Florida International University  
Course Syllabus  
RELIGIOUS STUDIES 5384: Graduate Seminar on Rasta, Vodou and Santeria  
FALL Semester 2016  
Tuesday, 5:00 PM-7:40  
Graham Centre —Room 273B  
Instructor: Dr Albert Kafui Wuaku  
Office: Room DM 309A  
Office Hours: Monday,  
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course involves a critical historical, socio-anthropological and phenomenological study of the beliefs and ritual forms, of Vodou, Santeria and the Rastafari movement, three Caribbean religions with extensions in the United States and other parts of the globe. We will explore the historical foundations, cosmologies and ritual forms of these religions. We will also examine their roles in the shaping of the histories and cultures of their Caribbean communities and their Diasporas in the United States and other parts of the globe. The mix of political, religious, social and historical forces in shaping Caribbean societies calls for a multi-disciplinary approach in this course. For this reason, throughout the seminar, we will draw on relevant modern and post-modern socio-anthropological, political, historical, religious analytical frameworks for ideas as we seek intellectual understandings of the relationship between religion and society in the Afro-Caribbean communities and their Diasporas. Each year we chose a theme as the focal point of our reflections. The key theme for this year is the importance of African religious beliefs and practices as resources for counter imperial resistance and for the empowerment of African diasporic populations in contexts of hegemonic domination, past and present.

Pre-requisites: None

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Active Participation in class discussions.

At least 2 seminar presentations based on the readings. The format will be discussed in class.

A review of a book on either Vodou, Santeria, or the Rastafari tradition, to be decided after consulting with the professor.
Final research paper on a topic to be decided after consulting with the professor. This must be related to the course content [issues pertaining to Rasta, Vodou, and Santeria, or African centered religions of the Caribbean generally. I rate an essay as high quality if it shows a potential for acceptance by a peer-reviewed academic journal.

**Evaluation:**

Research/Term Paper: 40%
Seminar Presentations based on Assigned Readings: 30%
Attendance and Participation in discussions--10%

Book Review: 20%

**REQUIRED TEXT BOOKS**


List of some other relevant Books in the Area. Some Extra readings will be taken from these sources. You do not need to purchase these books.


**You do not need to buy these texts.**

**Some Relevant Articles and Book Chapters**


**Attendance Policy:** Attendance and participation are important to success in this course, and attendance will be taken at each meeting.

**Plagiarism Policy:** The following is the definition of plagiarism in the University’s CODE OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Plagiarism: The deliberate use and appropriation of another's work without any indication of the source and the representation of such work as the student's own. Any student, who fails to give credit for ideas, expressions or materials taken from another source, including internet sources, is guilty of plagiarism. Any student helping another to plagiarize may be found guilty of academic misconduct.

**NOTE**—READINGS ARE ON Bb, IN THE PRESCRIBED TEXTS OR BOTH

Topics/ Readings/ Dates

**Week 1:**
Class introduction and discussion of the course

**Week 2:** Discussions on some relevant concepts and approaches-

Andrew Apter: Herskorvits Heritage Rethinking Syncretism in the African Diaspora


*Chapters on Marx, Weber, Eliade, Geertz from Pals. Nine Theories of Religion*

**Week 3**

Readings

Chapters 2, 3 and 4 of Caribbean Religious History.


“The Fon of Dahomey” by Mercier in African Worlds by Daryl Fordes


African Religions: A very Short Introduction, by Jacob Olupona


Olufemi Taiwo. Orisa: a Prolegomenon to a Philosophy of Yoruba In Orisa Devotion as World Religion, Olupona and Rey eds. The University of Wisconsin Press, 2008.

Week 4: Vodou: meanings of the term and history of the tradition


Week 5: Vodou: cosmology [Creation, God, and gods in Vodou].

**Week 6 & 7:**
The Vodou philosophy of Personhood, Spirit Possession, and Death Rituals

Readings:
“The concept of Personhood in Haitian Vodun Religion” by Guerin C Montilus

**Week 8:** Afro-Cuban Religious Traditions [Lukumi, Abakua, Arara, Palo Monte, Vodou]


**BOOK REVIEWS DUE**

**Week 9:** Historical overview of Afro-Cuban Religiosity- with specific reference to Lukumi [Santeria] and its Cosmology and rituals

Reading: Brandon 37-185.

Read part 1 of Sandoval’s *Worldview, the Orichas, and Santeria: Africa to Cuba and Beyond*. Gainesville:]

**Week 10:** The concept of Health, healing and Divination in Lukumi [Santeria ]


on Illness and death in part 1 of Sandoval’s *Worldview, the Orichas, and Santeria: Africa to Cuba and Beyond.*

**Week 11-** The Rastafarians: History and Development [Reading: Michael Barnett Rastafarianism: Belief and Ritual [Reading: Michael Barnett.

**Week: 12** Rastafarianism: Belief and Rituals [Reading: Michael Barnett.

**Week: 13** Rastafarianism: its Global Spread

**Week 14** Term Paper Submissions
This syllabus is subject to revision at the discretion of the professor.