Women in Africa today are exceedingly diverse and accomplished, despite the negative news we read every day about violence, disease and poverty. Even those who recognize this often assume that women’s growing influence in African societies is a recent development due to the influence of modern liberal values. Contrary to this, in the past African women were not the victims of male domination, but held powerful leadership roles, were strong economic contributors and respected members of their extended families. African feminists today draw upon these traditions as a source of empowerment. This course will examine African women’s roles in the past as well as factors that undermined their status and changed gender relations such as slavery, economic forces and colonialism.

Course Objectives

- Develop a knowledge of how gender is an important factor in understanding history
- Learn about the variety of sources that allow us to reconstruct a history that was not always present in official written records such as linguistics, oral history, archaeology, anthropology and material history
- Examine the variety of important roles that African women fulfilled in the past
- Trace the shifts that occurred over time that changed gender relations and undermined women’s roles such as slavery, economic forces and colonialism
- Come to an understanding of how their traditions have empowered African women today

Evaluation

This course will be conducted as a seminar. Readings will be assigned every week and students will be expected to come prepared to discuss them. Class participation grade will be assessed on the basis of attendance and demonstrated engagement with the assigned reading. Each student will be required to give an introduction to course reading for one class which will raise questions for discussion. The following week, they will be required to submit a paper based on all the reading for the class (5-6 pages). The major assignment in this course will be a research paper on a topic dealing with an aspect of the history of women and gender in Africa. Students are required to discuss this with the professor before the essay proposal is due in week 8 of the course. This will consist of one or two paragraphs describing the topic and the approach or thesis the student plans to present, plus an annotated bibliography of 8-10 scholarly sources that will be used. The proposal should be 6-7 pages. The final essay will be due in the last class and will be 12-15 pages long. Students will be required to submit this paper to turnitin.

Students who miss deadlines for illness or another reason for assignments less than 10% must speak to the professor to negotiate late submission. Students who miss more than 10% of assignments should consult with their Faculty for an accommodation and refer to the university...
Policy on Accommodation for Illness.
(http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_illness.pdf)

Course Website:

All course information and readings will be posted on the course website at https://owl.uwo.ca/portal.

Mark Breakdown

Class Participation 15%
Class Presentation 10%
Class Reading Essay 20%
Research Essay Proposal 20%
Research Essay 35%

Class Schedule

Subject to revision by January 2019 with updates from recent publications.

1. January 10 Introduction

Reading:


Video: Umoja: No Men Allowed

Background Reading:


Pre-Colonial History:

2. January 17 Pre-history: Gender Roles and Matriarchy

Reading:


3. January 24 Women’s Spiritual Roles and the Importance of Motherhood

Reading:


Todd Sanders. Beyond Bodies: Rainmaking and Sense Making in Tanzania. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008) ix-xvi; 139-159.


4. January 31 Women of Power: Queens, Queen Mothers and Female Warriors

Reading:


5. February 7 Women’s Economic Roles and Contributions to the Family Economy

Reading:


Challenges to Women’s Traditional Roles:

6. February 14 Women and Slavery

Reading:


February 21 Reading Week

7. February 28 Christian Missionaries and Sexuality

Reading:

Marc Epprecht. ‘*This matter of women is getting very bad*’: *Gender, Development and Politics in Colonial Lesotho*. (Scottsville, South Africa: University of Natal Press, 2000) 30-38.


8. March 7 Women’s Resistance to Colonialism: Rebellion and the 1929 “Women’s War” in Nigeria

Essay Proposals Due

Reading:


9. March 14 Colonialism, Migration and Economic Change

Reading:


The Post-Colonial Era:

10. March 21 Women’s Contributions to African National Liberation Movements
Reading:


11. March 28 Gender Roles, Modernity and ‘Development’

Reading:


Video: *Sasa! A Film About Women, Violence and HIV/AIDS* 
Can be viewed on-line at [http://raisingvoices.org/resources/](http://raisingvoices.org/resources/)

12. April 4 Women’s Activism and Struggles for Peace in Africa: The Case of Liberia

Reading:


Video: *Pray the Devil Back to Hell*

**Final Essay Due**

**Policies:**

It is the expectation that students will submit assignments by, and sit tests and/or examinations on, the assigned dates; in the event that this expectation cannot be met, students are advised that the policies and practices of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities will be followed. Short extensions of a week or less can be negotiated on a case-by-case basis with the professor.

**Prerequisites:**

“Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.” (http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/exam/crsout.pdf, and the 2007 *Western Academic Calendar*, p. 19.)

**Turnitin:**

"All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under licence to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licencing agreement currently between the University and Turnitin.com (http://www.turnitin.com)." (http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/exam/crsout.pdf)

**Scholastic Offences:**

“Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholoff.pdf."

**Students with Disabilities:**

Please contact ws-ugrad@uwo.ca if you require any information in plain text format, or if any other accommodation can make the course material and/or physical space accessible to you.