

W.P. Holbrook, Ph.D.

AFRICAN CULTURAL RETENTIONS IN THE AMERICAS
21:014:301

wholbrok@andromeda.rutgers.edu

Fall 2013

Tuesdays & Thursdays, 10 – 11:20

“African Cultural Retentions” is presented this term as reading and writing-intensive course focused on the continuities, transformations, adaptations and re-inventions of African culture found within the African diaspora in the Americas since the era of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The research and writing projects conducted by historians, anthropologists, archaeologists, art historians, and musicologists will be studied. Lectures, readings, classroom discussions and examinations will explore developments in the Caribbean, Central and South America, and the United States. In addition to our readings, a number of documentary films will be shown and reviewed; a museum trip is also planned. Of course, in the Americas, Africans encountered Native Americans and Europeans; and a constant project of this course is to explore and to understand the new local cultural contexts which emerged, and Africa’s contributions to those contexts. The South Carolina “Lowcountry” is a special geographic focus this term.

STUDENT REQUIREMENTS

Students are expected to attend each meeting of the class. Both a mid-term and a final examination are included as a part of the course calendar. The format for the examinations is as follows: 30 to 40 percent, “fill in the blanks” questions; and 60 to 70 percent, essays. A research paper of 15 to 20 pages is required. A list of suggested term paper topics will be discussed in detail during the second week of class. Term papers are due during the first scheduled meeting of the class after the Thanksgiving holiday.

BOOKS

The following books have been ordered for your purchase at the New Jersey Books Book Shop which is located at the corner of University Avenue and Bleeker Street.

1. Walter Hawthorne. FROM AFRICA TO BRAZIL: CULTURE, IDENTITY AND THE ATLANTIC TRADE, 1600-1830. (Cambridge University Press)
2. Michael Gomez. EXCHANGING OUR COUNTRY MARKS: THE TRANSFORMATION OF AFRICAN IDENTITIES IN THE COLONIAL AND ANTE-BELLUM SOUTH. (University of North Carolina Press)
3. Jason R. Young, RITUALS OF RESISTANCE: AFRICAN ATLANTIC RELIGION IN KONGO AND THE LOWCOUNTRY SOUTH IN THE ERA OF SLAVERY. (Louisiana State University Press)
4. Ras Michael Brown. AFRICAN-ATLANTIC CULTURES AND THE SOUTH CAROLINA LOWCOUNTRY. (Cambridge University Press)

ADDITIONAL READINGS: Students will be required to visit sites on the internet.

Professor Holbrook’s Office: 303 Conklin Hall

Office Hours: Tuesdays 1:30 – 2:30 ; and at other times by appointment

The following list of broad topics is suggested as research areas for the semester paper. Topics must be narrowed and refined in multiple consultations with the instructor. Term papers are due on Tuesday, 3 December 2013, at the class meeting time. Students are allowed to choose a topic which does not appear on the list; however, all topics must be approved in September. Office mentoring sessions will be provided on a weekly basis; and term paper workshops will be provided in class.

1. African Elements in African American Folklore/Oral Tradition, Historically
2. Reviewing Recent Scholarly Works on Santeria
3. Conjurers and Traditional Healers in the American South, Historically: How African was their Work?
4. Did the griot in African Oral Tradition Survive in Adapted Form in the Americas?
5. Did African architectural forms influence the architecture of slave housing in the Americas?
6. Exploring African Elements in Botanicas in our metropolitan area
7. Geophagia and Pregnancy in Africa and Among African Americans
8. African Religions and Brazilian Candomble: The Connections
9. Africa as Revealed in Recent Archaeological Work in the United States
10. Understanding Obeah in the Caribbean and Among West Immigrants to the United States
11. Islam in the Americas During the Era of Slavery
12. Hairstyles as a Part of the Transition from Africa to the Americas
13. African Traditional Beliefs and Their Significance to Resistance Against Enslavement in the Americas
14. Bottle Trees in the American South: Their Ties to Africa, Historically
15. Haitian Voodoo in Recent Research and Exhibitions
16. African Culture Among Maroons in the Americas
17. Congo Continuities in the Americas
18. Altars Invoking African Deities in the Americas
19. Spirit Possession from Africa to the Americas
20. Gender Roles, Work and Enterprise: Echoes of Africa During the Slave Era
21. Africa Within Burial Customs Among Blacks in the Americas, Historically
22. Exploring the African Elements of a Musical Tradition in One Caribbean Country
23. Africa's Contributions to Creole Languages in the Americas
24. Africa and Foodways in the Americas, Historically
25. The Work of African American Mid-Wives, Historically, As Seen Through the Prism of Traditional Beliefs and Customs
26. Zora Neale Hurston and Her Work on the African Cultural Legacy in the Americas
27. The Gullah Culture of South Carolina and Georgia
28. Dance Traditions from Africa to the Americas
29. Yoruba Continuities in the Americas
30. Igbo Continuities in the Americas

CALENDAR

Week 1, The Week of 3 September 2013

Introductory Lectures, Course Overview, and Organizational Sessions

Week 2, The Week of 9 September

Readings: Michael Gomez, EXCHANGING OUR COUNTRY MARKS, Chapters 1 and 2.

Discussion and Elaboration of Broad Research Topics

Week 3, The Week of 16 September

Readings: Michael Gomez, EXCHANGING OUR COUNTRY MARKS, Chapters 3 and 4

Film: "The Language You Cry In: The Story of a Mende Song"

Week 4, The Week of 23 September

Readings: Michael Gomez, EXCHANGING OUR COUNTRY MARKS, Chapters 5 and 6.

Term Paper Workshop: A Discussion of Format, Documentation, and Writing.

Week 5, The Week of 30 September

Readings: Complete EXCHANGING OUR COUNTRY MARKS by Michael Gomez (Chapters 7, 8, 9, and 10)

Film: "Slavery's Buried Past"

Week 6, The Week of 7 October

Readings: Walter Hawthorne, FROM AFRICA TO BRAZIL, Chapter 4: "Labor Over 'Brown' Rice"

Week 6

Friday Afternoon: Prof. Holbrook will conduct a tour and discussion at the African Gallery of the Newark Museum.

Week 7, The Week of 14 October

Readings: Walter Hawthorne, FROM AFRICA TO BRAZIL, Chapter 6: "Spiritual Beliefs"

Thursday Afternoon: Prof. Holbrook (repeat to accommodate schedules) will conduct a tour and discussion at the African Gallery of the Newark Museum.

Week 8, The Week of 21 October

Tuesday: Written and Oral Review in preparation for the Mid-Term Examination
MID-TERM EXAMINATION ON THURSDAY, 24 OCTOBER

Week 9, The Week of 28 October

Readings: Jason R. Young, RITUALS OF RESISTANCE, Introduction and Chapter 1.

Research Paper Advisement Sessions Continue in Professor Holbrook's Office.

Week 10, The Week of 4 November

Readings: Jason R. Young, RITUALS OF RESISTANCE, Chapters 2 and 3.

Individual Advisement Sessions for Research Papers Continue in the office, Room 303.

Week 11, The Week of 11 November

Readings: Complete Jason R. Young, RITUALS OF RESISTANCE (Chapter 4, Conclusion, and Epilogue)

Office Sessions to discuss research papers continue.

Week 12, The Week of 18 November

Readings: Ras Michael Brown, AFRICAN ATLANTIC CULTURES, Chapters 1 and 2.

Research paper advisement sessions and discussions continue to be scheduled.

Week 13, The Week of 25 November

Readings: Ras Michael Brown, AFRICAN ATLANTIC CULTURES, Chapters 3 and 4.

THANKSGIVING BREAK

Week 14, The Week of 2 December

Readings: Complete Ras Michael Brown, AFRICAN ATLANTIC CULTURES (Chapters 5 and 6)

RESEARCH PAPERS ARE DUE, Tuesday, 2 December.

OUR LAST DAY OF CLASS FOR THE FALL TERM: 10 December

Written and Oral Review in preparation for the final examination.