

**HISTORY OF WOMEN IN AFRICA**  
Associate Professor Timothy Cleaveland  
Fall 2006

HIST 3530  
LeConte 101  
TR. 2:00- 3:15

Office: 340 LeConte Hall  
Hours: TR. 9-10:00  
542-2479- tcleave@uga.edu

**Course Warning**

This is a very rigorous course that requires attendance as well as abundant reading and study. The teacher will penalize those students who do not meet the mandatory minimum attendance.

**Course Description and Philosophy**

The primary goal of this course is to provide the students with an historical framework for interpreting the status of African women in various societies. The course will also examine the history of Western perceptions of gender relations in Africa. The second goal of the course is to develop the students' analytical skills and their ability to express their analyses in verbal and written forms. To this end, the course emphasizes class discussions rather than lectures, and formal essays rather than exams. The course surveys the history of African women and examines in detail a few selected societies in West Africa. It will focus on gender and the roles African women played in their societies and families. It will examine elite women, working women and female slaves. It will examine the roles women played in the economy, politics and religion and it will examine how these roles changed with the spread of Islam in Africa, the rise of the Atlantic slave, European conquest and colonialism, and finally independence and globalism. The course assumes no prior background in African or gender history, but it requires the students to master the historiography of several African societies and to analyze historical debates and primary sources in formal essays.

Primary sources constitute a significant portion of the course readings. They include translations of Medieval North African geographies and nineteenth-century Muslim poetry, a late nineteenth-century English woman's travel account, a mid twentieth-century African autobiography, and two late twentieth-century novels. The course readings also include academic interpretations of African history and gender theory. Students will analyze these diverse course readings in four reaction papers and four short essays. The short essays will be about five pages in length and should set out an analytical argument about one of the issues covered in the course and rely exclusively on assigned readings. The teacher will provide more details about the short essays in class meetings, and will be happy to advise students during office hours.

Some students will find this course somewhat more difficult than comparable courses on American or European history, because of their lack of familiarity with the names of African peoples and places. This problem can be solved by carefully reading the assigned material when it is assigned, thus gradually digesting the material. Although some students habitually neglect weeks of reading assignments only later to cram them into their brains over a single weekend-- such a strategy is not suited to this course. The design of the course encourages daily reading, and the instructor expects students to come to class prepared. Class lectures will address and supplement the assigned readings in ways designed to help the students develop their own analyses, which they will express in class discussions and in reaction papers and formal essays. Therefore, in addition to learning about African history, the successful students will improve their abilities to read, to think analytically, and to express their ideas in formal essays.

**Course Requirements** (The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.)

**Readings-** All the books for purchase are available at the Tate University Bookstore and many are also available at other bookstores. These books are also available from online new and used book dealers. Because *Baba of Karo* is out of print, students may only be able to purchase this book through online used book dealers. There are also two copies of *Baba of Karo* on reserve. The reserved readings are available at the reserve desk in the Main Library.

### **Books for Purchase**

- 1) *Women in African Colonial Histories*, ed. by Allman, Geiger, and Musisi
- 2) *One Woman's Jihad: Nana Asma'u, Scholar and Scribe*, by Beverly B. Mack, Jean Boyd
- 3) *Travels in West Africa*, by Mary Kingsley (National Geographic Reprint - 2002)
- 4) *Baba of Karo*, translated and edited by Mary Smith
- 5) *So Long a Letter*, by Mariama Ba
- 6) *The Joys of Motherhood*, by Buchi Emecheta

### **Books on Reserve**

*Problems in African History: The Pre-colonial Centuries*, Robert O. Collins  
*Corpus of Early Arabic Sources* (trans. by Hopkins and Levtzion)  
*African Women: A Modern History*, by Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch  
*History of Africa*, Kevin Shillington

**Reaction Papers-** The students will write four analytical reactions to specific reading assignments. These reaction papers will be one-page reviews (about 300 words) of the most salient aspects of the assigned documents. The teacher will evaluate the reaction papers on the basis grammar and style as well as content. The reaction papers must be submitted at the beginning of class on the date due. Do not put late papers in my department mailbox and do not slide them under my office door. One letter grade will be deducted from late reaction papers for each class meeting after the due date. The reaction papers will constitute 25% of the course grade.

**Short Essays-** The students will write three analytical essays (plus the final exam essay), each four pages in length (about 1,200 words). I will distribute writing guides for the short essays in class more than a week before each essay's due date and will grade the essays on the basis of content, grammar, presentation, and style. Essays should bear only the student's identification number. Do not write your name on your paper. The essays must be submitted at the beginning of class on the date due. One letter grade will be deducted from late essays for each class meeting after the due date. The three analytical essays constitute 50% of the course grade.

**Final Essay-** There will be no final exam, instead the students will write a short essay (about 1,200 words), which will be due on the scheduled date of the exam, December 12. This analytical paper will address one of the broad themes presented over the course of the semester, drawing exclusively from class readings and presentations. The instructor will explain the various requirements of this essay throughout the semester, and will provide a written guide. The teacher will evaluate the Final Essay according to grammar and style as well as content, and it will count as 25% of the course grade. Essays should bear only the student's identification number. Do not write your name on your paper.

**Group Presentations-** The teacher reserves the right to assign group presentations if the class enrollment is substantially less than 20 students. The class will be divided into groups of two or three for the purpose of preparing special written reports (about 4 pages), which will be distributed to the rest of class electronically and will be summarized in group presentations. The instructor will assign each group a primary source text or theoretical statement, which the rest of the class will not be required to read. Each individual will independently produce his/her own interpretation and written analysis of the assigned text, but the group members will present their findings jointly in a presentation lasting about 45 minutes. Each student's written report or essay will be graded as the other written assignments and will count as the final essay. The teacher will not assign a grade to the oral presentations. The teacher will guide the students in the preparation of their presentations in class and in two scheduled office meetings.

**Class Attendance-** Instruction in this course will consist of lectures and discussions. Therefore the teacher expects students to attend class and be prepared to discuss the readings. Although I probably will assign discussion leaders for specific class sessions, I will not ascribe a grade for attendance or participation. However, attendance is mandatory and the teacher will automatically drop any student who accumulates four absences before the midpoint withdrawal deadline (Oct. 9) regardless of the reasons for the absences. Thereafter, the teacher will deduct two-thirds of a letter grade from the student's course average for every absence after the sixth. Excessive tardiness or early departure without permission from the instructor will count as a half absence. Attendance will be recorded on sign-in sheets, and every student is responsible for signing the sheet. If a student does not sign the attendance sheet the instructor will count the student absent. Students are also responsible for keeping track of their own absences, and should not expect to be warned when they reach the limit. Attendance is important because those students who are occasionally absent and fall behind in the readings will almost certainly perform badly on the reaction papers and essays, because of their lack of familiarity with Africa. Students who maintain excellent class attendance and participation will receive extra credit points toward their final course averages—3 points for no absences, 2 points for one absence and 1 point for two absences. Assignments missed because of illness or the like may be submitted without penalty if the documentation is acceptable to the teacher and within university guidelines, but the absence still counts against the student's maximum allowance. Students should contact the teacher by email in advance of missed assignments. Students who suffer a major illness or a series of minor illnesses during the semester should request a medical withdrawal from the Registrar.

**Email-** I request that all students provide me with an email address in order to facilitate communication regarding assignments. I will occasionally send the class emails bearing advice regarding the assignments or changes to the schedule. For this reason, students should check their email regularly, at least twice a week. Students should also be careful to keep their in-boxes tidy, as the teacher has often had messages to students bounce back because of overloaded in-boxes.

**Academic Honesty-** This course has "zero tolerance" for cheating. Any work that infringes the University's academic honesty code (see web address below) will at a minimum receive a grade of "0". The consequences for what I consider significant plagiarism on an essay in this course can also include suspension or expulsion. For a definition of plagiarism please refer to my general writing guide, which I will distribute early in the semester. My policies regarding plagiarism conform to the History Department recommendations. Similar penalties apply to cheating on exams or falsifying an attendance sheet. ([http://www.uga.edu/ovpi/academic\\_honesty/academic\\_honesty.htm](http://www.uga.edu/ovpi/academic_honesty/academic_honesty.htm))

## **Schedule of Assignments at-a-glance**

Aug. 17-Course Introduction and African geography

Aug. 22-Overview of African history: *Women in African Colonial Histories*, pp. 1-10

Aug. 24- African women and African slavery: Collins, 183-212 on Reserve

Aug. 29- Gendered perceptions of medieval Africa: al-Bakri (esp. 64-69, 77-87) in *Corpus*, on Reserve

Aug. 31- Women and the Kingdom of Mali: Ibn Battuta, 279-304, in the *Corpus* (**Reaction Paper #1**)

Sept. 5- Arenas of women's power: Collins, 213-250 on Reserve

Sept. 7- Introduction to Hausaland and Nana Asma'u: *Nana Asma'u*, preface and 1-29

Sept. 12- Women's roles in Hausaland/Sokoto: *Nana Asma'u*, 30-62

Sept. 14- Islam in the Sokoto Caliphate: *Nana Asma'u*, 63-91

Sept. 19- One woman's poetry: *Nana Asma'u*, 93-131

Sept. 21- Poetry and power: *Nana Asma'u*, 132-171 (**1st Essay due**)

Sept. 26 - Missionaries and imperialism: *Women in Afr. Col. Histories*, chs. 2,4,9 (48-62, 95-115, 219-232)

Sept. 28- Mary Kingsley, European women and imperialism: *Travels in West Africa*, 1-49

Oct. 3- Fans of 'Civilization': *Travels*, 50-133 (**Reaction Paper #2**)

Oct. 5- The politics of being 'civilized': *Travels*, 135-197

Oct. 10- Fetishizing the fetish: *Travels*, 199-269

Oct. 12- Assessing European narratives: *Travels*, 270-320 (**2nd Essay due**)

Oct. 17- Baba, A Hausa woman's Youth: *Baba of Karo*, 1-65

Oct. 19- The British and marriage: *Baba of Karo*, 66-137

Oct. 24- Marriage in Hausaland: *Baba of Karo*, 138-213

Oct. 26- **Fall Break**

Oct. 31- The Fourth Marriage: *Baba of Karo*, 214-254. (**3rd Essay due**)

Nov. 2- Women and gender in Southern Africa: *Women in Afr. Col. Histories*, chs. 1, 8, 13

Nov. 7- Women and marriage in Colonial Ghana: *Women in Afr. Col. Histories*, chs. 5 and 10

Nov. 9- Women and French Colonialism: *Women in Afr. Col. Histories*, chs. 3, 6, 12

Nov. 14- Mariama Ba and Senegal: *So Long a Letter*, 1-30

Nov. 16- Islam in French West Africa: *So Long a Letter*, 31- end (**Reaction Paper #3**)

Nov. 21- Buchi Emecheta and Nigeria: *The Joys of Motherhood*, 1-62, *Women in Afr. Col. Histories*, ch. 11

Nov. 23- **Thanksgiving Break**

Nov. 28- Urban women in Nigeria: *The Joys*, 63-128,

Nov. 30- Working women: *The Joys*, 129-158

Dec. 5- Political women: *The Joys*, 159-end, (**Reaction Paper #4**)

Dec. 7- Reading Day

Dec. 12, 5:00pm- **Final Essay due**



Feminism and Anthropology

Al-Bakri

Ali Eisami

Richardson

Heinrich Barth