

**Boston University**  
**Department of History**  
**AA/HI 588**  
**Women, Power and Culture in Africa**  
**Wednesdays 2:30-5:15**  
**Fall 2017**  
**AA 101**

**Prof. Linda Heywood**  
**African American Studies**

**138 Mountfort St. Room 202**  
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**Office Hours:**  
**Mondays 4:00-5:00**  
**Fridays: 9:00-10:00**  
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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. In what ways have western feminist scholarship and African feminist scholarship helped to advance the study of the history 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 African 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 have women's access to power and leadership changed over time?
5. In what ways have internal social forces, conquests, colonial control, independent movements, civil wars, and international actors during the various historical periods affected women's access to power and shaped notions of gender?<sup>1</sup>

**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)**

Kara Cooney, *The Would be King: Hatshepsut's Rise to Power in Ancient Egypt* (New York, 2014).

Linda Heywood, *Queen Njinga of Angola: Africa's Warrior Queen* (Cambridge, 2015).

Oyeronke Oyewumi, *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses* (Minnesota, 1997).

Anna Marie du Preez Bezdrob, *Winnie Mandela: A Life* (Struik Publishers, 2005).

Ali Tripp, *Women and Power in Post-Conflict Africa* (Cambridge, 2015).

Ayobami Adebayo, *Stay With Me* (Knopf, 2017)

### **Grading**

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| Critical Papers                            | 30% |
| Presentation, Participation and Attendance | 20% |
| Research Paper                             | 50% |

### **Description of Assignments and Dates Due**

**Critical Papers:** Each student must write **3** critical papers of 5 pages each. **One of the critical papers should be based on the readings for Week II or Week III, the second paper should be based on reading from Week IV-VIII, and the last paper should be based on any week's reading from Weeks IX-XIII.** Papers should be submitted at the end of the 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 1**; evidence of outside readings consulted, particularly 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. 30% of final grade.**

**Presentations, Class Participation, Attendance:** All students are expected to attend each class session. Students who are not writing essays for a particular week should be prepared to participate in the discussions with critical questions and comments about the readings. **30% of final grade.**

**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 no later than 12:00 pm Monday December 18. The research paper should be no less than 5,000 words (undergraduates), or 8,000-9,000 words (graduate students). **50% of final grade.**

## **Weekly Readings**

### **Part One: Introduction**

#### **Week I (9/6): Theories and Approaches and Historiography**

##### **Readings:**

Oyéwùmi, *The Invention of Women*, Begin to p. 55.  
Herbert, *Iron, Gender and Power*, pp. 219-238. **BL**  
Makinde, "Motherhood as a Source of Empowerment..." **BL**  
Gorfield, "The Challenge of Gender History." **BL**  
Robertson, "Putting the Political in Economy: African Women and Gender History, 1992-2010 **BL** (Rec).

**Introduction, Lecture, Discussion of Readings**

### **Part II The Foundations: Ancient Egypt to the 1730's**

#### **Week 2 (9/13) Questioning Patriarchy: The Case of Hatshepsut**

##### **Readings**

Kara Cooney, *The Woman Who Would Be King*  
Blandford, "The Social and Political Position of Women in Ancient Egypt." **BL**  
Carney, "Women and Military Leadership...Egypt." **BL**  
**Continuation of Discussion of Week 1 Readings; Presentation; Lecture, Discussion of Readings, Week 2.**

#### **Week 3 (9/20) Culture, Power and Gender in Kush, Nubia and Beyond**

##### **Readings:**

Lohwasser, "Queenship in Kush" (**BL**)  
Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban, "Nubian Queens in the Nile Valley and Afro-Asiatic Cultural History" (**BL**).  
Marco Baldi, "Isis in Kush: A Nubian Soul for an Egyptian Goddess." **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 (9/27) Women and Leadership: Visionaries and Politicians**

**Readings:**

Heywood, *Njinga of Angola: Africa's Warrior Queen*  
Thornton, "Elite Women in the Kingdom of Kongo" **BL**  
**Student Presentation, Lecture, Discussion**

**Week 5 (10/4) 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 (10/11) Gendered Lives: Queen Mothers, Warriors, and Concubines**

**Readings**

Oyéwùmi, *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**  
Akyeampong and Obeng, "Spirituality, Gender Power...Asante." **BL**  
**Student Presentations, Lecture, Discussion**

**Part IV African Women and the Colonial Regimes to Independence**

**Week 7 (10/18) Changing Notions of Status, Gender and Power**

**Readings:**

Oyéwùmi, *The Invention of Women*, pp. 121-157.  
Adirento, "Gender, Race Class, Prostitution...Lagos." **BL**  
Thomas, "Imperial Concerns and 'Women's Affairs...'" **BL**  
**Student Presentations, Lecture, Discussion**

**Week 8 (10/25) Women and Leadership in Late Colonial Africa**

**Readings:**

Oyéwùmi, *The Invention of Women*, pp. 157-180.  
Johnson Odim, "For Four Freedoms" (**BL**)  
Kanogo, "Women and the Politics of Protest: Mau Mau." **BL**  
**Student Presentations, Lecture, Discussion**

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

**Week 9 (11/1) African Women and Power during the Independence Struggles in 1960s-1980s: Southern Africa, Part One**

**Readings and Videos:**

Preez Bezdrob, *Winnie Mandela: A Life* (begin to 136)  
Parpart, "Militarized Masculinities: Heroes and Gender

Inequality...Zimbabwe.”**BL**  
**Video**, *Winnie* (2017), Begin  
**Video**, *Flame* (1996), Begin  
**Student Presentations, Lecture, Discussion**

**Week 10 (11/8)** African Women: Gender and Power: 1960s-1980s: Southern Africa, Part Two

**Readings and Videos:**

Preez Bezdrob, *Winnie Mandela: A Life* (136 to end)

Ranchod-Nilsson, “Gender Politics, Gender Backlash...Zimbabwe.” **BL**

**Videos**, *Winnie* (2017); *Flame* (cont. to end)

**Selection of Television Interviews with Winnie Mandela**

**Student Presentation, Lecture, Discussion**

**Week 11 (11/15)** African Women: Gender and Power: Contemporary East Africa

**Readings:** Tripp, *Women and Power in Post Conflict Africa* (3-33 and 49-77)

Alicia Decker, “Of Miniskirts and Morality” in *In Idi Amin’s Shadow*

**BL**

Behrend “Power to Heal, Power to Kill: Spirit Possession and War in Northern Uganda, 1986-1994.” **BL**

**Presentation, Discussion**

**Week 12 (11/29)** African Women: Gender and Power: Contemporary West Africa

**Readings**, Tripp, *Women and Power in PostConflict Africa* (p.78-113)

Ayobami Adebayo, *Stay With Me*

<https://www.iamschick.com/africa-now/watch-the-very-first-episode-of-kemi-adetibas-inspiring-series-king-women/>

Moran, “Our Mothers Have Spoken.” **BL**

**Presentation, Discussion, Final Paper Presentations (Begin)**

**Week 13 (12/6)** African Women: Gender and Power: Contemporary Southern Africa

**Readings:** Tripp, *Women and Power in PostConflict Africa* pp. 114-258

Heywood, “Violence and its Transformation in Angola: The Place of Women” **BL**

Brinkman, “War, Witches and Traitors: Cases from MPLA’s Eastern Front in Angola, 1966-1975.” **BL**

**Presentation of readings; Final Paper Presentations (Begin)**

**Week 14 (12/13) Final Paper Presentations**

**Final Papers Due Monday 18 December 12:00 noon**

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