

WEST AFRICAN PERFORMING ARTS

Instructor: Dr. E. Kwadwo O. Beeko

Course Number: MUS 1341

Days & Times: Mon – Fri, 11:30am–1:00pm

Location: CIEE Room, UG Legon

Term: Summer 2018

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Course fulfills the Arts, and Foreign Culture/International Requirement.

I. Course Description

The course is designed to introduce students to the nature and characteristic features of West African performance traditional arts that totally cover music, and other art forms such as dance, drama, masquerade, drama and theater, which are combined with music in performance. It seeks to provide students with an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the diversity, dynamism and complexity of these performing arts in the region, and the role that these arts plays in social, cultural, political, and economic lives of the societies. In a broader context, the course traces the shifting styles, forms, and content of these performing arts in relation to larger social, cultural, political and economic conditions experienced by the people. It analyzes the underlying discourse of artistry as expressed in these art forms, by examining the nature or the characteristic features of the arts, and how they are used with music as social and artistic mediums of communication, or as spontaneous dialogue to dramatize themes drawn from everyday social lives of the people. It shows how the use of these performing arts by the communities, as an avenue of communication, has continued to exist as ‘African cultural memory’ generally among the communities, and has subsequently led to cultural self-determination and self-transformation among the societies. The course finally shows, in conclusion, how these West African performing art traditions have historically and culturally formed part of the heritage of the Afro-Diaspora musical traditions, as they are normally expressed through cultural performance.

II. Course Objectives

Students after the course will...

- (a) Gain better understanding and appreciation of the nature, or the characteristic features, of West African performing arts, as employed by the societies.
- (b) Gain better understanding and appreciation of the scope of the activities involved in such performance.
- (c) Gain better understanding and appreciation in identifying and analyzing peculiar stylistic tokens that mark the performance of these art forms.
- (d) Gain better understanding and appreciation of the attitudinal values, belief systems, and behaviors expressed in these performing arts.
- (e) Gain better understanding and appreciation of the aesthetic and philosophical dimensions of these West African artistic forms.
- (f) Gain better understanding and appreciation of the uniqueness about the West African peoples’ performance experience, and the role that those performing arts play.

III. Course Requirements

Students will be expected:

1. To finish all weekly reading assignments;
2. To participate actively in class discussions, and other selected events;
3. To participate in the following trips and excursions, which relate to the course: *a visit to the Traditional Musical Performance Center at Abokobi, Accra; and a visit to other local cultural events, such as Festivals, Ceremonies, etc.*
4. To present and submit Final paper on what they would have learned and experienced at the end of the term

IV. Evaluation/Grading

Grading will be based on an aggregate of (1) *Class Participation and Presentations* – 15%; (2) *Two Examinations* – 30% (each 15%); (3) *Submission of Field Report* – 15%; and (4) *Submission of Final Papers/Project* – 40%.

The Submission of the Final Paper will be June 20, 2018, after returning to the U.S.A.

V. Students with Disabilities

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and the Office of Disability Resources and Services, 140 William Pitt Union, 412-648-7890/412-383-3346 (Fax), as early as possible in the term. Disability Resources and Services will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

VI. Academic Integrity Policy

Cheating/plagiarism will not be tolerated. Students suspected of violating the University of Pittsburgh Policy on Academic Integrity, noted below, will be required to participate in the outlined procedural process as initiated by the instructor. A minimum sanction of a zero score for the quiz, exam or paper will be imposed. (For the full Academic Integrity policy, go to www.provost.pitt.edu/info/ai1.html.)

VII. E-Mail Communication Policy

Each student is issued a University e-mail address (username@pitt.edu) upon admittance. This e-mail address may be used by the University for official communication with students. Students are expected to read e-mail sent to this account on a regular basis. Failure to read and react to University communications in a timely manner does not absolve the student from knowing and complying with the content of the communications. The University provides an e-mail forwarding service that allows students to read their e-mail via other service providers (*e.g., Hotmail, AOL, Yahoo*).

VIII. Required Texts

Manuh, Takyiwaa and Esi Sutherland-Addy, edit. 2013. Africa in Contemporary Perspectives: A Textbook for Undergraduate Students. Accra, Ghana: Sub Saharan Publishers.

♣ **Handouts** (to be provided in class or through email for further readings)

IX. Course Outline

In the U.S.A.

Week One

INTRODUCTION TO WEST AFRICAN PERFORMANCE TRADITIONS

Monday, 05/07

First Meeting with Students: An Introduction to the Program and the Two Courses involved!

Tuesday, 05/08

(Cultures and Society Lectures)

Wednesday, 05/09

9:00am – 10:30am

Session 1: The Performance Traditions in West Africa

• *Introduction to West African Performance traditions*; • *West African Popular Cultural Practices*; • *Historical Features of these Performance Traditions: from the pre-colonial era to the present*; • *The Social Relevance of these performances (entertainment and relaxation, teaching ideals and conduct, etc.*

11:00am – 12:30pm

Session 2: The West African Performing Arts

• *Introduction to West African Performing Arts*; • *Orality as a performance aesthetics*; • *Music as a performing art*; • *Dance as a performing art*; • *Drama and Theater as performing arts*; • *The Co-ordination of these Arts with music in performance*; • *Society Relationship with the Performing Arts.*

1:30pm – 3:00pm

■ **DVD/Video #2 – Artistic/ Cultural Performance**

Thursday, 05/10

Final Meetings and Discussion on Logistics

Friday, 05/11

Free day for Students

♣ **Weekly Readings: Stone, 2005: 1-21****

In Ghana

Week Two

WEST AFRICAN ORAL PERFORMANCE TRADITIONS

Monday, 05/14

Oral Performance Traditions in West Africa – I

• *Introduction to Oral Performance Traditions in West Africa*; • *Activities Involving Oral Performance: Naming Ceremony; Puberty Rites; Festivals.*

Tuesday, 05/15

Oral Performance Traditions in West Africa – II

• *The Heritage of Literary Arts in West Africa: Definition and Characteristics*; • *Elements of Epic Traditions in West Africa: Historical and Narrative Traditions*; • *Oral Narratives/ Storytelling*; • *Praise Poetry, Funeral Poetry, etc.*

Wednesday, 05/16

Oral Performance Traditions in West Africa – III

• *Oral Performance in West African Traditions: Varieties of Performance, and Paralinguistic Resources*; • *The Performer and the Accompanist.*

Thursday, 05/17

West African Oral Performers and their Role in the Society

• *West African Oral Artist/ Storyteller*; • *The Personality of the Artist*; • *The Oral Artist's Place in the Society*; • *The Artist/ Performer-Audience Relations* • *The Audience Role and Participation in Oral Performance.*

Friday, 05/18

West African Heritage of Literary Arts

• *West African Society and the Literary Arts*; • *Written Literature Verses Oral Literature; History: Time and Space in African Literary Arts; Forms and Settings Modern West African Literature; Text and Context; Classification.*

Saturday, 05/19

♠ *Volunteering with FLUCC*

♣ **Weekly Readings:** *Manuh & Addy 2013:362-381; Okpewho, 1992:42-69, 127-290***
*Belcher 1999:1-26**; Adjaye 2004: 41-58, 59-82, 83-108, 139-162***

Week Three

WEST AFRICAN MUSICAL PERFORMANCE TRADITIONS

Monday, 05/21

Musical Performance Traditions in West Africa – I

• *Introduction to West African Musical Traditions*; • *Early Accounts of West African Music*; • *Characteristic Features of West African Music*; • *Diversity and Similarities*; • *External Cultural Interaction and Influence.*

Tuesday, 05/22

Musical Performance Traditions in West Africa – II

• *The Social Context of Musical Performance; Organization of Activities: Political, Domestic and Economic, Religious, and Socio-Cultural Activities;* • *Organization of Vocal Music and their performance;* • *Organization of Instrumental ensembles and their performance;* • *the Organization and the Combine of Vocal and Instrumental ensemble*

Wednesday, 05/23

Musical Performance Traditions in West Africa – III

• *Occupational and Performing groups in West Africa;* • *West African Performance Groups and their Role;* • *Recruitment and Training of Musicians in West Africa;* • *the Structure of Performance;* • *The West African Musicians and their Role – the Griots;* • *Types of Vocal and instrumental organization and performance;* • *The Musician-Audience Relations.*

Thursday, 05/24

West African Modern/ Contemporary Popular Music and the Society

• *A Historical Review of West African Popular Entertainment: European Military Bands, Freed Slaves, Sailors; The Mission-Educated Elites; Minstrel Shows, Records and Early Film; Islamic and Christianity Influence; The Impact of WWII;* • *The Current Trend of West African Popular Music.*

Friday, 05/25

♠ **Transfer to KUMASI (King’s Palace, Museum and Traditional Homes; Bonwire Kente, Markets, etc.)**

Saturday, 05/26

• **LECTURE 3: “Role of Traditional Authority in Contemporary Democratic Governance” by a Traditional Ruler in Kumasi, Ashanti Region.**

♣ **Weekly Readings: Manuh & Addy 2013:430-444, 445-466;
Martin & O’Meara 1995:257-272****

Week Four

WEST AFRICAN DANCE PERFORMANCE TRADITIONS

Monday, 05/28

Dance Performance Traditions in West Africa – I

• *West African Dance Performance Traditions;* • *Dance as Cultural Activity;* • *Dance as an Art;* • *Dance as an Aesthetic Activity;* • *Dances as a Reflection of Life;* • *Dance Symbolic in West Africa;* • *Interrelationship of Dance and the Other Performing Arts; Dance—Beyond Tradition*

Tuesday, 05/29

Dance Performance Traditions in West Africa – II

• *West African Dances: Stilt Dances; Military, War and Martial Arts Dances; Rites-of-Passage Dances; Mask and Masquerades Dances; Harvest Dances; Story and Myth Dances; Ancient Court Dances; Work Dances; Healing and Religious Dances; National and Ethnic Identity Dances; Funeral Dances*

Wednesday, 05/30

Dance Performance Traditions in West Africa – III

• *New West African Dances: Change, Transition and Continuity*; • *Modern/ Contemporary Dance Forms*; • *Choreographic Dance Forms in West Africa*; • *Dance in New Context*; • *Stage Performance of Dance Drama*.

Thursday, 05/31

Session 2: West African Performing Arts

• **LECTURE 4**: “*The Aesthetics and Social Dimensions of West African Arts*” by Ms. Cecilia Adjei, School of Performing Arts, University of Ghana, Legon.

Friday, 06/01

Session 2: West African Music and Dance

• **LECTURE 5**: “*Traditional Music and Dance and Communication Patterns in West African Societies*,” by Professor Daniel Avogbedor, Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon.

Saturday, 06/02

Free Day!

♣ **Weekly Readings**: *Manuh & Addy 2013:413-429*;

*Welsh 2010:13-37, 38-62***; *Asante 1996:3-12, 13-28, 41-62***

Week Five

WEST AFRICAN DRAMATIC-THEATRICAL PERFORMANCE TRADITIONS

Monday, 06/04

Dramatic-Theatrical Performance Traditions in West Africa – I

• *The Heritage of Drama in West Africa: Historical Perspective*; • *Dramatic Forms: Puppet Shows; Comedies and Masquerades; Ritual Drama and Popular Drama*

Tuesday, 06/05

Dramatic-Theatrical Performance Traditions in West Africa – II

• *The Dramatist’s Place in the Society: Relationship between the Dramatist and the Society*; • *Dramatist-Audience Relations*; • *The Audience Participation in the Dramatic/ Theatrical Performance*.

Wednesday, 06/06

Dramatic-Theatrical Performance Traditions in West Africa – III

• *Modern Theatre in West African Traditional Cultures*; • *The Syncretic popular theater in West Africa (Militaristic Mime, Concert Party & Opera)*; • *The Use of Music in Dramatic/Theatrical Performance*

Thursday, 06/07

West African Dramatists and their Role in the Society – I

• *Modern and Contemporary Dramatic Forms*; • *The New Theatrical Forms in West Africa*; • *West African Theatrical Performances*; • *African Theatre in a Global Context*

Friday, 06/08

West African Dramatists and their Role in the Society – II

● **LECTURE 8: “Modern Drama and Theater in West Africa;”** by Dr Awo Mana Asiedu, School of Performing Arts, University of Ghana, Legon

Saturday, 06/09

♠ *Transfer to Cape Coast!*

♣ **Weekly Readings:** *Finnegan 1978:500-517; Okpewho 1992:261-290**
Kerr1995:72-103**; Jeyifo2002:421-433, 468-470***

Week Six

Week Six:

FINAL ACTIVITIES

Monday, 06/11/18

No Class; Students’ meetings with UG Professors on their Final Papers at Legon.

Tuesday, 06/12/18

No Class; Students’ meetings with UG Professors on their Final Papers at Legon

Wednesday, 06/13/18

No Class; Students’ meetings with UG Professors on their Final Papers at Legon

Thursday, 06/14

No Class; Students’ meetings with UG Professors on their Final Papers at Legon

Friday, 06/15

Holiday for Students

● Students will be free to have personal Interaction with the people and friends in the communities.

Saturday, 06/16

A Return to the U.S.A.

● Students will return to the U.S.A.