Course Description HI588 examines the changing status of women in Africa beginning with Pharaonic Egypt to the contemporary period. Students read scholarly writings on gender, power, and culture, autobiographies and biographies of some of Africa’s outstanding female leaders, as well as articles on groups of women whose lives and actions shaped African societies in fundamental ways. The readings examine strategies women used to obtain and exercise power, explore women’s place as economic actors, as well as their spiritual and ritualistic roles in the various societies. The readings also interrogate how African women contested gender categories that privileged males during the various periods.

Some of the questions and issues that the readings address are:

1. To what extent has western feminist scholarship and African feminist and womanist scholarship helped to advance the study of women in Africa?
2. Is gender as a category of analysis essential in the study of the history of women in Africa?
3. Since few women exercise political power in Africa today, can the study of how women exercised political power in the past provide an analytical guide to assessing women’s political status in African states today?
4. How has culture informed the ways in which women exercised power in the past and how has women’s access to power and leadership changed over time?
5. In what ways have non-African forces during the various historical periods affected women’s access to power?

Prerequisites: Sophomore status or higher

Readings
The required books are available for purchase at Barnes & Noble. One copy of each required book is also available on two-hour reserve at Mugar library. To obtain a list of the materials on reserve, go to http://library.bu.edu and click on Reserve Services, selecting either my name or the course number. Additional required readings from books and journals are available at Blackboard Learn. (BL)

**Academic Integrity Policy:** Each student is expected to author his/her own work. Students should familiarize themselves with the CAS Conduct Code. Students who submit plagiarized papers or other assignments that they have not authored will be subject to the penalties imposed by Boston University Academic Conduct Code.

**Required Books (Available on Reserve at Mugar Library and Bookstore)**


**Grading**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical Papers</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation and attendance</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Paper</td>
<td>50%</td>
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**Description of Assignments and Dates Due**

**Critical Papers:** Each student must write **four** critical papers of 5 pages each. At least one of the papers should be based on the readings for **Week II** or **Week III**. Papers should be submitted at the end of class for the week selected. The papers will be graded according to the following criteria: critical analysis of the main themes in the readings; connections between the reading for the week selected and the conceptual issues raised in the readings and discussions for **Week I**; evidence of outside readings, including research on Google Scholar and other scholarly electronic sites. Students will select the weeks for their essays during the first class session. **Students writing critical papers will take the lead in the discussion for the weeks selected.**

**Class Participation:** All students are expected to attend each class session and actively participate in class discussions. Students who are not writing essays should be prepared to participate in the discussions with critical questions and comments about the readings.

**Research Paper:** Each student will be required to write a research paper on one of the themes arising from the weekly readings and discussions. Students must consult with me
before selecting a topic and undertaking research (Due Week 6). Each student will make a formal 12-15 minute oral presentation of his/her research paper during weeks 12 and 13. Completed research papers are due Friday December 12. The research paper should be between 4,500-5,000 words (undergraduates), or 8,000-9,000 words (graduate students). The final research paper account for 50% of the course grade.

Weekly Readings

Part One: Introduction

Week I (9/7): Contesting Theories and Approaches

Readings:
Oyéwùmi, *The Invention of Women*, Begin to p. 55.
Herbert, *Iron, Gender and Power*, pp. 219-238. BL
Taiwo Makinde, “Motherhood as a Source of Empowerment…” BL
Stevens, “Women’s Aggressive Use of Genital Power in Africa.” BL
Introduction, Lecture, Discussion

Part II The Foundations: Ancient Egypt to the 1730’s

Week 2 (9/14) Questioning Patriarchy: The Case of Hatshepsut
Readings
Kara Cooney, *The Woman Who Would Be King*
Carney, “Women and Military Leadership…Egypt.” BL
Discussion of Week 1 Readings; Presentation; Lecture, Discussion of Readings, Week 2.

Week 3 (9/21) Culture, Power and Gender in Kush, Nubia and Beyond
Readings:
Lohwasser, “Queenship in Kush” (BL)
Witt, “Isis as Perceived by women in the Greco-Roman World” BL

Presentation, Lecture, Discussion

Part III Asserting Power in the Period of the Slave Trade

Week 4 (9/28) Women and Leadership: Visionaries and Politicians
Readings:
Thornton, “Ideology and Power in Central Africa: The Case of Queen Njinga (1624-1663).” BL
McKnight, (Heywood), “Queen Njinga Mbandi Ana de Sousa.” BL
Thornton, *Dona Beatrice*.
Student Presentation, Lecture, Discussion
Week 5 (10/5) Women: Trans-Cultural Relations and New Bases of Power
Belcher, “Sisters Debating the Jesuits,” BL
Hilary Jones, “From Marriage a la Mode,” BL
E. Francis White, “Creole Women Traders in the Nineteenth Century,” BL
Claire Bosc-Tiesse, “How Beautify She is in Her Mirror…” BL

Class takes place in Mugar Library, Room 503
Lecture: Beth Restrick, Head African Studies Library
Student Presentations, Lecture, Discussion

Week 6 (10/12) Gendered Lives: Queen Mothers, Warriors, and Concubines
Readings
Oyéwùmì, The Invention of Women, 80-120.
Aidoo, “Asante Queen Mothers in Government and Politics.” BL
Lovejoy, “Concubinage in the Sokoto Caliphate (1804-1903)” BL
Larsen, “City of Women” BL

Student Presentations, Lecture, Discussion

Part IV African Women and the Colonial Regimes to Independence

Week 7 (10/19) Changing Notions of Status, Gender and Power
Readings:
Adirento, “Gender, Race Class, Prostitution…Lagos.” BL
Thomas, “Imperial Concerns and ‘Women’s Affairs…”” BL

Student Presentations, Lecture, Discussion

Week 8 (10/26) Women and Leadership in Late Colonial Africa
Readings:
Johnson Odim, “For Four Freedoms” (BL)

Student Presentations, Lecture, Discussion

Part V African Women: Decolonization and the Post-Colonial State

Week 9 (11/2) African Women and Power in Independent Africa
Readings:
Alicia Decker, “Of Miniskirts and Morality” in In Idi Amin’s Shadow BL
Preez Bezdrob, Winnie Mandela: A Life (begin to 136)

Student Presentations, Lecture, Discussion

Preez Bezdrob, Winnie Mandela: A Life (136 to end)
Ranchod-Nilsson, “Gender Politics…Zimbabwe.” BL
Selection of Television Interviews with Winnie Mandela
Student Presentation, Lecture, Discussion

Readings: Gbowee, *Mighty Be Our Powers* (Begin to p. 119)
Fuest, “This is the Time…Women in Liberia” BL
Bauer, “Women and the 2005 Election Liberia” BL

Presentation, Discussion

Readings, Gbowee, *Mighty Be Our Powers* (p. 120 to end)
Moran, “Our Mothers Have Spoken.” BL

Pray the Devil Back to Hell Documentary
Presentation, Discussion, Final Paper Presentations (Begin)

Week 13 (12/7) Final Paper Presentations

Final Papers Due Thursday 15 December

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