

AFRI 101

Introduction to African Civilization

General Description

Overview African Studies 101, an introduction to the African continent, is intended to fulfill two primary purposes: to acquaint you with the African environment, its peoples, their cultures, past, and contemporary societies; and to develop an appreciation for African civilizations—civilizations that have made a major contribution to American society.

The course is organized around thematic and topical units arranged in four sections. The introductory material in Section 1 discusses the perspectives used in the study of Africa and examines the physical layout of the continent. Section 2, Precolonial Africa, includes lessons on Africa's history, African languages, African social organization and economic life, and religion in Africa. Section 3 covers imperialism and colonial rule in Africa and concludes with decolonization and nationalism. Section 4 examines political, economic, and environmental issues in Africa since independence.

Required Texts Three main texts are required for this course:

- *Understanding Contemporary Africa*, 3rd edition, edited by April A. Gordon and Donald L. Gordon (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner, 2001)
- *Africa*, 3rd edition, edited by Phyllis M. Martin and Patrick O'Meara (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995)
- *A Grain of Wheat* by Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (Heinemann, 1967).

The texts by Martin and O'Meara and Gordon and Gordon are standard texts for African studies. Both are edited collections

written by leading scholars in African studies and offer multi-disciplinary perspectives critical to the study of Africa. The novel, *A Grain of Wheat*, first copyrighted in 1967, discusses the Mau Mau conflict in Kenya in the 1950s and is assigned here to provide an alternative media for examining various issues covered in this course.

These texts can be purchased from the Higher Grounds bookstore at the Friday Center using the book order form at the end of this General Description, or from Higher Grounds' Web site, <https://s4.its.unc.edu/HigherGrounds>.

Supplemental Materials

In addition to the primary texts for this course, we encourage you to use various supplemental materials. Refer to pages 97–98 for a list of supplemental materials. Several films are listed in a few lessons, as are various articles and readings outside your primary texts. In addition, if you have access to the Internet, we encourage you to visit the home page of the Curriculum in African and Afro-American Studies at UNC-Chapel Hill (www.unc.edu/depts/afriafam/afriafam.html). This page not only lists other African studies courses and descriptions that will broaden your understanding of the field of African studies, but it also contains links to other Web sites that contain a wealth of information. Two other valuable Web resources (out of thousands available) are the University of Pennsylvania African Studies site (www.sas.upenn.edu/African_Studies/AS.html), which has a variety of sources about the continent as a whole and about individual countries and regions, and the BBC African news site (news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/africa), which provides current news about the African continent. These materials as well as videos and other Web sites are not required for completion of the course, as the goal for this course has been to make the study of Africa available to those who do not have immediate access to university technological and library resources. However, if you can obtain films, scholarly journals, and books through interlibrary loan or have access to the Internet, these sources provide valuable perspectives to the information covered in the course.

Study Suggestions

Each lesson in this course is made up of four elements: the assigned readings, the discussion found in this manual, self-help

exercises, and the written assignment. The discussion includes objectives for each lesson.

Reading assignments

I suggest you begin each lesson by examining the objectives and then turning directly to the assigned reading. After completing the assigned reading, study the discussion in this manual, which is meant to serve as the equivalent of lectures given in a traditional classroom. Introduction to African Studies is traditionally conducted not only through readings and lectures, but also with a substantial amount of classroom discussion. By completing the assigned readings prior to considering the discussion section, I believe you will bring more of your own perspective to this study. You may find it useful to skim the self-help exercises, however, prior to beginning the reading and discussion, in order to help you prioritize your study.

I encourage you to take notes as you consider the discussion section, especially noting questions for the instructor and your own insights and elaboration. Your notes may be useful in completing the written assignments.

Self-help exercises

Prior to starting the written assignment, review the self-help exercises to ensure you understand the material covered and have noted essential points in each lesson. Answers to these questions are provided in the back of this manual. The self-help exercises should not be turned in for grading, but you should be able to complete these exercises without referring to your text. Please feel free to include questions or comments regarding these exercises with your written assignments.

Written assignments

Each written assignment consists of one or more essay questions. Your responses should be free of errors in grammar, syntax, and basic organization and should indicate a sound knowledge and comprehension of the course material. In addition, your own reflections should be included to demonstrate critical analysis and evaluation of the material in each lesson. As you progress through the course, lessons will build upon each other as various themes develop, and your assignments should reflect synthesis of the material from previous lessons.

Each written assignment indicates a suggested length for your response. Assignments should be typed, if at all possible. Clearly

handwritten responses are acceptable only in ink. Pencil is unlikely to withstand the process of paper shuffling necessary to move your responses from your desk to your instructor's. Also, please keep a copy of your assignments.

Grading and Final Exam

The written assignments constitute 60 percent of your grade. The remaining 40 percent is based on your final exam, which *you must pass in order to pass the course*. All written assignments may be completed "open-book," and I encourage you to refer to the readings, the lesson discussion, and your notes as you complete the assignments.

The final exam, however, will be a supervised, *closed-book* exam. The final exam is comprehensive, and you are responsible for understanding all material covered in the course. In addition, the final exam includes *objective exercises* as well as *essay questions*. The objective section of the exam consists of a list of terms that you should identify in one or two complete sentences, questions requiring short answers (words or phrases), and a map portion in which you are expected to identify the capitals and countries of Africa, similar to the self-help exercise in Lesson 2. You should study for this section of the exam by reviewing the self-help exercises and the maps provided in the course manual. The essay section contains critical essay questions similar to those presented in the written assignments. Reread your responses to the written assignments, but remember that the essay questions on the final exam may cover any topic from the course and are likely to require you to draw from more than one lesson per essay. Consider themes that tie the individual lessons together. Your study for the objective section should lead to conclusions and observations that contribute to your responses in the essay section.

A Final Word

My intention has been to make this course a most rewarding experience for you. If you have any difficulties or questions, please ask for clarification. Enjoy your study of Africa!