

Boston University
Department of History
AA/HI 588
Women, Power and Culture in Africa
Wednesdays 2:30-5:15
Fall 2018
AA 101

Prof. Linda Heywood
African American Studies

138 Mountfort St. Room 202
Email: heywood@bu.edu

Office Hours:
Mondays 4:00-5:00
Fridays: 9:00-10:00
Telephone: 617 358 3389

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?¹

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)

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).

Cora Ann Presley, *Kikuyu Women, the Mau Mau Rebellion and Social Change in Kenya* (Black Classics Press, 2013)

Grading

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 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:

Oyéwùmì, *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**

Sudarkasa, "The Status of Women" ...African Societies," *Feminist Studies* (1986) **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**)

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 (9/26) 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

Oyéwùmi, *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:

Oyéwùmi, *The Invention of Women*, pp. 121-157.
Adirento, "Gender, Race Class, Prostitution...Lagos." **BL**
Presley, *Kikuyu 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:

Oyéwùmì, *The Invention of Women*, pp. 157-180.
Johnson Odum, "For Four Freedoms" (BL)
Presley, *Kikuyu Women* (Complete)
Rachael Jean-Baptiste "Miss Euro-Africa Men Women...Metis Senegal," 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 (10/31) African Women and Power: Independence Struggles, 1960s-1980s

Readings and Videos:

Preez Bezdob, *Winnie Mandela: A Life* (begin 136)
Inge Brinkman, "War, Witches and Traitors: Cases from MPLA's Eastern Front in Angola, 1966-1975." BL
Aliou Ly, "Promise and Betrayal: Women's Fighters...Guinea Bissau," BL
Geiger, "Women and African Nationalism," BL
Rec. **Video**, *Flame* (1996), Begin
Student Presentations, Lecture, Discussion

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

Readings and Videos:

Preez Bezdob, *Winnie Mandela: A Life* (136 to end)
Ranchod Nilsson, "Gender Politics, Gender Backlash...Zimbabwe." BL
Parpart, "Militarized Masculinities: Heroes and Gender Inequality...Zimbabwe." BL
Rec. Videos, *Winnie* (2017)
Selection of Television Interviews with Winnie Mandela
Student Presentation, Lecture, Discussion

Week 11 (11/14) African Women: Gender and Power in East and Central Africa, Part Two

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

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 (11/28) African Women: Gender and Power in Contemporary Africa, I

Readings, Tripp, *Women and Power in PostConflict 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 PostConflict 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

¹ The syllabus, course descriptions, and handouts created by Professor Heywood, and all class lectures, are copyrighted by Boston University and/or Professor Heywood. Except with respect to enrolled students as set forth below, the materials and lectures may not be reproduced in any form or otherwise copied, displayed or distributed, nor should works derived from them be reproduced, copied, displayed or distributed without the written permission of Professor Heywood. Infringement of the copyright in these materials, including any sale or commercial use of notes, summaries, outlines or other reproductions of lectures, constitutes a violation of the copyright laws and is prohibited. Students enrolled in the course are allowed to share with other enrolled students course materials, notes, and other writings based on the course materials and lectures, but may not do so on a commercial basis or otherwise for payment of any kind. Please note in particular that selling or buying class notes, lecture notes or summaries, or similar materials both violates copyright and interferes with the academic mission of the College, and is therefore prohibited in this class and will be considered a violation of the student code of responsibility that is subject to academic sanctions.