

Course: **AFRICAN DIASPORIC ART AND SPIRITUALITY IN THE AMERICAS:**

Honey Is My Knife

Course No.: **K20.1372-001 HUM**

Meeting: **Mondays 6:20pm – 9:00pm, 145 Fourth Avenue, Room 208**

Instructor: **C. Daniel Dawson**

Contact: **(212) 998-7314, <cddawson@mindspring.com>**

Office Hours: **Monday 3:00pm-5:00pm, 715 Broadway, Room 416**

CLASS SESSIONS, TOPICS AND TEXTS

January 26: **The African Influence in American Popular Culture** (Introduction.)

February 2: **The African Influence in American Popular Culture** (Introduction cont.)

Topics: the African legacy in early American culture, African heritage of white America, Africanisms in American musical instruments and popular music, smithery and rice cultivation as African American traditions, etc.

Texts: Holloway, Joseph E.. ed. *Africanisms in American Culture*. Bloomington: Indiana University Pres, 2005. (Readings: Introduction, Chapters 1, 2, 10, and 11.)

Vlach, John Michael. *The Afro-American Tradition in Decorative Arts*. Athens, GA: Brown Thrasher Books/University of Georgia Press, 1990. (Readings: Chapters 2, and 8.)

CP*: No. 1, “Table 1. Explorers of America” from *Lies My Teacher Told Me* by James W. Loewen. (Readings: one page.)

No. 2, E-mail discussion on early African explorers to the Americas. (Readings: pages 1-3.)

[*Please note, C. P. stands for Course Packet. The number refers to the number of the article in the packet.]

February 9: **Cultures of Freedom: Quilombos, Palenques and Maroon Societies**

Topics: the arrival of Africans in the Americas, African ideas about government and social structures, the various types and histories of maroon societies,

the importance of those societies in the formation of the contemporary Americas, etc.

Texts: Holloway, Joseph E., ed. *Africanisms in American Culture*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005. (Readings: Chapters 3, and 4.)

CP: No. 3. Seitel, Peter, ed. *Maroon Societies*. In *1992 Festival of American Folklife*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1992. (Readings: pages 54-80.)

No. 4. Barnett, Miguel. *Biography of a Runaway Slave*. Willimantic, CT: Curbstone Press, 1995. (Readings: pages 44-57.)

RBL*: Price, Richard, ed. *Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1969.
Price, Richard and Sally Price. *Afro-American Arts of the Suriname Rain Forest*. Los Angeles: Museum of Cultural History-UCLA, 1980.
(Readings: Browse both books to get an idea of the scale and depth of maroonage in the Americas.)
[*Please note, RBL stands for Reserved-Bobst Library.]

February 16: **Presidents' Day: UNIVERSITY CLOSED**

February 23: **Ilé Aiyé: Yoruba Culture in the "New World"**

***Take-home midterm given out today. Select a date and time to meet this week with the professor for verbal presentation.**

Topics: the Yoruba world view, Yoruba concepts of divinity including a discussion of the *Orisha*, types of divination in Yoruba culture, Yoruba influence in Brazil, Cuba, Trinidad and the United States, etc.

Texts: Mason, John and Gary Edwards. *Black Gods-Orisha Studies in the New World*. Brooklyn: Yoruba Theological Archministry, 1985. (Readings: complete book.)

Murphy, Joseph M.. *Working the Spirit: Ceremonies of the African Diaspora*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1994. (Readings: pages Chapter 4.)

RBL: Drewal, Henry John and John Pemberton III with Roland Abiodun. *Yoruba: Nine Centuries of African Art and Thought*. New York: Center for African Art/Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1989. (Readings: pages 13-42.)
Warner-Lewis, Maureen. *Guinea's Other Suns: The African Dynamic in Trinidad Culture*. Dover, Mass: The Majority Press, 1991. (Readings: pages 1-77, 125-140.)

March 2: **Royal Garments for the Throne: Art of Lourdes López and Juan Boza**
***Take-home midterm due today.**

Topics: the place of African traditions in Cuban culture, Afro-Cuban altar design and usage, ritual garments for the Orisha, art as a vehicle for African American religious celebration, etc.

CP: No. 5. Lindsay, Arturo, ed. *Santería Aesthetics in Contemporary Latin American Art*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996. (Readings: pages 171-187.)
 No. 6. Flores-Peña, Yasmur and Roberta J. Evanchuk. *Santería Garments and Altars: Speaking Without a Voice*. Jackson: University of Mississippi, 1994. (Readings: pages 13-26, 43-63.)

RBL: Lindsay, Arturo, ed. *Santería Aesthetics in Contemporary Latin American Art*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996. (Readings: pages 77-146.)

March 9: **Zé Diabo, Mimito and Dentinha de Xangô: Religious Art in Bahia**

Topics: religious metalwork in *Candomblé*, the blacksmith in contemporary Yoruba traditions, *Candomblé* altar objects, communalism in *Candomblé*, etc.

Texts: Murphy, Joseph M. *Working the Spirit: Ceremonies of the African Diaspora*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1994. (Readings: Chapter 3.)
 Vlach, John Michael. *The Afro-American Tradition in Decorative Arts*. Athens, GA: Brown Thrasher Books/University of Georgia Press, 1990. (Readings: Chapters 4, and 7.)

RBL: Lindsay, Arturo, ed. *Santería Aesthetics in Contemporary Latin American Art*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996. (Readings: pages 263-296.)

March 16: **Spring Recess: NO CLASSES (University Offices Open)**

March 23: **East Harlem to Havana: The Spiritual Journey of Marta Moreno Vega**

Topics: Puerto Rican popular culture, art in service of the Orisha, ritual dress of *Candomblé*, cross-cultural interactions, institution building in the African world, etc. (Guest lecture by Dr. Marta Moreno Vega, scholar, institution builder and priestess.)

- Text: Vega, Marta Moreno. *When the Spirits Dance Mambo: Growing Up Nuyorican in El Barrio*. New York: Random House, 2005. (Readings: the whole book, pages 1-292.)
- CP: No. 7. Canizares, Raul. *Walking with the Night: The Afro-Cuban World of Santeria*. Rochester, Vermont: Destiny Books, 1993. (Readings: pages 38-47.)

March 30: **Vodou: Visions and Voices of Haiti**

- Topics: Haitian ritual dress, Congo and Dahomean cultures in Haiti, role of African-based religions in popular culture, *Vodou* based visual arts, *vèvè* as a writing system, symbols of the *lwa*, *gede*, *simbi*, etc. (Guest lecture by Dowoti Desir, priestess, scholar and curator.)
- Texts: Galembo, Phyllis. *Vodou: Visions and Voices of Haiti*. Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 1998. (Readings: full book, pages vi-xxx, 1-113.)
Thompson, Robert Farris. *Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy*. New York: Random House, 1983. (Readings: Chapter 3.)
- CP: No. 8. Desir, Dorothy. "Vodou: A Sacred Multidimensional, Pluralistic Space." *Teaching Theology and Religion*, 2006, Vol. 9, No. 2. (Readings: pages 91-96.)

April 6: **Bantu Heritage of Popular Culture in Brazil**

- Topics: influence of Bantu culture in the music, dance and social philosophy in Brazil, religious forms of Central African origin in Brazil, e.g., *Cabula*, *Macumba*, *Umbanda*, *Candomblé Angola*, *Catimbó*, Central African instruments, etc.
- CP: No. 9. Kubik, Gerhard. *Angolan Traits in Black Music, Games and Dances of Brazil*. Lisbon: Junta de Investigações Científicas do Ultramar, 1970. (Readings: pages 22-36, 47-51.)
No. 10. Pinto, Valdina Oliveira. *Pemba: Sacred Chalk of the Angola-Nation Candomble*. Self published manuscript w/o date. (Readings: pages 1-3.)
No. 11. Unesco. *African Cultures. Proceedings of the meeting of experts on 'The survival of the African religious traditions in the Caribbean and Latin America'*, (San Luis de Maranhão (Brazil), 24-28 June 1985). CC-88/WS/24. (Readings: pages 137-169.)

April 13: **The Universe in a Pot: Palo Mayombe in Cuba**

***Start developing ideas for your final paper or project.**

Topics: Bantu influence in Cuban popular culture including music and dance, types of Central African religious practices in Cuba, religious objects (*nkisi*, *makuta*, *mpaka*, etc.) and their usage, *firmas*-the signatures of the spirit, etc.

Texts: Thompson, Robert Farris. *Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy*. New York: Random House, 1984. (Readings: Chapter 2.)

CP: No. 12. Colina, Cino. "The Regla de Palo Monte." *Granma* (English Edition). Havana, August 26, 1990. (Readings: two pages.)
 No. 13. Sarduy, Pedro Perez and Jean Stubbs, eds. *Afrocuba: An Anthology of Cuban Writings on Race, Politics and Culture*. New York/Melbourne: Center for Cuban Studies/Ocean Press, 1993. (Readings: pages 117-120.)

May 20: **Bomba and African Spirituality in Puerto Rico**

***Present your ideas for final paper or project.**

Topics: African spirituality in Puerto Rico; the spirituality of *bomba*, the African-Haitian dance/music form of Puerto Rico; five African based rhythms that connect the Americas together; cultural sharing and transformation in the African Diaspora. (Guest lecture by Alex LaSalle singer, drummer, dancer, scholar, and founder and director of Alma Moyo, a traditional music and dance company.)

CP: No. 14. LaSalle, Alex, *Bambula*. New York: self-published, 2007. (Readings 4 pages.)

April 27: **The African Atlantic Athletic Tradition**

Topics: spirituality of African martial arts, African based martial arts of Brazil, Columbia, Cuba, Martinique, the United States and Venezuela, music of *capoeira* and *ladja*, African philosophy in American athletics and dance, music and movement, etc. (Guest lecture by T. J. Desch Obi, historian and author of *Fighting for Honor: The History of African Martial Arts Traditions in the Atlantic World*.)

CP: No. 15. Dawson, C. Daniel. "Capoeira: An Exercise of the Soul." *Icarus* 13 (Winter 1994): 13-28. (Readings: pages 13-28.)
 No. 16. Dossar, Kenneth. "Capoeira Angola: Dancing Between Two Worlds." *Afro-Hispanic Review* 11 (1-3), 1992: 11-20. (Readings: pages 11-20.)
 No. 17. Frigerio, Alejandro. "Capoeira Angola: More Than a Martial Art." *Karate Kung-Fu Illustrated* 19 (8), (August 1988): 38-42. (Readings: pages 38-42.)
 No. 18. Thompson, Robert Farris. "Black Martial Arts of the Caribbean." *Review: Latin American Literature and Arts* 37 (January-June, 1987): 44-47.

(Readings: pages 44-47.)

May 4: **Final Class Session. Final Exam Due Today. Class Presentations.**
***Take-home final exam and class presentations due today.**