REL. 4370 (African Religions)

Spring 2016
Professor: Dr. Albert Wuaku
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Course Description
What are the indigenous religious beliefs and practices of peoples of African descent? In what forms did they exist before slavery, colonialism and the arrival of Islam and Christianity in Africa? In what sense/s are Christianity and Islam in Africa African Religions? In what forms do African religious Expressions exist in modern times in Africa and the African Diaspora communities? This very intriguing course exposes students to the indigenous [African] foundations of the religious beliefs and practices of African communities living in Africa and the Diaspora. The course explores the theological ideas and the ritual forms especially of the Ashanti, Ga,Fon, Ewe, Ibo, Yoruba and Mende of West Africa, and the peoples of central, east and southern Africa. Because most of the Africans forced to migrate to the USA, and Caribbean and Latin America as slaves came from these regions this course will provide students with insights into the beliefs and practices of such African centered Caribbean and Latino religious traditions as Santeria [the lukumi tradition], Vodou, Candomble and some religious forms and expressions of African Americans in the USA. Topics to be covered in this course will include, sources of African Religious beliefs, African theological notions about God, African Religious beliefs about the nature of the human being and the universe, Witchcraft, sorcery and the problem of Evil in African religious thought and

Class attendance and participation.
10% percent of your final grade depends on your regular attendance and participation in Class discussion. All must attend class regularly and punctually. Only three unexcused absences will go without penalty. Any additional unexcused Absence will cause a drop in your final grade. A to an A-, an A-to a B+, etc. Habitual lateness will also impact your grade negatively. If you cannot come to class, let the professor know beforehand via e-mail and explain why.

Note: Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class

Tests- There will be three multiple-choice tests-20pts each
Term Paper- A paper based on research on aspects of African religions, not covered in class.-20pts
A Book Review-10pts

REQUIRED TEXT BOOK
The required text book for this course is
Discussions and lectures will be based on readings from this text and selected readings from a variety of other relevant texts. These selections will be posted on Black Board ahead of the discussions and lectures.

WEEKS AND TOPICS
Week 1-Course introduction
Week 2-General Characteristics of African Religions
Week 3&4-Sources of African Religious beliefs and practices
Week 5-African Concepts of the Universe
Week 6&7-The spiritual Universe and its members
Week 8-Rituals----
Life cycle Rituals
Week 9-Death and Rituals
Week 10&11-Concepts of health, illness, Healing discourses and practices
Week 12-Salvation
Week 13-Sin and its removal
Week 14-Evil in African Religions
Week 15-African Islam and African Christianity