

Professor Abosede George  
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BC3788 Gender, Sexuality, and Power from Colonial to Contemporary Africa

W 2:10 – 3:55

**Description and Objectives**

The central themes of the course will be changes and continuities in gender performance and the politics of gender and sexual difference within African societies; social, political, and economic processes that have influenced gender and sexual identities; connections between gender, sexuality, inequality, and activism at local, national, continental, and global scales. Readings will include key works in African gender history and the history of sexuality. The main objective of the course is to introduce students to significant debates in the study of gender and sexuality in the African History field. Emphasis will be placed on the theoretical and methodological approaches that have informed scholarship on gender and sexuality in African History.

**Student Learning Outcomes**

- Identify and explain key topics related to the politics of Gender and Sexuality in African History.
- Develop historical reading, writing, and research skills.
- Systematically evaluate and critique primary and secondary sources on African History.
- Apply the methods of History as a discipline to the study of the politics of gender and sexual difference in African contexts
- Demonstrate a critical understanding of the relationship between past events and contemporary politics of gender and sexuality in Africa.
- Engage in debate and discussion of moral reasoning and ethical practice in a variety of African cultures and across two key historical periods.
- Identify the historically specific social, political, and economic structures and agencies, as well as dominant ideas, relevant to the shifting politics of gender and sexuality in modern African history.
- Research, organize and produce an original work of historical research.
- Learn how to participate in and contribute to a writing community.

**Assignments**

Participation	20%
Opening Presentations	20%
Reading Responses	20%
Research Paper Proposal	10%
Research Paper Draft	10%
Final Paper	20%

A+ (97-100) / A (94-96) / A- (90-93) / B+ (87-89) / B (84-86) / B- (80-83)  
C+ (77-79) / C (74-76) / C- (70-73) / D+ (67-69) / D (64-66) / D- (60-63) / F (59 -)

**Policies**

Attendance will be taken. Students are expected to appear on time every time class meets. More than three unexcused absences will result in an automatic F.

There will be no make-up quizzes.  
Late essays will not be accepted.  
Your participation grade is based on your contributions to seminar discussions.

Absences for severe health issues, interview appointments, college-related athletic obligations, and the like, are excused only if substantiated by a notice to the professor from the dean of your class year.

Students who may need disability related accommodations are very strongly encouraged to notify the professor as soon as possible, preferably within the first week of classes. Students who need testing or classroom accommodations must be registered in advance with the Office of Disability Services (ODS) in 105 Hewitt or with Disability Services at Columbia.

Terrible things sometimes happen that are not disability related. Students who are facing *extraordinary* challenges that may impair their academic performance are advised to make an appointment with the professor immediately issues emerge.

## Requirements

- **Participation.** Seminar participants must complete assignments before each meeting and be prepared to participate actively in all seminar discussions.
- **Opening Discussions.** Each student is responsible for presenting one meeting's topic. Good presentations will include but are not limited to providing a brief intellectual bio of the author, critical evaluation of each reading, statement of key shared themes, a larger framework within which to consider readings, and a list of 3- 5 discussion questions which must be submitted to the professor. 10 - 12 minutes.
- **Reading Response Essays.** Students must submit weekly reading responses of 300 – 400 words starting in Week 3. A good reading response may include a quick summary of a reading or a set of readings, but a simple summary of the reading(s) *does not* itself constitute a good response. A good reading response is one that picks out and analyzes a point made in the reading(s) or suggested by the reading(s) that was particularly useful, interesting, provocative, or problematic to you. You must clearly state the subject of your analysis, *formulate an argument* about the subject, and provide evidence from the reading(s).
- **Research Paper Proposal.** Each student will submit a research paper proposal that includes an annotated bibliography and make a brief but formal presentation of their research paper proposal in the class. The research paper proposal you will hand in must include a one page statement of your key research question/s, a discussion of your proposed methodology for exploring the question/s, and an annotated bibliography of at least two primary sources and six secondary sources.
- For the annotated bibliography, each student will assemble a list of four journal articles and three primary sources, or two books and three primary sources that are relevant to your research topic. Your list should be alphabetical by author. Annotations must be at least one paragraph but no more than one page in length. They must briefly summarize the article's main points and emphasize methodological and theoretical issues.

Annotations may also include some discussion of whether/why the reader found a given article useful or interesting

- **Research Paper Version 1** is not the same as a rough draft. It is more polished. You may investigate whatever topic interests you. Your paper must have a descriptive title. It must have a polished opening page that includes a thesis statement or clearly worded argument. You must have an in-depth analysis of at least three of your primary sources. Version 1 of your research paper must be between 6 and 8 pages.
- **Research Paper Final Version**  
 You must use at least 8 primary sources.  
 The Final Version of your research paper must be between 12 and 15 pages  
 Detailed criteria for evaluation of your final paper can be found below.

Criteria	Strong: A	Good: B	Fair: C	Weak: D	Poor: F
Thesis Statement or Question					
Sources and Methodology					
Historiography: Close reading and analysis of req'd number of primary /secondary sources around the subject.					
Close Reading					
Development of idea over the course of the paper (or) visible "red thread"					
Citations/Grammar work					
Summary and Conclusion					

All journal articles can be accessed online through CUL Databases like JSTOR or ProjectMuse. Chapters from edited volumes will be posted on Courseworks.

Week 1 **Introductions / Expectations**

Introductions & Expectations

Week 2

Viewing and discussion of "The Life and times of Sara Baartman: The Hottentot Venus"

by Zola Maseko

Sign-ups for presentations

Week 3

**Studying Gender and Sexuality in African History**

Lisa Lindsay and Stephen Miescher, Introduction: Men and Masculinities in Modern African History,” in Men and Masculinities in Modern Africa, 1-29

Sylvia Tamale, “Researching and theorizing sexualities in Africa” in African Sexualities: A Reader, 11- 36

Week 4

**Gendering Subjects and the State**

Nwando Achebe, “ ‘And She Became a Man’: King Ahebi Ugbabe in the History of Enugu-Ezike, Northern Igboland, 1880 – 1948” in Stephen Miescher and Lisa Lindsay, eds. Men and Masculinities in Modern African History, 52-68 (2003)

Lisa A. Lindsay, "Domesticity and Difference: Male Breadwinners, Working Women, and Colonial Citizenship in the 1945 Nigerian General Strike," The American Historical Review June 1999 <<http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/ahr/104.3/ah000783.html>>

Week 5

**Intersections of Race, Sex, and Gender in a Colonial World**

Carina Ray, “Decrying White Peril: Interracial Sex and the Rise of Anticolonial Nationalism in the Gold Coast” *The American Historical Review*, Volume 119, Issue 1, 1 February 2014, Pages 78–110

Rachel Jean Baptiste, 'A Black Girl Should Not be With a White Man': Sex, Race, and African Women's Social and Legal Status in Colonial Gabon, c. 1900–1946" *Journal of Women's History*, Volume 22, Number 2 (Summer 2010) pp. 56 – 82

Corrie Decker, “The Elusive Power of Colonial Prey: Sexualizing the Schoolgirl in the Zanzibar Protectorate” *Africa Today*, Volume 61, Number 4, Summer 2015, pp. 42-60

Week 6

DUE: A FEW LINES ON PROBABLE RESEARCH PAPER TOPIC

Library Research Practicum for second half of class.

Week 7

In-class Presentations of Research Paper Topics

DUE: RESEARCH PAPER PROPOSAL *with* ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Week 8

FILM: Taafe Fanga. Directed by Adama Drabo

Available via CLIO

Week 9

OPTIONAL 1-on-1 feedback on working draft. If students wish to get some feedback on argument and structure of their work in progress at this stage, students may send a draft of their paper to the professor on the Friday before. No sooner, no later. This will be an ungraded draft for feedback purposes only. This is entirely optional.

Week 10

**Sexual Politics and the Post-Liberation State**

Sylvia Tamale, "Confronting the Politics of Nonconforming Sexualities in Africa,"  
African Studies Review 56, No 2 (2013) 31 - 46

Serena Dankwa, " 'It's a Silent Trade': Female Same-Sex Intimacies in Post-Colonial Ghana"  
NORA: Nordic Journal of Women's Studies Volume 17, Number 3 (September 2009) 192 - 205

Week 11

Guest Speaker

PAPER VERSION I DUE

Week 12

Henriette Gunkel, "Some Reflection on Postcolonial Homophobia, Local Interventions, and  
LGBTI Solidarity Online: The Politics of Global Petitions," African Studies Review 56, No 2,  
(2013) 67 - 82

Week 13

VIMEO: Hauwa Ibrahim "The Amina Lawal Case: The Sleeping Fetus, Islamic Jurisprudence,  
and the  
Struggle for Women's Rights in Nigeria" (2009) < <http://vimeo.com/12618517>>

Dawuni, Josephine and Kang, Alice. 2015. Her Ladyship Chief Justice: The rise of female leaders  
in the judiciary in Africa. *Africa Today*, 62 (2), pp 45-69.

Week 14

FINAL PAPER DUE in class.

In class conference papers