

**Art History 426  
(BST/ARH 470)  
African Art, Spring 2015  
Online (4 credits)**



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Office Hours: by appointment

**Course Description:**

*The course examines a selection of African art forms, styles, and traditions. Emphasis is placed on situating the art within a larger political and social context. We will look at art in relation to kingship, gender, social control, and historical memory. No prerequisites.*

**Requirements:**

4% Research Paper Topic Proposal  
4% Annotated Bibliography for Research Paper  
32% Research Paper  
30% Weekly Discussion (African Art Blog)  
30% Final Exam

*Disability notice:* If you have a documented learning difference and are in need of academic accommodations, please notify me during the first week of class to make appropriate arrangements. For information on available disability services see:

<http://www.pdx.edu/iasc/drc.html>. PSU students requesting accommodations must provide documentation of the disability and work with the Disability Services for Students Office (503 725-4150).

*Late Policy:* Please see individual assignment descriptions for the late policy for that assignment.

**Textbook:** (available from PSU bookstore and the usual online sources)  
Required: M. Blackmun Visona et al, *A History of Art in Africa* (Harry N. Abrams, second edition 2008).

**Learning Outcomes:**

1. Compare and contrast works of art in terms of style, materials, form, function.
2. Evaluate how artistic creation interacts with the social, political, economic, and religious environment.
3. Identify significant issues in the interpretation of African art.
4. Analyze African art from a variety of perspectives. Identify the sorts of questions each approach asks and how its perspective differs from other approaches to the subject.
5. Choose a research topic related to the course material. Propose and conduct a viable research project that supports an argument with evidence from appropriate primary and secondary sources. Cite sources.
6. Write clearly and logically. Offer critical feedback to other students and use critical feedback in revisions.

**African Art Blog:**

Each module is accompanied by study questions designed to help you focus on key issues, develop critical thinking skills, and prepare for the final exam. Two due dates are set for posts to the discussion board: one for posting your answers to the study questions and one for your feedback comments to your peers.

**Research Assignment:**

Choose an African art object from a museum collection available online, such as the Fowler Museum at UCLA:

<http://collections.fowler.ucla.edu/mwebcgi/mweb.exe?request=hiersearch;id=23000;type=801>

Or any collection available via Google Institute Art Project:

<http://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/collections?projectId=art-project>

Or Google Earth 3d museum visits.

You will work on your research and communication skills by writing a research paper on your chosen object. The object can be from any culture on the African continent. The paper should be five pages in length, not including notes, images, and bibliography. The text should be double-spaced, using Times New Roman size 12 font. (for more details see the specifications in the "Research Assignment" document posted to the D2L course site).

**Paper topic proposal due Sunday, April 26 on D2L by 11:59 pm (midnight)**

**Annotated Bibliography for the paper due Sunday, May 10 on D2L by 11:59 pm**

**Paper due Sunday, May 31 on D2L by 11:59 pm**

**Schedule:****This course is fully online.****All times given refer to local Portland time.****Week 1**

March 30-April 5:

**Study question posts to African Art Blog due Saturday, April 4 on D2L by 11:59 pm****Peer feedback to study question posts due Sunday, April 5 on D2L by 11:59 pm**Introduction to the Study of African Art*Read*

Blackmun Blackmun Visona "Introduction," 14-19.

*Consult the Site*

Henry Drewal: Looking at and Seeing African Art

Archaeology of Africa: Nok Culture*Read*

Blackmun Visona "The Central Sudan," 76-81.

*Watch*

Video from Archaeosoup Productions

Nok PowerPoint

*Consult the Sites*

Metropolitan Museum of Art: Nok Terracottas

Henry Drewal: Nok

**Week 2**

April 6-12:

**Study question posts to African Art Blog due Saturday, April 11 on D2L by 11:59 pm****Peer feedback to study question posts due Sunday, April 12 on D2L by 11:59 pm**Foundation Myths*Read*A. Lagamma, "Genesis: Ideas of Origin in African Sculpture," *African Arts* 35:3 (2002), 54-75, 92.The Dogon Worldview*Read*

Blackmun Visona "The Western Sudan," 130-143.

J. Adkins Richardson, "Speculations on Dogon Iconography," *African Arts* 11:1 (1977), 52-57, 92.K. Ezra, "The Art of the Dogon," *African Arts* 21:4 (1988), 30-33, 90-91.G. Dieterlen, "Masks and Mythology among the Dogon," *African Arts* 22:3 (1989), 34-43, 87-88.*Watch*

Dogon Performance

The Dama Ceremony

National Geographic Video on the Dama  
Documentary Educational Resources video PSU library *A Dogon Kanaga Mask*

### **Week 3**

April 13-19:

**Study question posts to African Art Blog due Saturday, April 18 on D2L by 11:59 pm**

**Peer feedback to study question posts due Sunday, April 19 on D2L by 11:59 pm**

#### Masking Traditions

*Consult the Site*

Overview of Various Masking Traditions in West and Central Africa(Optional)

#### Initiation and Masquerade: The Bamana and Chi Wara

*Read*

Blackmun Visona "Mali and the Inland Niger Delta," 107-121, esp. "Ntomo and Ci Wara," 115-118.

*Watch*

Bamana PowerPoint

Video of Bamana Performance

*Consult the Site*

Virginia Art Museum: Chi Wara

#### Masks and Performing History: Kuba Masquerade

*Read*

Blackmun Visona "The Kuba," 381-392, esp. "Masks and Masquerades," 389-392.  
A. Lagamma, "Genesis: Ideas of Origin in African Sculpture," *African Arts* 35:3 (2002), 54-75, 92.

*Watch*

Dallas Museum of Art video on Kuba myth

Kuba PowerPoint

*Consult the Site*

Kuba Masks

### **Week 4**

April 20-26:

**Paper Topic Proposal due Sunday, April 26 on D2L by 11:59 pm**

#### Masking Traditions and Gender amongst the Mende

*Read*

Blackmun Visona "West Atlantic Forests," 168-169; and "Women's and Men's Societies: Sande/Bondo and Poro," 179-183.

*Watch*

High Museum of African Art video on Mende Masks

Video on the Soweï Mask

### **Week 5**

April 27-May 3:

**Study question posts to African Art Blog due Saturday, May 2 on D2L by 11:59 pm**

**Peer feedback to study question posts due Sunday, May 3 on D2L by 11:59 pm**

Masking Traditions and Gender amongst the Yoruba

*Read*

Blackmun Visona "The Yoruba and the Fon," 229-256, esp. "Masks and Masquerades," 252-256. Babatunde Lawal, "Ejiwapo: The Dialectics of Twoness in Yoruba Art and Culture, *African Arts* 41 (2008), 24-39.

*Watch*

UNESCO video on Gelede Masquerade

Manchester Museum video on a Gelede Mask

Royal Anthropological Institute video on Gelede available through PSU library

Optional Royal Anthropological Institute video on Yoruba culture PSU library

*Consult the Sites*

British Museum: Wooden Mask for Gelede Masquerade

Women in Ritual: Gelede (also follow the links on this page)

**Week 6**

May 4-10:

**Annotated Bibliography for the research paper due Sunday, May 10 on D2L by 6 pm**

**Study question posts to African Art Blog due Saturday, May 9 on D2L by 11:59 pm**

**Peer feedback to study question posts due Sunday, May 10 on D2L by 11:59 pm**

Kingship and Portraiture

*Read*

Jean B. Borgatti, "Portraiture in Africa," *African Arts* 23:3 (1990), 34-39, 101.

Kings, Retainers, and Rich Materials in the Kingdom of Benin

*Read*

Blackmun Visona "The Lower Niger," 272-284.

B. Blackmun, "Oba's Portraits in Benin," *African Arts* 23:3 (1990), 61-69, 102-104.

Frank Willett et al, "Composition and Style: An Examination of the Benin "Bronze" Heads," *African Arts* 27:3 July (1994), 60-67, 102

*Watch*

Royal Anthropological Institute video on Benin kingship rituals available from PSU library

*Consult the Sites*

British Museum: Plaque showing Oba with Europeans

Henry Drewal: Benin Art

Pitt Rivers Museum: Court Art of Benin

*Listen*

BBC podcast on Plaque showing Oba with Europeans

**Week 7**

May 11-17:

**Study question posts to African Art Blog due Saturday, May 16 on D2L by 11:59 pm**

**Peer feedback to study question posts due Sunday, May 17 on D2L by 11:59 pm**

Portraiture from Ife, the Yoruba Capital

*Read*

Blackmun Visona "The Yoruba and the Fon," 228-242.

Babatunde Lawal, "Aworan: Representing the Self and its Metaphysical Other in Yoruba Art," *Art Bulletin* 83 (2001) 498-526.

*Listen*

BBC podcast on an Ife Head

*Consult the Sites*

British Museum: A Head from Ife

Henry Drewal: Ife Art

Galerie Herrmann: Bronzes from Ife and Benin (optional)

Kuba Portraits of the King: Ndop

*Read*

Blackmun Visona "The Kuba," 381-384.

J. B. Rosenwald, "Kuba King Figures," *African Arts* 7:3 (1974), 26-31.

*Watch*

Ndop PowerPoint

*Consult the Sites*

Met: Portraits of African Leadership

Met: The Kuba Kingdom

**Week 8**

May 18-24:

**Study question posts to African Art Blog due Saturday, May 23 on D2L by 11:59 pm**

**Peer feedback to study question posts due Sunday, May 24 on D2L by 11:59 pm**

Cameroon Grasslands: Bamun Thrones and Royal Appearances

*Read*

Blackmun Visona "Cross River, Cameroon Grasslands, and Gabon," 318-347, esp. "Arts of the Royal Treasuries," 326-333.

C. Geary, "Bamun Thrones and Stools," *African Arts* 14:4 (1981), 32-43.

*Watch*

Fowler Museum video: Pageantry in the Palace – Bamun Kingdom, Cameroon

Kings and their Advisors: The Asante

*Read*

Blackmun Visona "Akan Worlds," 196-214, esp. 196-203.

Doran H. Ross, "The Verbal Art of Akan Linguist Staffs," *African Arts*, 16:1 (Nov., 1982): 56-67+95-96.

*Watch*

Asante Linguist Staffs PowerPoint

*Consult the Site*

Met: Linguist Staff

**Week 9**

May 25-31:

**Paper due Sunday, May 31 on D2L by 11:59 pm**

**Study question posts to African Art Blog due Saturday, May 30 on D2L by 11:59 pm**

**Peer feedback to study question posts due Sunday, May 31 on D2L by 11:59 pm**

Healing, Divination, and Social Control

*Consult the Site*

John Pemberton: Divination in Sub-Saharan Africa

Vodun

*Read*

Blackmun Visona "Dahomey," 256-264.

D. Rush, "Ephemerality and the "Unfinished" in Vodun Aesthetics," *African Arts* 43:1 (2010), 60-75.

*Watch*

National Geographic video on Voodoo (Vodun)

Nkisi

*Read*

Blackmun Visona "The Western Congo Basin," 350-363.

Z. Volavkova, "Nkisi Figures of the Lower Congo," *African Arts* 5:2 (1972), 52-59, 84.

*Watch*

Nkisi PowerPoint

*Consult the Sites*

Met: Power Figure (Nkisi)

Annenberg Learner: Power Figure

**Week 10**

June 1-7:

**Study question posts to African Art Blog due Saturday, June 6 on D2L by 11:59 pm**

**Peer feedback to study question posts due Sunday, June 7 on D2L by 11:59 pm**

Healing, Divination, and Social Control amongst the Luba and Yoruba Peoples

Luba Divination and the Lukasa as Historical Memory

*Read*

Blackmun Visona, "The Eastern Congo Basin," 400-408.

Roberts, Mary Nooter and Allen F. Roberts. "Luba Art and the Making of History." *African Arts* 29 (1, 1996): 22-35; 101-103.

*Consult the Sites*

Met: Ways of Recording African History

Annenberg Learner: Memory Device (Lukasa) with audio by Mary Nooter Roberts

Ifa Divination

*Read*

Blackmun Visona "Art and the Spirit World," 244-252.

Babatunde Lawal, "Ejiwapo: The Dialectics of Twoness in Yoruba Art and Culture," *African Arts* 41 (2008), 24-39.

*Watch*

UNESCO video on Ifa Divination

**Final Exam**

June 8

The final exam will be posted on D2L on Monday, June 1 by 10 am. You must submit your answers by Monday, June 8 at 11:59 pm. *For all submissions please use: rtf, pdf, doc, or docx format and please include your last name in the title of the file you upload to D2L.*

The final exam will consist of essays that rely on your familiarity with the assigned reading and other online course material.