

Moravian College Syllabus

ART 222 African Art Spring 2016

1/18/2016-5/7/2016, TR 1:10-2:20 pm, HILL 410

Professor Kearns

kearnsm@moravian.edu

marthamkearns@gmail.com (emergency 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, Tuesday or Thursday. The office is in the Art Department, South Campus, and hours are 12:30-1 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 genre studied, but textiles, painting, artisan works and architecture are also included. Students will examine how religion, world views 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 visual arts vocabulary to analyze and interpret African Art, and apply it to oral and written modes of expression.

(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 MUST 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, be actively engaged, 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 all peer group sessions and as assigned.
5. Students must complete the Guest Lecturer Assignment as required

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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 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 and II, 12 hrs
- Peer I, 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

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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, III; each is weighted 5%. **Peer Seminar I** is a short individual paper and group discussion. **Peer Seminar II** is an engagement, oral and written, with Moravian Honorary Doctorate Mario Joseph, from Haiti, who will be with us in class on February 9. **Peer Seminar III** is a short individual student power point presentation. 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%, 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-2016 AD. Presentations are given the final week of classes, and ranked by student vote.

Disability Statement:

Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact The Academic Support Center, located at the 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 refer to the College policy in the Student Handbook.

Example: Cheating on exams or papers will not be tolerated and will result in an F. Written assignments are designed to engage students with material covered in class through visual participation and honest personal response. Papers show your own thinking processes, insights and perceptions, and are designed to reveal growth in visual, historic and cultural understanding. **Plagiarism is stealing. Plagiarism from the internet, other student work or any other form will not be tolerated and is an automatic failure.**

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Week 1/ January 19 and 21

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 26 and 28

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 Tuesday 1/ 26

Week 3/ February 2 and 4

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 2/4
Aesthetic Analysis I Due Tuesday 2/4

Week 4/ February 9 and 11

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.
Honorary Doctorate Mario Joseph visits with us in class Tuesday 2/9
Peer II Doctorate Engagement Due Thursday 2/11

Week 5/ February 16 and 18

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 2/18

Week 6/ February 23 and 25

Ancient Djenne-Juno, Ancient Mali, Dogon
Read **Africa: The Art of A Continent**, pp 479-95.
Midterm Exam Thursday Feb 25

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Week 7/ March 1 and 3

Divination

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

Week 8/ March 8 and 10

NO CLASSES SPRING BREAK

Week 9/ March 15 and 17

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 3/17

Week 10/ March 22 and 24

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.

Week 11/ March 29 and 31

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.

Greatest Works of African Art Group Meeting #3 3/31

Week 12/ April 5 and 7

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.

NOTE NY FIELD TRIP TO TH MET TC FRI 4/8/16

Note: Required field trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC, scheduled for Friday, 4/8

Week 13/ April 12 and 14

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.

Field Aesthetic Analysis II Due Thursday 4/14

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Week 14/ April 19 and 21

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 4/19

Week 15/ April 26 and 28

Greatest Works of African Art Presentations 4/26 and 4/28

Week 16/ May 2-6 Final Exam Week

Final Exam date and time TBA

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 Tuesday 2/4.** It is a **minimum of five pages of writing**, one documented source is allowed, and should 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 for the appropriate genre. 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 only, from the text.

African Art 222 Spring 2016
Peer Group I Assignment Due top of the class, Tuesday 1/26

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. What was the most interesting new idea, new fact, or new perception you received from this excerpt? Please state the new idea, fact or perception you received, and discuss thoroughly why this was of value to you in your own intellectual understanding and development.

African Art 222 Spring 2016
Peer Group II Doctorate Engagement
Due top of the class, Thursday 2/11

Opportunity and Assignment: We have a wonderful and unique opportunity to have Moravian Honorary Doctorate Mario Joseph be with us in class on Tuesday, February 9.

We learn from persons of achievement in a variety of ways: they are role models, they inspire us, or we learn habits or beliefs that help us on our own life journey. In order to take full advantage of this great learning opportunity, structure Peer II as follows.

Step 1—Preparation for the Visit and The Visit

- a. Think carefully about what you want to know from Mr. Joseph.
- b. Frame three questions to ask him in class. Write the questions down.
- c. In class, ask him at least one of the questions you have written down.
- d. In class, it's protocol to let everyone speak, so that everyone has engaged Mr. Joseph with at least one question.

Step II—Written Engagement (total of 2 to 5 pages of writing)

Peer II Format:

Top Left Corner: Peer II Doctorate Engagement

Your Name

Course Title

Due Date

1. **Introductory paragraph.** State the three questions you had written down **prior** to meeting Mr. Joseph.
2. **Second paragraph.** State the question you asked him, his answer, and your reponse to his answer as you reflect upon it. What insights did you have from his reponse about that you liked or were useful to you?
3. **Third to fifth paragraph.** What was the most engaging part of the class discussion, in your view? Why? What did you learn from it?
4. **Sixth paragraph to end of page 2 or completion.** What knowledge did you learn in general that was very interesting or intriguing to you?