Oyewumi, ed. *African Gender Studies: A Reader*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) 145-65.

Oyeronke Oyewumi. "Reconstituting the Cosmology and Sociocultural Institutions of Oye-Yoruba: Articulating the Yoruba World-Sense." in Oyewumi, ed. 98-119.

Christine Saidi. *Women's Authority and Society in Early East-Central Africa*. (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press 2010) 1-22.

## **3. September 25 Women's Spiritual Roles and the Importance of Motherhood**

Reading:

Dorothy L. Hodgson. *The Church of Women: Gendered Encounters Between Maasai and Missionaries*. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005) 19-40, 66-7.

Balogun Abiodun Oladele. "Yoruba-African Understanding of Authentic Motherhood." in Toyin Falola and S.U. Fwatshak, eds. *Beyond Tradition: African Women in Cultural and Political Spaces*. (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2011) 17-28.

Todd Sanders. *Beyond Bodies: Rainmaking and Sense Making in Tanzania*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008) ix-xvi; 139-159.

Jan Bender Shetler. "The Gendered Spaces of Historical Knowledge: Women's Knowledge and Extraordinary Women in the Serengeti District, Tanzania." *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*. 36, No. 2 (2003) 283-307.

#### **4. October 2 Women of Power: Queens, Queen Mothers and Female Warriors**

Reading:

Sa'ad Abubakr. "Queen Amina of Zaria." in Bolanle Awe, ed. *Nigerian Women in Historical Perspective*. (Lagos and Ibadan: Sankore Publishers and Bookcraft, 1992) 11-23.

Edna G. Bay. "The Kpotjito or 'Queen Mother' of Precolonial Dahomey: Towards an Institutional History." in Flora Edouwaye S. Kaplan ed. *Queens, Queen Mothers, Priestesses, and Power: Case Studies in African Gender*. (New York: The New York Academy of Sciences, 1997) 19-40.

Linda M. Heywood. *Njinga of Angola: Africa's warrior Queen*. (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2017) 245-57.

Beverly J. Stoeltje. "Asante Queen Mothers: A Study in Female Authority." in Kaplan, ed. 41- 71.

David Sweetman. *Women Leaders in African History*. (London: Heinemann, 1984) "Nzinga of Angola" 39-47; "Dona Beatrice of Kongo" 48-54; "Yaa Asantewa of Asante." 82-90

#### **5. October 9 Women's Economic Roles and Contributions to the Family Economy**

Reading:

Nwando Achebe. *Farmers, Traders, Warriors, and Kings: Female Power and Authority in Northern Igbo land, 1900-1960*. (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2005) 109-160.

Dorothy L. Hodgson. *Once Intrepid Warriors: Gender, Ethnicity and the Cultural Politics of Maasai Development*. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001) 21-39.

Alina Segobye. "Daughters of Cattle: The Significance of Herding in the Growth of Complex Societies in Southern Africa Between the 10th and 15th Centuries AD." in Susan Kent, ed. *Gender in African Pre-History*. (Walnut Creek CA: Alta Mira Publishers, 1998) 227-233.

Challenges to Women's Traditional Roles:

#### **6. October 16 Women and Slavery**

Reading:

Edna G. Bay. *Wives of the Leopard: Gender, Politics, and Culture in the Kingdom of Dahomey*. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1998) 40-51.

Susan Herlin Broadhead. "Slave Wives, Free Sisters: Bankongo Women and Slavery c. 1700-1850." in Claire C. Robertson and Martin A. Klein, eds. *Women and Slavery in Africa*. (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1997) 160-181.

Pernille Ipsen. *Daughters of the Trade: Atlantic Slavers and Interracial Marriages on the Gold Coast*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015.) 114-139.

Marcia Wright. *Strategies of Slaves and Women: Life Stories from East/Central Africa*. (New York: Lillian Barber Press, 1993) "Meli's Account of Slavery" (Late 19th C Zambia) 94-112.

### **7. October 23 Christian Missionaries and Sexuality**

Reading:

Marc Epprecht. 'This matter of women is getting very bad': Gender, Development and Politics in Colonial Lesotho. (Scottsville, South Africa: University of Natal Press, 2000) 30-38.

Tabitha Kanogo. *African Womanhood in Colonial Kenya 1900-50*. (Athens, OH: University of Ohio Press, 2005) 73-103.

Nakanyike Musisi. "The Politics of Perception or Perception as Politics? Colonial and Missionary representations of Baganda Women, 1900-1945." in Jean Allman, Susan Geiger and Nakanyike Musisi, eds. *Women in African Colonial Histories*. (Bloomington: IN: Indiana University Press, 2002) 95-115.

Elizabeth Schmidt. *Peasants, Traders, and Wives: Shona Women in the History of Zimbabwe, 1870-1939*. (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1992) 122-154.

### **8. October 30 Women's Resistance to Colonialism: Rebellion and the 1929 "Women's War" in Nigeria**

Essay Proposals Due

Reading:

Nwando Achebe. *Farmers, Traders, Warriors, and Kings: Female Power and Authority in Northern Igbo land, 1900-1960*. 161-195.

Toyin Falola. *Colonialism and Violence in Nigeria*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009) 108-130.

Marc Matera, Misty L. Bastian and Susan Kingsley Kent. *The Women's War of 1929: Gender and Violence in Colonial Nigeria*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) 188-227, 235-9.

### **November 6 Reading Week**

#### **9. November 13 Colonialism, Migration and Economic Change**

Reading:

Jean Allman. "Rounding Up Spinster: Gender Chaos and Unmarried Women in Colonial Asante." in Dorothy L. Hodgson and Sheryl A. McCurdy, eds. "Wicked Women" and the Reconfiguration of Gender in Africa. (Oxford and Portsmouth, NH: James Curry and Heinemann, 2001) 130-148.

Marjorie K. McIntosh. *Yoruba Women, Work and Social Change*. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009) 240-6.

Phoebe Musandu. "Daughters of Odoro: Luo Women and Power. Re-examining Scripted Oral Traditions." *Women's Studies*. 41 (2012) 536-57.

Elizabeth Schmidt. "Patriarchy, Capitalism and the Colonial State in Zimbabwe." *Signs*. 16, No. 4 (1991) 732-56.

The Post-Colonial Era:

### **10. November 20 Women's Contributions to African National Liberation Movements**

Reading:

Jean Allman. "The Disappearance of Hannah Kudjoe: Nationalism, Feminism and the Tyrannies of History." *Journal of Women's History*. 21, No. 3 (2009) 13-35.

Joyce M. Chadya. "Mother Politics: Anti-colonial Nationalism and the Woman Question in Africa." *Journal of Women's History*. 15, No. 3 (2003) 153-7.

Gisela Geisler. *Women and the Remaking of Politics in Southern Africa*. (Uppsala, Sweden: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2004) 39-63.

W.O. Maloba. *African Women in Revolution*. (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2007) 1-12.

### **11. November 27 Gender Roles, Modernity and 'Development'**

Reading:

D.J. Chandler and Njoki Wane. "Indigenous Gendered Spaces: An Examination of Kenya." *Jenda: A Journal of Culture and African Women Studies*. 2, No. 1 (2002) 1-25.

Amina Mama. "Sheroes and Villains: Conceptualizing Colonial and Contemporary Violence Against Women in Africa." in J. Alexander and C.T. Mohanty, eds. *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*. (New York: Routledge, 1997) 46-62.

Nkiru Nzegwu. "Recovering Igbo Traditions: A Case for Indigenous Women's Organizations in Development." in Martha C. Nussbaum and Jonathan Glover, eds. *Women, Culture and Development*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995) 445-465

Njoki N. Wane. *Indigenous African Knowledge Production: Food-Processing Practices among Kenyan Rural Women*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014) 87-97.

Video: *Sasa! A Film About Women, Violence and HIV/AIDS*

Can be viewed on-line at <http://raisingvoices.org/resources/>

### **12. December 4 Women's Activism and Struggles for Peace in Africa: The Case of Liberia**

Reading:

Iris Berger. "African Women's Movements in the Twentieth Century: A Hidden History." *African Studies Review*. 57, No. 3 (2014) 1-19.

Abosedo Ipadeola. "The Subaltern in Africa's Political Space: African Political Philosophy and the Mirror of Gender." *Journal of Black Studies*, 48, No. 4 (2017) 391-407.

Anne Theobald. *The Role of Women in Making and Building Peace in Liberia: Gender Sensitivity versus Masculinity*. (Stuttgart, Germany: Ibidem Press, 2012) 31-59.

Video: Pray the Devil Back to Hell

## **Additional Statements**

### ***Academic Offences:***

Scholastic Offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitute a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com ( <http://www.turnitin.com> ).

### ***Accessibility Options:***

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 519 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation. Information regarding accommodation of exams is available on the Registrar's website:

[www.registrar.uwo.ca/examinations/accommodated\\_exams.html](http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/examinations/accommodated_exams.html)

### ***Medical Issues***

The University recognizes that a student's ability to meet his/her academic responsibilities may, on occasion, be impaired by medical illness. Please go to:

[https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/accommodation\\_illness.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_illness.pdf)

to read about the University's policy on medical accommodation. In the event of illness, you should contact Academic Counselling as soon as possible. The Academic Counsellors will determine, in consultation with the student, whether or not accommodation should be requested. They will subsequently contact the instructors in the relevant courses about the accommodation. Once the instructor has made a decision about whether to grant an accommodation, the student should contact his/her instructors to determine a new due date for tests, assignments, and exams.

Students must see the Academic Counsellor and submit all required documentation in order to be approved for certain accommodation.

Please note: Please visit [https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/academic\\_policies/index.html](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/academic_policies/index.html) to view all updated academic policies regarding medical accommodations.

### ***Plagiarism:***

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offense (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Students are expected to retain all research notes, rough drafts, essay outlines, and other materials used in preparing assignments. In the unlikely event of concerns being raised about the authenticity of any assignment, your instructor may ask you to produce these materials; an inability to do so may weigh heavily against you.

The following rules pertain to the acknowledgements necessary in academic papers.

A. In using another writer's words, you must both place the words in quotation marks and acknowledge that the words are those of another writer.

You are plagiarizing if you use a sequence of words, a sentence or a paragraph taken from other writers without acknowledging them to be theirs. Acknowledgement is indicated either by (1) mentioning the author and work from which the words are borrowed in the text of your paper; or by (2) placing a footnote number at the end of the quotation in your text, and including a correspondingly numbered footnote at the bottom of the page (or in a separate reference section at the end of your essay). This footnote should indicate author, title of the work, place and date of Publication and page number. Method (2) given above is usually preferable for academic essays because it provides the reader with more information about your sources and leaves your text uncluttered with parenthetical and tangential references. In either case words taken from another author must be enclosed in quotation marks or set off from your text by single spacing and indentation in such a way that they cannot be mistaken for your own words. Note that you cannot avoid indicating quotation simply by changing a word or phrase in a sentence or paragraph which is not your own.

B. In adopting other writer's ideas, you must acknowledge that they are theirs.

You are plagiarizing if you adopt, summarize, or paraphrase other writers' trains of argument, ideas or sequences of ideas without acknowledging their authorship according to the method of acknowledgement given in 'A' above. Since the words are your own, they need not be enclosed in quotation marks. Be certain, however, that the words you use are entirely your own; where you must use words or phrases from your source; these should be enclosed in quotation marks, as in 'A' above.

Clearly, it is possible for you to formulate arguments or ideas independently of another writer who has expounded the same ideas, and whom you have not read. Where you got your ideas is the important consideration here. Do not be afraid to present an argument or idea without acknowledgement to another

writer, if you have arrived at it entirely independently. Acknowledge it if you have derived it from a source outside your own thinking on the subject.

In short, use of acknowledgements and, when necessary, quotation marks is necessary to distinguish clearly between what is yours and what is not. Since the rules have been explained to you, if you fail to make this distinction, your instructor very likely will do so for you, and they will be forced to regard your omission as intentional literary theft. Plagiarism is a serious offence which may result in a student's receiving an 'F' in a course or, in extreme cases, in their suspension from the University.

### ***Scholastic Offences***

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following web site:

[www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

### ***Copyright***

Lectures and course materials, including power point presentations, outlines, and similar materials, are protected by copyright. You may take notes and make copies of course materials for your own educational use. You may not record lectures, reproduce (or allow others to reproduce), post or distribute lecture notes, wiki material, and other course materials publicly and/or for commercial purposes without my written consent.

### ***Support Services***

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western, [http://uwo.ca/health/mental\\_wellbeing/](http://uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation.

If you have any further questions or concerns please contact, Heidi Van Galen, Administrative Officer, Department of History, 519-661-2111 x84963 or e-mail [vangalen@uwo.ca](mailto:vangalen@uwo.ca).