

Moravian College Syllabus

ART 222 African Art

Spring 2012 Monday and Wednesday 1:10-2:20 pm Hill 310

Professor Kearns

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Availability: Best time for a conference is immediately before or after class. If this is inconvenient, a meeting can be scheduled in advance in my office, Monday or Wednesday.

Course Goals

Students will gain an aesthetic and cultural understanding of the art of Africa, from prehistory to the present day. Sculpture is the primary medium studied in the course, but textiles, painting, artisan works and architecture are also included. Students will examine how religion and cultural influences affect the development of regional and national styles. The influence of the African diaspora on art and culture in Europe, Latin America and the United States will also be considered. Students will acquire the critical vocabulary required to analyze and interpret African Art, and apply it in both discussion and writing. *(This course meets LinC M5/Cultural Values and Global Issues Requirement)*

Required Text for purchase or loan from the Moravian Art Department

Africa: The Art of a Continent. Edited by Tom Phillips, NY: Prestel Publications, 2004.

Course Requirements

1. Students must attend all classes and bring the required text as needed.
2. Students must complete two analyses, a midterm, a final project, and a final exam.
3. Students must attend the African Art Museum Field Trip as assigned.
4. Students must complete peer group sessions as assigned.

Disability Statement:

Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Mr. Joe Kempfer, Assistant Director of Learning Services for Disability Support, 1307 Main Street (extension 1510). Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the office of Learning Services

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Evaluation

Grading: 35% of your grade is determined by written work; 35% by exams, 15% by Peer Seminars, 10% by the Final Project, and 5% by attendance.

Papers: there will be Aesthetic Analyses required on two different topics. Criteria for these will be given beforehand. **Aesthetic Analysis I** is 15%, and **Field Analysis II** is worth 20%.

Peer Seminar I, II and III: each is weighted 5%. **Peer Seminar I** is a group discussion. **Peer Seminar II** and **III** are short individual student power point presentations. Criteria for each will be given beforehand.

Exams: There will be a Midterm and a Final Exam, identifying, comparing, and analyzing images from the text. The **Midterm** counts as 15%, and the **Final Exam** 20%.

Final Project: A power point presentation will show the aesthetic, cultural and historical influences of each group's choice for **Greatest Works of African Art**, 77,000 BC. to 2012 AD. The **Final Project/Greatest Works of African Art** counts for 10%.

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Proposed Schedule of Meetings Spring 2012

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Week 1/ January 16 and 18

Introduction, African Aesthetics, *Weltanschauung*, Paleolithic to predynastic Egypt. Read **Africa: The Art of a Continent**,

pp 8-37, 179-191, 103-105, 548-552.

Ancient Egypt and Nubia. Read **Africa: The Art of a Continent**, pp 41-115.

Week 2/ January 23 and 25

African Aesthetic and Cultural Influences in Minoan, Mycenaean, Etruscan Civilizations, Classic Nok to Meroe. Read **Africa: The Art of a Continent**, pp 48-9, 107-115, 194-5, 534-43, 553-8, 478, 484, 326, 526-531.

African Aesthetic and Cultural Influences in the Greco-Roman World, Read **Africa: The Art of a Continent**, p 543, 536-8, 553-8.

Peer Seminar I Black Athena (hand out) Due January 1/25

Week 3/ January 30 and February 1

Ancient West Africa, Coptic Christianity, Islam, 500 BC-1500 AD

Read **Africa: The Art of a Continent**, pp 178, 196, 230, 240,

326-412/179, 198-99, 327, 406, 468-70, 478-83, 488-95, 576-82, 538-43, 559-61, 586-91.

Greatest Works of African Art Meeting #1 2/1

Aesthetic Analysis I Due 1/30

Week 4/ February 6 and 8

South Africa, Igbo-Ukwu to Ife in West Africa, Ife Aesthetics

Read **Africa: The Art of a Continent**, p 178, 182-4, 194-6, 327-45, 383-95, 404-08.

Peer Seminar II: African Art *in situ* Due 2/8

Week 5/ February 13 and 15

Nigeria Sculptural Continuity, Ife to Benin

Read **Africa: The Art of A Continent**, pp 327, 412-431.

Greatest Works of African Art Group Meeting #2 2/15

Week 6/ February 20 and 22

Ancient Djenné-Juno, Ancient Mali, Dogon

Read **Africa: The Art of A Continent**, pp 479-95.

Midterm February 22

Week 7/ February 27 and 29

Divination

Read **Africa: The Art of a Continent**, pp 231-9, 244-8, 268-9, 288-91, 427, 454, 456, 527.

Week 8/ March 5 and 7

Spring Break No Class 3/5 and 3/7

Week 9/ March 12 and 14

Benin, African Art to the 18th Century

Read **Africa: The Art of a Continent**, pp 337-345, 395-403.

Peer Seminar III: African American Art Due 3/14

Week 10/ March 19 and 21

African Art, European Colonialism in the 19th Century,

Diaspora of African Art to Europe

Read **Africa: The Art of a Continent**, pp 231-325, 440-6, 448, 452-5, 517, 132, 150, 162, 166, 174-5.

Greatest Works of African Art Group Meeting #3 3/21

Week 11/ March 26 and 28

West African Art to the 19th Century, African Art and Modern

European: Cubism/Expressionism

Read **Africa: The Art of A Continent**, pp 327, 412-431, 337-45, 395-403, 231-325.

Note: Required NYC museum field trip scheduled for Friday, March 30

Week 12/ April 2 and 4

Central African Art to the 19th Century, African Art and the New York City's Harlem Renaissance

Read **Africa: The Art of a Continent**, pp 145-53, 170, 346, 348, 355, 358, 363, 366-7, 372, 382, 392, 440-3, 500-2, 513, 517, 522.

Field Aesthetic Analysis II Due Wednesday 4/4

Week 13/ April 9 and 11

Easter Monday No Class April 9

Early 20th Century African Art, African Diaspora in the Americas

Read **Africa: The Art of a Continent**, pp 142-3, 146-7, 153, 158-9, 204-8, 256, 260, 276-8, 280, 300, 305, 312, 357-8, 421-6, 432, 436, 447-52, 456--7, 460-3.

Week 14/ April 16 and 18

Contemporary African Art, 1980-2012

Read **Africa: The Art of A Continent**, pp 218-9, 372, 472, 465-6, 501, 520-2, 525, 544-6, 570-1, 573-5.

Week 15/ April 23 and 25

Greatest Works of African Art Presentations 4/23 and 4/25

Week 16/ Tuesday, May 1

Final Exam Tuesday May 1, 8:30 AM.

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African Aesthetic Elements of Sculpture

1. **Practical Function** is *how* and *where* the sculpture is used. The practical function includes but is not limited to sculpture to be worn, i.e., masks, or sculpture to fit into an altar or sacred setting, i.e., ancestor figures. If the work is in its original setting and still being used it is identified as *in situ*, in context.
2. **Spiritual or Cultural Function** is the religious and/or cultural use of the sculpture within and for the community as a whole. The work of sculpture *almost always* functions as an embodiment of the religious and cultural beliefs and rituals of the community. The **Spiritual Function** includes but is not limited to sculpture of humans or animals honored for the well-being or power they give to the community, i.e., Yoruba Ibedji twins.
Note: the element of function, both practical and spiritual, is **primary** for almost all traditional African sculpture, though there are exceptions.
3. **Media** is wood, clay, stone, or melded glass or metal alloys, i.e., faience, iron, which can be carved, modeled, or fired. Included in this element is the texture, which may be rough, smooth, lined, painted, embedded with gems, etc. Wooden African sculpture is almost always created out of a single trunk or limb.
4. **Shape** is created by the interplay of positive and negative space and is dictated by the three elements above. There are two basic categories of shape: **geometric** or **regular**, and **organic** or **biomorphic**. Note: the **element of line** may be implied or invisible here, that is, it emerges from the shape.

5. **Space** is internal and external. **Internal space** is both negative and positive. **External space** is the optimum viewing distance and possibly movement the work requires. For example, **a sculpture in the round** asks the viewer to walk around it. **Monumentality** may refer to a work small in size but demands the viewer step back.
6. **Mass** is the volume or weight of the work.
7. **Proportion** is derived from the work's practical and spiritual functions.
8. **Scale** is more than size. It is the work's relation to its setting. Categories are **human scale**, based on the size of a human being, **grand**, larger than a human, and **colossal**, the largest, in relation to mountains or the sky, i.e., The Sphinx.
9. **Composition** is the arrangement of the above elements. The basic designs are **symmetrical**, an equal balance divided by an axis or line, **asymmetrical**, an equilibrium of corresponding parts, or **radial symmetry**, equidistant parts emerging from a center point in a circle.
10. **Style** in African sculpture is abstract, rarely realistic, and based on the functions.
11. **Subject Matter** is important for its symbolism, i.e, what it represents in meaning
12. **Emotional Intensity** or **Passion** is the emotion, mood, or communication the viewer receives before the work. The feeling may be reverence, protection, wonder, etc.
13. **Artistic Unity** is the harmonizing of the above elements into a work of visual beauty.