DISCOVER AFRICAN ART – Hart 260
Preliminary Syllabus - schedule subject to change and links to be activated

Professor: Jean Borgatti
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Class Time: M-W 2-5 Office hours: 1-2 and 5-6 M-W

Africa continues to challenge our eyes, our minds, and our hearts. Let extraordinary African images from the distant past to the post-modern present challenge your imagination. We will look at ‘how we look at’ and ‘how we see’ African art. We will use films, field trips, selected reading, lecture and discussion to approach (selectively) the rich and diverse artistic heritage of this vast continent. I will combine a thematic approach, punctuated by case studies of art in context. A thematic approach allows for an exploration of ideas that cut across many cultural zones. Case studies provide a more complex view of artworks, aesthetics, their communicative and symbolic functions within specific societies—today and in the past. A sub-text for this class is how meaning is constructed/how learning happens through experiencing African art in different contexts: Art Museum, Ethnographic Museum, Gallery, Film, Lecture.

Goals
- To enhance students’ awareness of the complexity and diversity of African culture through time as manifest in visual forms
- To develop a strategy for looking at and understanding African art as exhibited in Western Museums
- To enhance observational skills, research capabilities, and clear expository writing

Required Texts:
- Spring, Chris. African Art in Detail (Overview, thematically organized, beautifully illustrated, short essays and long captions; easy to read)
- Additional reading will be assigned in books on reserve in the library, or posted on the course wiki (www.afrart.pbworks.com)

Requirements and Possibilities
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1) Attendance. Your grade is linked to it. And, please be on time.
2) Email - this is how I communicate with you.
3) Assigned Reading: Complete before the class associated with the assignment
4) Collaborative Blog consisting of informed reflection upon reading, films and field trips. Your participation is critical. Extra credit for blogging on relevant unassigned issues such as visits to museums other than those assigned, African concerts, or other events.

Grade breakdown: Attendance 28%, Assigned Blog topic 10%, 6 individual blog assignments 12%, Comments on blogs by other students 8%, Paper 25%, Powerpoint 15%

Blog: should reference the readings in relation to the films, lecture material (with blog topics assigned) and field-trips. Each student is responsible for a blog that is essentially a sharing of reactions to the issues addressed by the museum or film and the reading. Your reaction may include a summary of the readings as they relate to the museum/film but more importantly they should allow you to interpret in an informed way what you see and hear. Emotional reactions may be noted; elements of surprise recorded. The point of this is to integrate the information with which you are bombarded during an intensive course. Other students are expected to respond with thoughtful, insightful comments. Blog comments: Each comment should represent a new thought, not just agreement with previous comments.
Paper on a work from MFA (African Gallery, Benin Gallery, Contemporary Gallery—El Anatsui and may include the Diaspora artists Fred Wilson or Martin Puryear whose work is on display) with powerpoint summary --- topics to be discussed and guidelines posted on wiki.

M_July 7
Introduction to Africa/Syllabus Overview (Stereotypes and Ethnocentrism)
Reading: Bohannon - Shakespeare in the Bush
http://faculty.mwsu.edu/sociology/emily.labeff/shakes_in_bush.htm
http://www.naturalhistorymag.com/editors_pick/1966_08-09_pick.html
Visona: Introduction pp. 14-19
Hoffman “Portable Paradise” in Nooter (Secrecy), pp. 223-233 (posted)—in relation to film
Film: Living Memory – Six sketches of Mali
Suggested: Visona et al. pp.104-142
Blog on film—Student 1—other students respond

W_July 9: African art and the West
Afro-Portuguese Ivories – 16th-17th c.
Enlightenment Attitudes – 18th-19thc.
Ethnographic Orientation – 19th– 20th c.
The lens of modern art – 20th c.
Video: Fang: An Epic Journey  (8 minutes – in class)
Reading: Visona et al., A History of Art in Africa, pp.168-172
Susan Vogel, Introduction to Art/Artifact (posted) and discussion on
http://www.randafricanart.com/Fang_an_epic_journey.html
For additional Illustrations: Fagg & Bassani - African Art and the Renaissance
Each student selects a modern Western artist’s work influenced by African art from those posted on the wiki to Blog about. No two students should address the same work in their primary blog. First come, first served.

M_July 14 African Art/Architecture before 1800: Rock Art, Nubia, Nok, Djenne, Igbo-Ukwu, , Ife, Esie, Benin Kingdom, SoAfr heads
Blog on an artwork from this list (look for illustrations in Spring and Visona) —each student writes own commentary on a work from this group. Do not repeat what Spring and Visona have already said.
Watch: Lost Kingdoms of Africa (Nubia)
OBJECT SELECTED AND WRITTEN PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION DUE.

W_July 16 Meet at MFA – Permanent Installation - The Canon/The Materials/the Scavenger Hunt/the Benin Gallery/Nubia/Contemporary
Reading: Spring: Brass, Bronze and Gold: Royal Art and Kingship in West Africa, pp. 64-79; Power of the Hand: Tools,
Arnold Rubin: "Accumulation: Power and Display in African Sculpture" in Berlo & Wilson, pp. 4-21
Each student Blogs about the work s/he would like to work on for final presentation – pointing out its interesting visual features—if you are not working on a piece from MFA, you should do this blog after you have selected a piece. Post your blog quickly. No two students should be working on the same piece. First come, first served.
Student 2: Blog on MFA as a context for learning about African art, other students add comments

M_July21 Masquerade in social context—Mende, Bamana, Senufo, Dan, We, Bwa, Yaka
Each student finds and blogs about a Youtube video showing an African masquerade (Not restricted to above cultures—but not one I have already found and posted on Resource Pages)
Reading: Spring: The Art of Masquerade, pp. 26-39
Visona et al. (p.324), (Masquerades)
Masks and Social Organization: Visona et al. pp. 115 (Ntomo and Tyi Wara); 119 (Komo & Kono); 120
(Shrines and Altars); 121 (Kore, Secular Masquerades, puppetry); 130-144 (Western Sudan & Dogon), 143 (The Senufo); 144 (Poro); 148 (Masks and Masquerades); 183 (Masks & Sacred Authority: the Dan and their neighbors) Harnessing the Spirits of the Wild: Visona et al. pp. 156-60 (Bwa Masquerades); 310-313 (Ijaw Festivals & Masks). Masks and the Ancestors: Visona et al., pp. 252-256 (Yoruba Msq); 140-143 (Dogon Msq)

PRELIMINARY BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE.

W_July 23 Visit to the Hamill Gallery
Review web site: www.hamillgallery.com
Preparation: Visona et al. "Illicit Trade" (p.78), “Export arts” (p.152)
Student 3: Blog on the Gallery as a context for learning about African Art

M_July 28- African Artists—Trad/Mod/PostMod
Student 4: Blog on Film Nigerian Art Kindred
Student 5: Blog on William Kentridge Film
Reading: Roslyn Walker, “Anonymous has a Name: Olowe of Ise” in Abiodun, Drewal & Pemberton, Yoruba Artist,
pp. 91-106 (posted)
Spring: Wood and Iron, Women and Men pp. 80-93
Spring: To Hell with African Art: Contemporary Art of Africa pp. 12-25
Visona et al., 125-129 (20th & 21st Century Art in Senegal)
Visona et al. pp. 500-515 (African Artists Abroad)
VHS/DVD – Kindred Spirits
VHS/DVD – William Kentridge, Drawing the Passing

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE.

Suggested: Chika Okeke – The Quest for Nigerian Art: Or a Story of Art from Zaria and Nsukka in Oguibe and Enwezor (posted)
Visona et al. pp. 40-43 (Contemporary Art of North Africa); 72-75 (Contemporary Artists of Sudan and Ethiopia); 192-195 (Contemporary Arts in Abidjan...); 226-227 (Artists and Academies in Ghana); 395-399 (Art in Kinshasa and Brazzaville),
W_July 30 African Artists—Trad/Mod/PostMod (cont.)

M_Aug 4 Dogon /Yoruba Case Studies
Essay on Yoruba Aesthetics (posted); Visona et al. pp. 238-256. 272-284. 130-143.
Each student selects a Yoruba or Dogon work to blog about – incorporate image in your post.

POWERPOINT OUTLINE DUE.

W_Aug 6 Visit to the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology
Preparation: Review Vogel: Art/Artifact
Student 6: Blog on the anthropology museum as a context for learning about African art. Other students comment.

M_Aug 11
2-D design – focus on textiles
Reading: Spring: Cloth, History and Culture, pp. 40-63.
Visona et al.: Body Arts, pp. 97-102 (Fulani); 457-461 (Nuba/Masaii et al.) and Architecture: pp. 162-164 (Nankani), 486-487 (Nguni)
Suggested for additional information: John Picton, “Seeing and Wearing: Textiles in West Africa” in L.Gumpert (ed.) The Poetics of Cloth. NY: NYU, Grey Art Gallery. (posted) and Monni Adams, "Kuba Embroidered Cloth" in Berlo & Wilson, pp. 133-152 (posted) and for further reference, see: Visona, et al., pp.207-209 (Akan); 387-389 (Kuba) See also illustrations (Chapter & illustration #) 1-20, 3-23, 3-29, 3-34, 3-35; 4-21, 4-26, 4-26; 7-11, 7-12, 7-13, 7-40; 8-18, 8-49, 8-63, 8-64; 9-57; 11-3, 11-12, 11-52, 11-59, 11-60, 11-61; 12-36; 13-40, 14-33;
Each student selects a textile or body decoration for blog – from examples shown in class or illustrated in reading.

**PAPER DRAFT DUE.**

**W_Aug.13** Visit to the National Center for Afro-American Artists, Roxbury
Reading: Review: Visona 44-60 (Nubia) and 5-6-541 (Diaspora)
Student 7: Blog on the Center as a context for learning about African art

**M_Aug 18** STUDENT PRESENTATIONS
**W_Aug.20** STUDENT PRESENTATIONS
Students each critique one other student’s presentation in Blog focusing on how well the presentation adhered to guidelines and how successful the student was in recontextualizing or explaining the art work under consideration, as well as how effectively the material was presented.

**REVISED PAPERS DUE AUGUST 25**

**Note from Academic Planning and Support:** Massachusetts College of Art and Design is committed to fostering the academic, personal, and professional growth of our students. We are especially committed to ensuring that students with documented disabilities, as defined under the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act of 2008 (ADAA), are provided equal access to all campus resources and opportunities. If you believe you have a disability that may warrant accommodations, we urge you to contact Ms. Erla Shehu (Erla.Shehu@massart.edu or 617-879-7692) in the Academic Resource Center, Tower 550. The Academic Resource Center provides access to a learning specialist, an academic coach and professional tutors.

*Academic Resources will also be available this summer for students who need some help with writing.*

The Academic Resource Center offers up to 2 hrs. per week of support for writing assignments in summer courses to all students enrolled in a MassArt program, i.e., Certificate, BFA, or Graduate. Writing support includes getting started with papers, critical reading, time management, revising drafts, ESL support, grammar, and punctuation.

Students may sign-up a) online at [http://tinyurl.com/lwcenters](http://tinyurl.com/lwcenters), b) in person at the Tower Bldg., 8th Floor, Rm. 811, or c) by calling either 617-879-7692 or 617-879-7280.

A writing specialist is also available to visit your class at a time convenient to you and explain our services and approach. To schedule a visit, please email Shea Mullaney at [smullaney@massart.edu](mailto:smullaney@massart.edu).