

Moravian College Syllabus

ART 222 African Art Fall 2015

8/31/15-12/18/15, MW 1:10-2:20 pm, HILL410

Professor Kearns

kearnsm@moravian.edu

marthamkearns@gmail.com (immediate message only)

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.

The office is in the Art Department, South Campus, and hours are 12:30 pm to 1 pm, or another time by pre-arrangement.

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. The loan is free; you sign out the text and return it at course end. The Art Department has only 10 copies of the book available on a first-come, first-served basis. Note that the text, being the best documentation of the History of African Art yet published, is unfortunately also out of print, so it is available to you on our class Blackboard site. Note: As an undergraduate, you may also receive the text through student rental services online.

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.

ART 222 African Art
Fall 2015 Monday and Wednesday 1:10-2:20 pm Hill 410
Page 2

Attendance: The Art Department established this department-wide attendance policy to apply to students in all art classes. For classes that meet twice a week: **After the second unexcused absence, final grade will be dropped by one full letter. After the fourth unexcused absence, student will receive a failing final grade.**

An excused absence is one confirmed by a note from the Dean's Office, Student Services, the Learning Center, or verified with a doctor's note (within 24 hours of illness). Death in family should be confirmed with Student Services.

Documentation is required for sports. Students may be excused from class, with advanced notice, for games or matches, but not for practice. Students should provide the instructor with a schedule, if they know you will be missing any classes due to a game or match. Practice is not an excused absence. Students must make arrangements to cover any missed class material and turn in assignments on the appropriate date.

Job interviews or doctor's/dentist's appointments are not to be scheduled during class.

Missing Portions of Class: The following count as unexcused absences

- More than 15 minutes late for class
- Failure to bring supplies to class
- Failure to return from break
- Leaving class half an hour or more early
- Being tardy more than 3 times. Tardiness: being 5 to 15 minutes late for class

Students: If you are late or absent, it is your responsibility (not the professor's) to find out what you missed and to catch up in a timely manner.

Estimated time required outside of class:

Reading of texts, 5 hrs per week

Writing

- Analysis I, 6 hrs
- Peer I, 6 hrs
- Analysis II, 6 hrs
- Peer II, 5 hrs
- Peer III, 5 hrs

Field Trips

New York MET 12 hrs

Greatest Works Presentation, 7 hrs

Exam Preparation, Midterm and Final, 12 hrs

Seat time, 33 hrs

ART 222 African Art, Monday and Wednesday, 1:10-2:20 pm
Proposed Schedule of Meetings Fall 2015
Page 3

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 2015 AD. The **Final Project/Greatest Works of African Art** counts for 10%.

Disability Statement:

Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Elaine Mara, assistant director of learning services for academic and disability support, lower level of Monocacy Hall, or by calling 610-861-1401. Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the Academic Support Center.

Academic Honesty Policy: Please reference the College policy in Student Handbook.

Cheating on exams or quizzes will not be tolerated and will result in a 0 or F. Written assignments are designed to engage students with material covered in class through visual participation and personal reaction. Papers must be your own thoughts, impressions and reactions. The Internet can provide valuable source material, but you must participate by visiting the artwork yourself, in person, and offering your own viewpoint. Plagiarism in any form will not be tolerated. Be aware that I am very familiar with art websites, such as the Metropolitan Museum's, when you write your papers.

ART 222 African Art, Monday and Wednesday, 1:10-2:20 pm
Proposed Schedule of Meetings Fall 2015
Page 4

Week 1/ August 31 and September 2

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/ September 7 and 9

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 September 9

Week 3/ September 14 and 16

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 9/14
Aesthetic Analysis I Due 9/16

Week 4/ September 21 and 23

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 9/23

Week 5/ September 28 and 30

Nigerian Sculptural Continuity, Ife to Benin
Read **Africa: The Art of A Continent**, pp 327, 412-431.
Greatest Works of African Art Group Meeting #2 9/30

Week 6/ October 5 and October 7

Ancient Djenne-Juno, Ancient Mali, Dogon
Read **Africa: The Art of A Continent**, pp 479-95.
Midterm October 7

AR 222 African Art, Monday and Wednesday, 1:10-2:20 pm
Proposed Schedule of Meetings Fall 2015
Page 5

Week 7/ Wednesday October 14 only

Note: Fall Recess No Class Monday 10/12

Divination

Read **Africa: The Art of a Continent**, pp 231-9, 244-8, 268-9, 288-91

Week 8/ October 19 and 21

Divination (Continued)

Read **Africa: The Art of a Continent**, pp 427, 454, 456, 527.

Week 9/ October 26 and 28

Benin, African Art to the 18th Century

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

Peer Seminar III: African Diaspora Art Due 10/26

Week 10/ November 2 and 4

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 11/4

**Note: Required museum field trip to the Metropolitan Museum
of Art, NYC, scheduled for Friday, November 6**

Week 11/ November 9 and 11

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.

Field Aesthetic Analysis II Due Wednesday 11/11

Week 12/ November 16 and 18

Central African Art/Kongo to the 19th Century, African Art and
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.

Week 13/ Monday November 23 only, Happy Thanksgiving

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.

AR 222 African Art, Monday and Wednesday, 1:10-2:20 pm
Proposed Schedule of Meetings Fall 2015
Page 6

Week 14/ November 30 and December 2

Contemporary African Art, 1980-present

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

Greatest Works of African Art Final Meeting #4 11/30

Week 15/ December 7 and 9

Greatest Works of African Art Presentations 12/7 and 12/9

Week 16/ December 14/Final Exam Week

Final Exam is Monday, December 14, 2015, 1:30-4:30 PM, Hill 410

ART 222 Professor Kearns

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.

African Visual Aesthetic Elements

Textiles, Apparel, Painting, Graphic Art, and/or Body Adornment

- 1. Practical Function** is *how* and *where* the work is used, and often, *by whom*. The practical function may be but is not limited to textiles woven for rugs, apparel, and/or wall tapestries. If the work is in its original setting and/or is 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 visual work within and for the community as a whole. It functions often as an embodiment and/or as a signifier or visual code of the religious and cultural beliefs and rituals of the community. An example of this is Bonnet, attributed to male rites of passage or warriorship, originated by the Acholi of Uganda (see text, p 139). **Spiritual Function** includes its use in a practice which is religious or sacred to the community, and the visual work may, fully or in part, itself be holy. Note: function, whether practical and spiritual, is **primary** for almost all traditional African visual art, though there are exceptions.
- 3. Line**, visible or invisible, is used to create directionality, compositional focus, and/or dimension. It may be **regular**, i.e., dotted, vertical, spiral, or **lines in relation to one another**, i.e. converging or parallel, or **irregular**, i.e., an uneven wave.
- 4. Color** is light at differing wave lengths. **Hue** is full or diffused light and most often refers to a change in a **primary color**, red, yellow, and blue, or the **seven principal colors** on the visible spectrum—red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo (or blue-violet) and violet. Included in color is **Light Value**, comparative lightness or darkness, or the amount of light reflected on its surface. In the African visual palette there is also **Color Contrast**, the putting together of two or more colors which are vibrant or saturated.
- 5. Shape** is **regular two dimensional geometric**, i.e., an oval or triangle, or **irregular or biomorphic two dimensional**, i.e. organic. **Shape** may be **open** or **closed**, and used to represent known objects or animals or abstract forms.
- 6. Media** is any material or surface on which line, color and shape can be applied, designed and layered. The media may be dyed thread, dye, pigment, paint, ink, etc. In African art, the media may also include **aural material** to create sound or music.
- 7. Balance** or **Composition** is the overall arrangement of the above elements. **Balance** is **symmetrical**, where an axis or line divides an exact correspondence of parts on either side, or **asymmetrical**, where an equilibrium exists between each side, or has **radial symmetry**, equidistant parts of a circle emerging from a center point. In African visual art the overall composition is also created by **patterning**, or **repetition** of a design, motif, media and/or colors.
- 8. Style** in African visual art is often abstract, but can be realistic and a blend of abstractionism and realism, and based on the functions.
- 9. Subject Matter** is important for its symbolism, i.e, what it represents in meaning.
- 10. Emotional Intensity** or **Passion** is the emotion, mood or tone the viewer feels and receives directly before the work. The feeling may be joy, sorrow, wonder, etc.
- 11. Artistic Unity** is the harmonizing of the above elements to create a work of beauty.

African Aesthetic Analysis I

Assignment: You are to choose a work of art, preferably a sculpture, which you perceive to be beautiful, and/or a great work of art, from the text, **Africa: The Art of A Continent**, Paleolithic to Benin, 77,000 BC to 1600 AD. **African Aesthetic Analysis I is due Wednesday, September 16, 2015.** It is a minimum of five pages, maximum eight pages, and should include the use of one documented source and follow the format below.

African Aesthetic Analysis I Format

1. Title Page, top: African Aesthetic Analysis I
Title of Work
Media
Date
Genre (If it is also a subgenre, include here.)
Culture and Region
Title Page, bottom: Your Name, Title of Course, Due Date
2. **Analysis**
 1. **Introduction.** In the first paragraph discuss the reason or reasons why you perceive this work is beautiful and/or a great work of art. The reason(s) you give are any that are genuine to you.
 2. **Analyze** each aesthetic element, following the African Aesthetic Elements page. Use one paragraph for each element, and do address each element in precise detail.
 3. **Conclusion.**
The conclusion is at least one paragraph, but can be two, which summarizes the learning or importance you received from analyzing this work. If you have had an aesthetic experience, identify the new *understanding* you received. Or, if you received new insights or perceptions on African art, aesthetics, culture, the perceptual process, or yourself, discuss these. Your insights or perceptions may be personal or aesthetic, i.e., any findings that are genuine and of value to you.
3. **Addenda.** One source citation. If the work is able to be downloaded from the internet, and some in the text are, please do, but this is not a requirement.

African Art 222 Fall 2015
Peer Group I Assignment Due top of the class, Wednesday, 9/9

Assignment: Black Athena, Vol. I, by Martin Bernal, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1989. Read Introduction, pp 1-17, the handout, and please type your responses to the following questions; these will be handed in and returned to you. What is important in **Peer Groups** is that your intellectual participation is active, and you convey your own ideas and perceptions honestly and lucidly. Your written response is a minimum of two pages.

Peer I Format: Page 1

Top Left Corner:
Black Athena Peer I Response
Your Name
Course Title
Due Date

Black Athena Response, begin mid-page, page 1, pp 1-2:

1. What is the author's main thesis?
2. Do you agree with it, or disagree with it, or are somewhere in between? Please cite one quote that illustrates your view.
3. **Black Athena** has caused and continues to cause intellectual controversy in the academic disciplines of art history, archeology, and ancient history. Why do you think this is so?
4. Please state other ideas or perceptions you received or learned from the excerpt of **Black Athena** or the topic in general which you feel are important to your intellectual understanding or development but not addressed in the questions above.