

**ARTH 206: African Art  
Spring 2021  
Liz Andrews, PhD**

Instructor:

Liz Andrews (she/her)  
[mandre11@gmu.edu](mailto:mandre11@gmu.edu)

Office Hours:

Friday 11am - 12pm on [Zoom](#)  
and by appointment

**Zoom**

<https://gmu.zoom.us/j/8801954280>  
+12678310333,,8801954280#

**Course Meeting Structure**

Monday, 3pm - 4:15pm

Live course meeting on

Attendance required

*(No meeting Feb. 8)*

Wednesday

Digital content

Video lectures, etc.

*(Zoom meeting Feb. 10, 3pm - 4:15pm)*

**Course Description**

What is African art? In this course, we will use this question to explore the arts of the African continent and its diaspora from its beginnings to the present day. We will examine how knowledge of African art was created and learn how to discuss African art through a critical lens. We will also learn about specific African artists and how their art responds to history and culture.

**Course Objectives:**

- Discuss the major threads and debates in defining and understanding African art
- Identify and understand works of art from different African societies in their cultural context
- Develop visual analysis skills
- Articulate the role that museums play in shaping our knowledge of African art
- Learn about modern and contemporary artists from the African continent

**Readings**

Please note, you do not need to purchase any textbooks for this course. In order to make it as accessible as possible, all readings will be available via PDF on Blackboard. There are three primary textbooks that we will use for the course. You are welcome to purchase them if you would like to have these materials to keep. We will also draw materials from many other sources.

Textbooks (not necessary to purchase):

Peter Garlake, *Early Art and Architecture of Africa* (Oxford University Press, 2002)

Monica Blackmun Visona, Robin Poynor, and Herbert Cole, eds., *A History of Art in Africa* (Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2008), referred to as "Visona" in course schedule

Suzanne Preston Blier, *The Royal Arts of Africa: The Majesty of Form* (Lawrence King Publishing, 2012) Grading and Assignments:

## **Assignments and Grading:**

### **Class Attendance & Participation: 15%**

Students are expected to attend our Monday sessions on Zoom and participate in the discussion. Participation in discussion will be both speaking and writing in the chat box. You are also expected to view Wednesday lectures and read corresponding materials. The best way to succeed in this course is to attend every Zoom class and actively engage with the video lecture and materials.

Class meetings in this course will regularly take place on web-conferencing software (Zoom). Students are required to have a device with a functional camera and microphone. In an emergency, students can connect through a telephone call, but video connection is the expected norm.

You are allowed 2 excused absences for the entire semester. An excused absence is one in which you email me NO LATER than 12pm on class days to let me know you will not attend that day. Any additional absences or absences that are not accompanied by an email will affect your final grade by half a letter (An "A" will go down to an "A-" for example). Your participation in class discussions is crucial to this course's success. Participation also means respecting your colleagues and the instructor by logging in on time, being prepared for each course, listening, asking questions, providing constructive criticism during class activities, and refraining from using cell phones (calls or texts).

There will be one film to view during this course on Netflix. You can either view the film on Netflix on your own or there will be a screening of the film scheduled.

A note on religious holidays: Please contact me in advance if the course conflicts with a religious observance. Please note that accommodations can be made in these cases, but students are still responsible for completing assignments and learning the course material.

### **Quizzes (4): 20%**

There will be four pop quizzes during our "in-person" meetings. These quizzes will test your knowledge of the course material, readings, and video lectures. They will include multiple choice and true/false questions.

### **Museum Essays (2): 40%**

It is important to view African art in museums to understand how curators contextualize the work. You will complete a write-up of two online museum presentations for these assignments. You will respond to a series of short-answer questions after viewing the exhibitions online.

Due: Feb. 22 and March 22

### **Artist Essay (1): 15%**

You will write a paper on an artwork or artist to be discussed with the instructor.

### **Instagram assignment: 10%**

During the examination period for the course (May 3-10th), each student will be required to make a post of 3-7 images and a detailed caption on a topic that we discussed in class. This post should use material we covered in class and illustrate it with images and information that will be dynamic and interesting for people to learn on social media. This post will be made on an account especially for this course.

## Late Work and Missed Assignments

Late work will be graded down for each day it is late. All work not submitted before Monday, May 10th will be given a 0.

Extra credit: There will be opportunities to view lectures, exhibitions, etc. and write short responses throughout the semester.

Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students by upholding the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. If you are seeking accommodations for this class, please first visit <http://ds.gmu.edu/> for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Then please discuss your approved accommodations with me. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email: [ods@gmu.edu](mailto:ods@gmu.edu) | Phone: (703) 993-2474

## Class Schedule

### **Week 1 - Introduction to Course**

Monday, January 25, 2021

Zoom Meeting

Wednesday, January 27, 2021

Video lecture on Blackboard

### **Week 2 - Introduction to African Art History + Egypt and Ethiopia**

Monday, February 1, 2021 - Zoom

Intro to African Art w ww w the wW\_History

Reading to be discussed in class: Garlake, pp. 9-27

Wednesday, February 3, 2021 - Video lecture + Blackboard materials

Egypt + Ethiopia

Reading to be covered in class: Visona, pp. 60-75

### **Week 3 - Julie Mehretu + Ancient Nubia**

Monday, February 8, 2021 - Video lecture + videos + images

Artist Spotlight: Julie Mehretu

Wednesday, February 10, 2021 - Zoom Meeting

Discussion of Julie Mehretu + Egypt/Ethiopia readings

**To discuss: Museum Essay #1**

### **Week 4 - Ancient Nubia + Egypt**

Monday, February 15, 2021 - Zoom Meeting

Ancient Nubia

Reading to be discussed in class: Garlake, pp. 51-71

Wednesday, February 17, 2021 - Video lecture + Blackboard materials

Reading to be discussed in class: Visona pp. 48-60

### **Week 5 - Eastern Africa + Wangechi Mutu**

Monday, February 22, 2021

Zoom Meeting

Reading to be discussed in class: Visona, pp. 440-461

***Museum Essay #1 Due today***

Wednesday, February 24, 2021

Video lecture + materials on Blackboard

Artist Spotlight: Wangechi Mutu

### **Week 6 - Contemporary Kenya + Eastern Africa, cont'd**

Monday, March 1, 2021 - Zoom Meeting

Guest Speaker: Jonathan Fraser (Kenya)

Materials to be sent out ahead of class

Wednesday, March 3, 2021

Video lecture + materials on Blackboard

Reading to be covered in class: Garlake 167-184

### **Week 7 - Yoruba Arts**

Monday, March 8, 2021 - Zoom Meeting

Early Yoruba Art

Visona, pp. 228-239

Wednesday, March 10, 2021 - Video lecture + Blackboard materials

Yoruba Royal + Spiritual Arts

Reading to be covered in class: Garlake, pp. 120-137, Visona, pp. 239-259

### **Week 8 - Museums + El Anatsui**

Monday, March 15, 2021 - Zoom Meeting

Reading on Blackboard

Wednesday, March 17, 2021 - Video lecture + Blackboard materials

Artist Spotlight: El Anatsui

### **Week 9 - Southern Africa**

Monday, March 22, 2021 - Zoom Meeting

Rock Art

Reading to be discussed in class: Visona, pp. 472-478, Garlake, Chapter 2

***Museum Essay #2 Due today***

Wednesday, March 24, 2021 -

Reading to be discussed in class: Visona, pp. 478-497

### **Week 11 - Irma Stern + South African Music**

Monday, March 29, 2021

Guest Speaker: LaNitra Berger, PhD

Reading to be discussed in class: Selections from Irma Stern and the Racial Paradox of South African Modern Art: Audacities of Color by LaNitra Berger

Wednesday, March 31, 2021 - View film

View Film: Amandla

### **Week 12 - Southern Africa**

Monday, April 5, 2021 - Zoom Meeting

Great Zimbabwe

Reading to be covered in class: Garlake, Chapter 7

Wednesday, April 7, 2021 - Video lecture + Blackboard materials

Artist Spotlights: Zanele Muholi + Mary Sibande

### **Week 13 - The Congo Basin**

Monday, April 12, 2021 - Zoom Meeting

The Kongo Kingdom

Reading to be discussed in class: Visona, pp. 366-396

Wednesday, April 14, 2021 - Video lecture + Blackboard materials

Reading to be covered in class: Visona, pp. 400-427

### **Week 14 - Modern + Contemporary Artists**

Monday, April 19, 2021 - Zoom Meeting

Guest speaker TBD

Wednesday, April 21, 2021 - Video lecture + Blackboard materials

Artist Spotlights: Malick Sidibe + Seydou Keita

### **Week 15**

Monday, April 26, 2021 - Zoom Meeting

Africa + the Diaspora

Reading to be covered in class: Visona, pp. 524 - 527

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 - Video lecture + Blackboard materials

Class wrap up

***Artist Essay Due Today***

To be added:

West Atlantic Masquerades

Reading to be covered in class: Visona, pp. 173-188

Blier, pp. 125-139, 152-162

