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 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 shaped African women’s access to power and notions of gender?

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)

**Library Assistance:** The African Studies Library is located on the 6th floor of Mugar Memorial Library. Hours are 9:00am-5:00 pm. They can be reached by email at asl@bu.edu or by phone at 617-353-3726.

**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**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Critical Papers</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation, Participation and Attendance</td>
<td>20%</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 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 week’s 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. 20% 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 (During Week 7 or before). Each student will make a formal oral presentation of his/her research paper during weeks 13 and 14. 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 (9/5): Women in Africa: Theories, Methods and Historiography

Readings:
Oyéwùmí, *The Invention of Women*, Begin to p. 55.
Semley, “Public Motherhood in West Africa and Theory and Practice, *Gender and History*,(2012).” BL
Herbert, “Iron, Gender and Power.” BL
Boydston, “Gender as a Category of Historical Analysis,” Rec BL
Introduction, Lecture, Discussion of Readings

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

Week 2 (9/12) 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
*Behind the Roddick Gates*, Ripley, “Hatshepsut, Identity, Ideology…,” BL
Continuation of Discussion of Week 1 Readings; Presentation; Lecture, Discussion of Readings, Week 2.

Week 3 (9/19) Culture, Power and Gender in Kush, Nubia and Beyond

Readings:
Lohwasser, “Queenship in Kush” (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 (9/26) 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 (10/3) 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 (10/10) Gendered Lives: Queen Mothers, Warriors, and Concubines
Readings
Oyéwùmí, *The Invention of Women*, 80-120.
Aidoo, “Asante Queen Mothers in Government and Politics.” BL
Robson, “Wife Seclusion and the Spatial Practice of Gender Ideology in Nigerian Hausaland.” BL or
Bonate, “Muslim Female Political Leadership…Mozambique.” 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 (10/17) Changing Notions of Status, Gender and Power
Readings:
Adiremento, “Gender, Race Class, Prostitution…Lagos.” BL
Presley, *Кikuyu Women* (Begin)
Van Allen, “‘Sitting on a Man’ Colonialism…Igbo Women,” BL
Thomas, “Imperial Concerns and ‘Women’s Affairs…”” BL
Student Presentations, Lecture, Discussion

Week 8 (10/24) Women, Gender and Leadership in Late Colonial Africa
Readings:
Johnson Odim, “For Four Freedoms” (BL)
Presley, *Kikuyu Women* (Complete)
Rachael Jean-Baptiste “Miss Euro-Africa Men Women…Metis Senegal,” BL

**Student Presentations, Lecture, Discussion**

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


**Readings and Videos:**
- Preez Bezdrob, *Winnie Mandela: A Life* (begin 136)
- Aliou Ly, “Promise and Betrayal: Women’s Fighters…Guinea Bissau,” BL
- Geiger, “Women and African Nationalism,” BL

**Student Presentations, Lecture, Discussion**

**Week 10 (11/7)** African Women: Gender and Power since the 1980s: Part One

**Readings and Videos:**
- Preez Bezdrob, *Winnie Mandela: A Life* (136 to end)
- Ranchod Nilsson, “Gender Politics, Gender Backlash…Zimbabwe.” BL
- Parpart, “Militarized Masculinities: Heroes and Gender Inequality…Zimbabwe.” BL
- Selection of Television Interviews with Winnie Mandela

**Student Presentation, Lecture, Discussion**


**Readings:**
- Tripp, *Women and Power in Post Conflict Africa* (3-33 and 49-77)
- Decker, “Of Miniskirts and Morality” in *Idi Amin’s Shadow* BL

**Presentation, Discussion**


**Readings:**
- Tripp, *Women and Power in Post Conflict Africa* (p.78-141)
- Heywood, “Angola and the Violent Years” BL
- Moran, “Our Mothers Have Spoken.” BL

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

**Week 13 (12/5)** African Women: Gender and Power in Contemporary Africa, II

**Readings:**
- Tripp, *Women and Power in Post Conflict Africa* pp. 142-258
- Mouzinho and Cutaia, “Reflections on Feminist Organizing in
Angola,” BL
Morrell et. al., “Hegemonic Masculinities....South Africa: Culture, Power and Gender Politics,” BL
Presentation of readings; Final Paper Presentations (Begin)

Week 14 (12/12) Final Paper Presentations

Final Papers Due Monday 18 December 12:00 noon

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