African art, like Africa itself, is fascinating—but is so vast and varied that a full overview is impossible within a short time period. This selective survey therefore takes a patchwork approach in order to introduce participants to the continent's wealth of art forms over time and the contexts in which artists create them and clients use them. A series of beginning lectures will acclimatize participants, giving them a sense of artistic setting, meaning, and function, while they develop visual analytic skills. We will then examine the arts of selected ethnic groups in greater detail. We will study a variety of African art objects and their contexts, from "traditional" art (imperial, nomadic, and community based) to new urban works, and from ancient times to the contemporary moment. Iconography, themes and style will be considered, as will questions of modernity, religious impact, tradition, the global art market, exhibition practices and colonialism.

**Text and Materials:** A *History of Art in Africa* by Monica Visona, et. al. is the required text. It's available at the Penn Book Center, 130 South 34th Street (34th and Sansom); 215-222-7600. The text serves as a supplement to classes, but tests are heavily dependent on lectures. Please also purchase bluebooks for your exams. Additional books for research projects are available at the library; a reserve list will be distributed separately.

**Supplemental Images and readings:** Test images and readings will be available on the class Blackboard site. Images will be posted on the evening of that day's class.

**Excursions:** Optional excursions by train are planned for New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art and Washington's Smithsonian. These will be day trips scheduled for two Fridays to be scheduled in conjunction with the class.

**Grading:** Grades will be based on the following: University Museum viewing exercise (15%); a quiz (10%), midterm (25%); final exam (30%); and a short research project done in stages (20%). Attendance will be taken periodically; repeatedly missed classes may affect your grade.

The viewing exercise should be written independently and will involve observational and research skills. The quiz will ensure notes are usefully directed toward the material, while exams include short essays on particular art works and
concepts, identification of pieces, and short questions relating to terms and basic information regarding African art. Participants will need to familiarize themselves with the names of artists (when known), ethnic groups, sites, countries, and dates, as well as more detailed information drawn from class notes, readings and the text. The short project will involve researching and reading about a particular object in the University Museum in order to establish an annotated bibliography and write a pithy catalogue entry of about 750 words; it will be done in stages. Additional information on the viewing assignment and project will follow.

**SCHEDULE: SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE**


*Readings for the week:* Text, pp. 10-23; 360-363; 44-45; 124-129; 153-155; 196-197; 234; 283; 336-337; 408-411; 424-425; 458-459; 494-497.

**Tuesday, May 22. A look at traditional art.** Gender and training, tools and materials, training methods, stylistic range

*Film:* Clip of Ashanti weaving, clip of carving

**Wednesday, May 23. A further look at traditional art.** Style and training, patronage. Sources for research.

**Thursday, May 24. A look at urban, workshop and academic artists.** Training, influences, patronage

**Monday, May 28. MEMORIAL DAY, NO CLASS**

**Tuesday, May 29. Exploring variety—animals.** Saharan and San rock painting. Liminal animals; birds as Yoruba and Edo witches. Protective/aggressive animal elements and medicine. Abstracting the natural world; Bwa masks and Bamana chi wara. Animals and status.

*Readings for the week:* Prince; Binkley; Ben-Amos. Text, pp. 26-31; 116-119; 158-161; 180-183; 382-391; 109; 114-115; 135; 144-147; 211-215; 314-316.

*Film:* segments of *Art as a verb in Africa*; bird masquerade

**Wednesday, May 30. Exploring variety: Becoming an adult.** Poro and Sande/Bundu societies in Sierra Leone. The fattening house of Nigeria’s Cross River and Delta regions; modern references. Chokwe and Yaka male initiation.

*Film: segments of Makishi*


*Film: Monday’s Girls*


Film: *A Great Tree has Fallen*; excerpts from *Funeral rites in Liberia*


Film: Nupe *ndakogboya* footage


Weekly readings (for the midterm): Blier, Sprague; Text, pp. 259-265; 228-236; 258-259; 317; 194-208310-313; 318-325.

Weekly readings (after the midterm): Drewal, Islam, Text, pp. 239-255.


Wednesday, June 13. MIDTERM.

Film


Film: *Yoruba*

Weekly readings: Prussin, Islam, Text, pp. 95-98; 100; 110-112; 176-180; 66-70; 72-74; 101-105; 274-296.

Film: Living memory; clips from Muslins in Wa, Ghana

Tuesday, June 19. Art and the effects of Christianity. Ethiopia—Lalibela, manuscripts and paintings. The Itsekiri and social club masquerades.

Film: Excerpts from Wonders of the African World—Ethiopia and Today is the Day We Will Do It Till the Last


Film: Deep Hearts


Monday, June 25. Varied Societies—the Ashanti Kingdom. Stools, linguist staffs and regalia, palace decoration.

Weekly readings: Curnow, Kuba, Text, pp. 396-406.

Film: excerpts from The death of an African king


Film: clips from palace festivals


Thursday, June 28. EXAM