

## AFRICAN WOMEN'S LIVES PAST AND PRESENT

AFRC 222 401; GSWS 222 401  
Tuesdays 5:15 – 8:14 pm  
Spring 2024

Dr. Pamela Blakely  
mwalimuparb@aol.com  
601 568-5323, text only

### Course Description

The course foregrounds contributions by African women to political struggle, religious change, cultural preservation, and economic development throughout the continent from ancient times to the present. It also addresses historiography questions about sources, methodology, and representation of African women's perspectives.

### Required Course Texts

Gbowee, Leymah 2011 *Mighty Be Our Powers, A Memoir*. New York, NY: Beast Books  
Getz, Trevor and Liz Clarke 2015 *Abina and the Important Men*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. **ISBN-13:** 978-0190238742  
Thornton, John 1998 *The Kongolese Saint Anthony, Dona Beatriz Kimpa Vita and the Antonian Movement, 1684-1706*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

### Additional Selected Readings from these texts (+provided as electronic readings "ER")

Achebe, Nwando 2005 *Farmers, Traders, Warriors, and Kings: Female Power and Authority in Northern Igboland, 1900-1960*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, pp. 161-224.  
Bastian, Misty "'Vultures of the Marketplace': Southeastern Nigerian Women and Discourses of the *Ogu Umunwaanyi* (Women's War) of 1929."  
Boahen, A. Adu 2003 *Yaa Asantewaa and the Asante-British War of 1900-1*. Oxford: J. Currey.  
Geiger, Susan 1997 *TANU Women, Gender and Culture in the Making of Tanganyikan Nationalism, 1955-1965*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.  
Maathai, Wangari 2006 *Unbound: A Memoir*. New York, NY: Random House.  
Sweetman, David 1984 *Women Leaders in African History*. London, UK: Heinemann.

### Activities & Assignments

In this course you will be asked to read books and articles, watch films, and do three types of writing. The phrase "three types of writing" may need some explanation.

1. Keep a journal of your reactions to films shown in class, including information you learn from the films, questions they raise, and connections you see with course readings, discussions, and other films. The entry for each week should be 250+ words. It may be written in an informal style. Hand in your journal writings every week. They will be read

and returned so that you can submit the entire semester's journal, bound as a notebook with a complete table of contents, at the end of the semester.

2. We will read books, excerpts from books, and articles authored by Nwando Achebe, Misty Bastian, A. Adu Boahen, Trevor Getz and Liz Clarke, Susan Geiger, David Sweetman, Leymah Gbowee, Wangari Maathai, and John Thornton and watch several films. You are asked to complete 5 unit assignments selected by you from 6 options (500+ words each) based on these readings and films. For full credit, the unit assignment must be handed in by the next class after the final day of the unit.
3. Complete a research paper on a topic of your choice. This assignment is an opportunity to explore a topic or region of Africa not otherwise focused on in the course. Covering African Women's Lives Past and Present in sixteen weeks necessarily leaves out a great deal, so you can use this assignment to extend what we treat in class or explore an area or topic we do not cover. Your paper should be at 8-12 pages in length, enough to handle a topic in some depth but still short enough to edit easily, with a substantial reference page.

## **Evaluation**

Students often want to know how things "count." Although this concern is reasonable, my foremost concern is that you are engaged and excited about learning. If you are guided by this higher motivation, the grades will take care of themselves. For calculation purposes, the film journals, the five response papers, and the term paper count equally as 30 % each of the overall grade. Attendance in zoom classes is 10%. If you cannot attend a zoom class you may watch the zoom recording and submit class notes. There are no tests or exams in this course.

## **Tentative Schedule (subject to change)**

### **Week 1, Jan. 23 Introduction**

**Ancient to Renaissance African Queens, Queen Hatshepsut (Egypt)**

*Ten African Queens* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n89Ks2lZq5Q>

### **Week 2, Jan. 30 Ancient to Renaissance African Queens**

*Unit Assignment 1: Prepare and share a 5-10 min. visual presentation on an assigned African queen. Submit outline of presentation on Canvas by Week 4.*

### **Week 3, Feb. 6 Ancient to Renaissance African Queens, Queen Sogolon (Mali)**

*Class films: Keita, Heritage of the Griot (excerpts); Africa's Great Civilizations  
Additional African queen presentations if necessary.*

**Week 4, Feb. 13 Religious Transformation, and Female Leadership in early 18th Century Kingdom of the Kongo**

Before class read: Thornton, John *The Kongolesse Saint Anthony: Dona Beatriz Kimpa Vita*, Introduction – Ch. 4, pp. 1 – 104.

Class film: Excerpt from Ali Mazrui *The Africans*, Episode 3; *African's Great Civilizations* Episode 5; *Kimpa Vita's Life Story* (YouTube); excerpt from *Kimpa Vita, Mother of the Revolution*

**Week 5, Feb. 20 Religious Transformation, and Female Leadership in 18th Century Kingdom of the Kongo**

Before class read: Thornton, John *The Kongolesse Saint Anthony*, Chs. 5 – 9.

Class film: *Arusi ya Bi Mariamu*

*Unit Assignment 2: Write a 500+ word essay on Dona Beatrice. Topic options will be discussed in class. Submit on Canvas by Week 6.*

**Week 6, Feb. 27 From Archive Fragments to “Graphic History”: Slavery, early Colonialism, Women’s Rights, and the Law in 19th Century Ghana**

Before class read: Getz, Trevor and Liz Clarke *Abina and the Important Men*, pp. xiii - xix, 5 - 82

Class film: *Asante Market Women*, part 1.

**Week 7, Mar. 5** Spring Break, No class

**Week 8, Mar. 12 From Archive Fragments to “Graphic History”: Slavery, early Colonialism, Women’s Rights, and the Law in 19th Century Ghana**

Read: Getz, Trevor and Liz Clarke *Abina and the Important Men*, pp. 115 - 184

Class film: *Mrs. Goundo's Daughter*

*Unit Assignment 3: Write a 500+ word essay on similarities and differences between Abina and Mrs. Goundo. Submit on Canvas by Week 9.*

**Week 9, Mar. 19 First Day of Spring**

**Women’s Responses to British Colonialism in West Africa**

**Part 1: The War of the Golden Stool, Yaa Asantewaa**

Read: ER A. Adu Boahem “Ch. 4, The Role of Nana Yaa Asantewaa in the War.”

*Assignment: Submit on Canvas a research paper proposal of at least 250 words with at least four sources. You are allowed to use online sources. Be sure to have a topic to discuss in class Mar. 19.*

**Week 10, Mar. 26 Women's Responses to British Colonialism in West Africa**

**Part 2: Resistance and Complicity**

ER Misty L. Bastian "'Vultures of the Marketplace': Southeastern Nigerian Women and Discourses of the *Ogu Umunwaanyi* (Women's War) of 1929;" ER Nwando Achebe *Farmers, Traders, Warriors, and Kings*, Ch. 5, "'Ochichi Gi Agafego Oke' (You Are Governing Too Much!) -- King Ahebi Ugbabe versus the Community: A Case Study of Female Clout, Excess, and Conflict in Enugu-Ezike."

Film: *Mama Benz and the Taste of Money*

*Unit Assignment 4: Write a 500+ word essay on Yaa Asantewa, King Ahebi or The Ogu Umunwaanyi (Women's War). You may either compare and contrast King Ahebi Ugbabe to Alice in the film Mama Benz and the Taste of Money or another topic for which you receive approval. Submit on Canvas by Week 11.*

**Week 11 Apr. 2 Women's Activism in East Africa**

**Part 1: The Nationalist Movement in Tanganyika (Tanzania)**

Read: ER Susan Geiger *TANU, Gender and Culture in the Making of Tanganyikan Nationalism, 1955-1965*

Film clips: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-6noZPkLwwU> (first 5 minutes);

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pnkIBcI1KPc> (first 3 minutes)

**Week 12, Apr. 9 Women's Activism in East Africa**

**Part 2: The Green Belt Movement in Kenya**

Read: ER excerpt from Wangari Maathai *Unbound*.

Film: *Taking Root, The Vision of Environmentalist Wangari Maathai*

*Unit Assignment 5: Write a 500+ word description of a film you would direct on Bibi Titi Mohammad's life or write a 500+ word essay on the challenges faced by Wangari Maathai and her response to these challenges. Submit on Canvas by Week 13.*

**Week 13, Apr. 16 Liberian Women Leaders in the 21st Century:**

**Leymah Gbowee and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf**

Read: Leymah Gbowee *Might Be Our Power, Chapters 1 - 6*

Film: *Pray the Devil Back to Hell*

<https://www-filmplatform-net.proxy.library.upenn.edu/product/pray-devil-back-hell/>

**Week 14, Apr. 23 Liberian Women Leaders in the 21st Century:**

**Leymah Gbowee and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf**

Read: Leymah Gbowee *Might Be Our Power, Chapters 7 - 21*

Film: *Iron Ladies of Liberia*

*Unit Assignment 6: Write a 500+ word essay on Leymah Gbowee, her life challenges and strengths as a leader. Submit on Canvas by Week 15.*

**Week 15, Apr. 30 Student Presentations**

**Please note: Semester work will be accepted if received by May 14.**