

## SST 4502 (Section 07F4): AFRICAN ORAL LITERATURE

SPRING 2017

**Professor:** Tunde Akinyemi  
**Office Location:** 348 Pugh Hall  
**Office Hours:** 12-1 (MWF)  
**Phone:** 392-7082

**Period:** MWF 9:35-10:25 (3<sup>rd</sup> period)  
**Venue:** LIT 235  
**Credit:** 3  
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### COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

This course provides an overview of African oral literature, introduces some methodological and theoretical problems, and examines the socio-political and cultural relevance of the literature. It stresses the importance of the spoken word in Africa, the nature of African unwritten literature, the training of African oral artistes, and the place of the artistes in the society. It examines the problems raised by transcription and translation of African oral literature, and suggests some possible solutions to these problems. The course also discusses the socio-political and cultural relevance of specific genres of the literature such as the folktales, riddles, proverbs, praise poetry/panegyric, elegiac poetry, children's game songs and lullabies, religious songs and poetry, topical and political songs, oratory and formal speaking, etc. It concludes with an assessment of the changing role of oral literature in contemporary Africa.

**REQUIRED TEXTS:** *One* of the following 3 books is required for this course:

Bayo Ogunjimi & Abdul-Rasheed Na'Allah *Introduction to African Oral Literature and Performance* Trenton: Africa World Press, 2005.

**OR**

Isidore Okpewho *African Oral Literature: Background, Character, and Continuity*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992.

**OR**

Ruth Finnegan *Oral Literature in Africa* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970.

All students are also expected to read Chinua Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart* New York: Anchor Books edition, 1994 for class discussion in week 15.

**SUPPLEMENTARY READING:** In addition, the following works are relevant to the course and students are expected to be familiar with them during the semester:

Russell H. Kaschula Ed. *African Oral Literature: Functions in Contemporary Contexts*. Claremont: New Africa Books, 1998.

### ATTENDANCE POLICY AND EXPECTATIONS

Students are encouraged to attend classes regularly and participate actively in class discussion. You can only do this if you complete all assigned readings before class. You are, however, allowed 2 unexcused absences. Beyond that, each additional absence will require a written excuse verifying illness or family emergency in accordance with UF policy, failing which, your final grade will be lowered by a one letter grade. Assignments are to be handed in by the designated date. Late assignments will be assessed a penalty of one-half letter grade out of fairness to those who hand in their work on time. Mark test dates on your calendars now so that you can plan ahead.

### COURSE EVALUATION

Your final grade in this course will be distributed as follows:

<i>Class attendance and participation</i>	<b>20%</b>
<i>Test (1)</i>	<b>20%</b>

<b>Mid semester Exam</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Class presentations (2)</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Final Exam</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Total:</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Class Presentations:** During Weeks XI and XIV students will make class presentations on assigned topics. Each presentation will last for 40 minutes while the last 10 minutes of class will be devoted to questions and discussion by all. PowerPoint presentation is encouraged but not mandatory.

#### **GRADE CORRESPONDENCE**

93-100 =A	90-92 =A-	
87-89 =B+	83-86 =B	80-82 =B-
77-79 =C+	73-76 =C	70-72 =C-
67-69 =D+	63-66 =D	60-62 =D-
Below 60 =E		

#### **General**

Feel free to ask question in the class so that you will not be left behind. However, if there are issues that we cannot resolve in class, you are encouraged to use my office hours or send me an email. I look forward to a rewarding semester with you all.

### **WEEKLY BREAKDOWN OF COURSE**

#### **Week I**

Days	Topic	Reading
W: 1/4	Course introduction, an overview of the continent of Africa	
F: 1/6	The nature of African unwritten literature	Ogunjimi & Na’Allah: Introduction “chapter 9” Isidore Okpewho: Chapter 1 Finnegan: Chapter 1

#### **Week II**

Days	Topic	Reading
M: 1/0	Classification of African Literature	Ogunjimi & Na’Allah: Chapter 9 Isidore Okpewho: Chapter 1 Finnegan: Chapter 2
W: 1/11	African oral artistes	Ogunjimi & Na’Allah: Chapter 2 Isidore Okpewho: Chapter 2 Finnegan: Chapter 3
F: 1/13	African oral artistes and their	Isidore Okpewho: Chapters 3 &5

	work in the society	Finnegan: Chapter 3
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### Week III

Days	Topic	Reading
<b>M: 1/16</b>	<i>No class</i>	<i>MLK Jr. day</i>
W: 1/18	Collection, transcription and translation of African oral literature: Problems and prospects.	Ogunjimi & Na'Allah: Chapter 2 Isidore Okpewho: Chapter 12
F: 1/20	Problems of translating African oral literature into English	Same as above

### Week IV

Days	Topic	Reading
M: 1/23	Folktales and narratives: myths	Ogunjimi & Na'Allah: Chapters 4 Isidore Okpewho: Chapter 7 Finnegan: Chapters 12 & 13
W: 1/25	Legends/Fairy Tales	Ogunjimi & Na'Allah: Chapter 5 Isidore Okpewho: Chapter 7 Finnegan: Chapters 12 & 13
F: 1/27	Folktales	Ogunjimi & Na'Allah: Chapter 6 Isidore Okpewho: Chapter 7 Finnegan: Chapters 12 & 13

### Week V

Days	Topic	Reading
M: 1/30	Proverbs: functions	Ogunjimi & Na'Allah: Chapter 7 Isidore Okpewho: Chapter 8 Finnegan: Chapter 14
W: 2/1	Analysis of samples	Same as above
<b>F: 2/3</b>	<b>Test 1: On Folk narratives and proverbs (20%)</b>	

### Week VI

Days	Topic	Reading
M: 2/6	Riddles	Ogunjimi & Na'Allah: Chapter 8 Isidore Okpewho: Chapter 8 Finnegan: Chapter 15
W: 2/8	Same as above	Same as above
F: 2/10	Analysis of samples	

### Week VII

Days	Topic	Reading
M: 2/13	African religious belief systems	
W: 2/15	Religious poetry	Ogunjimi & Na'Allah: Chapter 10 Isidore Okpewho: Chapter 9 Finnegan: Chapter 7
F: 2/17	Analysis of samples	

### Week VIII

Days	Topic	Reading
M: 2/20	Oracular poetry	Ogunjimi & Na'Allah: Chapter 12 Isidore Okpewho: Chapter 6 Finnegan: Chapters 4 & 5
W: 2/22	Watch documentary on Santeria divination and discuss	<i>Santeria: Afro Cuban Religion</i> video BL 2532.S3 L83 1984 (Latin American Special collections)
F: 2/24	Analysis of samples	

### Week X

Days	Topic	Reading
M: 2/27	Salutation or praise poetry: categories and functions	Ogunjimi & Na'Allah: Chapter 12 Isidore Okpewho: Chapter 6 Finnegan: Chapters 4 & 5
W: 3/1	Analysis of samples	
F: 3/3	<b>Test 2: Mid-semester (20%)</b>	

### WEEK IX: 3/4-3/11 SPRING BREAK

**Week XI**

Days	Topic	Reading
M: 3/13	Occupational poetry <b>[Presentation: Group 1]</b>	Ogunjimi & Na’Allah: Chapter 14a Isidore Okpewho: Chapter 6 Finnegan: Chapter 8
W: 3/15	Heroic poetry <b>[Presentation: Group 2]</b>	Ogunjimi & Na’Allah: Chapter 14b Finnegan: Chapter 16
F: 3/17	Topical poetry: categories Children’s literature & lullabies <b>[Presentation: Group 3]</b>	Ogunjimi & Na’Allah: Chapter 15 Isidore Okpewho: Chapter 8 Finnegan: Chapter 11

**Week XII**

Days	Topic	Reading
M: 3/20	Death and funeral in Africa	
W: 3/22	Funeral Dirge: functions, stylistics, and nature of performance	Ogunjimi & Na’Allah: Chapters 12 & 13 Isidore Okpewho: Chapter 9 Finnegan: Chapter 6
F: 3/24	Analysis of samples	Same as above

**Week XIII**

Days	Topic	Reading
M: 3/27	Aesthetic transfer and preservation of African oral traditions in contemporary literature	Isidore Okpewho: Chapter 10: Finnegan: Chapters: 17 & 18
W: 3/29	Analysis of sample texts	
F: 3/31	Analysis of sample texts	

**Week XIV**

Days	Topic	Reading
M: 4/3	Orality in modern literature <b>[Presentation: Group 1]</b>	<i>Things Fall Apart</i> by Chinua Achebe
W: 4/5	Orality in modern literature <b>[Presentation: Group 2]</b>	<i>Things Fall Apart</i> by Chinua Achebe

F: 11/7	Orality in modern literature <b>[Presentation: Group 3]</b>	<i>Things Fall Apart</i> by Chinua Achebe
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#### Week XV

Days	Topic	Reading
M: 4/10	Orality and globalization slavery, identity and the survival of African oral literature in the Diaspora	Russell H. Kaschula (Ed.) <i>African Oral Literature: Functions in Contemporary Contexts</i> "Introduction"
W: 4/12	African Folktales in the New World	
F: 4/14	African Folktales in the New World	

#### Week XVI

Days	Topic	Reading
M: 4/17	Wrap-up /Revision	
W: 4/19	Final Exam in class	