



INCL 340: African traditional religion & culture (3)

Course Instructor: Antoine Rutayisire, MA

Course Description:

The course deals with an overview of African traditional cultures and religion (ATR) as well as examining the interaction of ATR with Christianity and other worldviews in Africa. Topics to be covered will include: the concept of culture, social groupings, ATR, characteristics of ATR, sources of ATR, African world view, basic values, religious leaders, mystical forces, African religious experience, ethics and morality, death and hereafter. Attention will also be focused on specific societies. The changes currently taking place today will also be considered.

Course Learning Objectives:

At the conclusion of this course, each student will be able to:

- Know and appreciate the diversity of African traditional cultures.
- Understand the African in the right perspective and use this knowledge as a background to be able to live and work with African peoples more effectively.
- Use this knowledge to analyze modern African societies.
- Use this knowledge as a background to understand the spread and impact of Christianity.

Specific Goals:

Students will:

- Perceive the “unity in diversity” of African society,
- Understand some of the significant aspects of the African traditional cultures,
- Understand the basic beliefs and practices in ATR,
- Learn more about different cultures,
- Participate in the African culture (each student is assigned a local field assistant to help in this regard);
- Understand the various aspects of African cultures and the historical interactions of Christianity and other worldviews in Africa with ATR,
- Understand our world and the world of other cultures, and
- Develop self-awareness and analysis of other cultures.

Course Evaluation:

The above mentioned assignments will be evaluated as follows:

1. Class attendance and active participation in lecture
2. Reading the assigned texts and a one page summary
3. Weekly one page report for the three field
4. 25-30 page group (3-5 person teams) research paper based on class material, readings, personal reflection and field experiences. Focusing primarily on one theme developed in the course.

Discussions	=	20 points
Readings	=	20 points
Experiences	=	20 points
Research Paper		= 40 points

Grading Scale:

95-100	A	92-94	A-	89-91	B+	85-88	B
82-84	B-	79-81	C+	75-78	C	72-74	C-
69-71	D+	65-68	D	62-64	D-	61-	F



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Teaching and Learning Methods:

To be well prepared for the classes, a course outline is provided to the students indicating the syllabus to follow. A list of reading materials is given to them weekly for effective preparation of their lectures. All students are expected to attend classes and actively participate by answering questions and involving themselves in the discussions. Field trips during the course are intended to help students experience what is being taught to them in class (e.g: visiting Kasubi Tombs, Namugongo Shrines and Ssezibwa Falls). In addition to these field trips, the rural visits to various parts of Uganda are intended to give students a wider taste of African Culture and Religion. In addition, they also visit cultural performances such as the Ndere Troupe music and dance shows and participate in various church services at the weekends. During the course, students are offered a practical lecture on various aspects of African culture. Finally a Research Paper based on class material, readings, personal reflection, and field experiences is presented. All this is done to help students better understand and appreciate African Culture and Religion.

Required Textbook:

Mbiti John, *Introduction to African Religion*, Heinemann, London 1985

Recommended Books:

- Magesa Laurenti, *African Religion/ The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life*, Orbis Books, New York 1997
- Faupel J.K., *African Holocaust, the story of the Uganda Martyrs*, Geoffrey Chapman, London, 1962
- Mpagi Wasswa .P., *African Christian Theology*, Marianum Press Kisubi, 2002
- Mbiti John, *African Religions and philosophy*, Heineman 1988
- Roscoe J., *The Baganda*, Frank Cass & Co.,Ltd., London 1965
- Kirwen M. C, *The Missionary and the Diviner*, Maryknoll, NewYork, Orbis Books 1987
- Anatoli Wasswa (Bro) & Miirima, *Unveiling Witchcraft*, Marianum Press Kisubi 2007
- Jomo Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya*, Heinemann Kenya Ltd, Nairobi 1987
- Gehman Richard J., *African Traditional Religion In Biblical Perspective*, Kesho Publications, Kijabe, Kenya 1989
- Ayisi O.Eric, *An Introduction to the Study of African Culture*, East African Educational Publishers Nairobi 1997
- Mugambi J.N.K, *Christianity and African Culture*, Acton Publishers 2002
- Parrinder G., *African Traditional Religion*, London, Sheldon Press, 1954
- Bamuheka Judith, "Our religious heritage"



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- Idowu, E.B, *African Traditional Religion*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books,1975
- Good M. Charles, *Dimensions of East African Cultures*, Michigan State University & Cellar Bookshop Detroit USA.1966
- Taylor J.V., *The Primal Vision: Christian Presence amid African Religion*, London SC M Press 1963

Course Outline

Day	Topic	Objective	Assignment
1	African Culture & Religion before Christianity	I. The situation in Africa before Christianity II. A brief history of the coming of Christianity in Africa III. What happened when Christianity penetrated Africa	Mbiti .J. introduction to African religion ch.1 Mpagi .W. ch.1
2	The concept of Culture	I. What is culture and religion II. Evolution of African culture III. Interactions of African culture with Christianity in modern times	Bahemuka J.M.ch1 Mugambi J.N.K.ch.8
3	Social Groupings	I. Types of social groupings in African Trad. Cultures. II. Comparison of African trad. social groupings with those of other worldviews.	Kirwen M.ch.5 Mbiti J.ch.10;Eric O.Ayisi .ch.4 & 6
4	Death and Hereafter	I. Myths of origin of death II. The Hereafter III. Rituals of death & last funeral rites	Mbiti. ch.11;Kirwen ch.15
5	Kasubi Tombs	I. Visit to Kasubi Tombs	A one page essay about Kasubi Tombs
6	Practical Lecture on Aspects of African Culture.	I. Food & its preparation II. Hospitality, dress & related customs III. Manners & daily activities in the African home	
7	The Unity and Diversity of African trad. Cultures.	I. Some traditional cultural elements II. Study of some selected societies	Roscoe J; Jomo Kenyatta



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8	Sources of African Traditional Religion	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Rituals, ceremonies and festivals II. Shrines, sacred places and religious objects III. Arts and symbols IV. Music and dance: names, places, myths, legends V. Riddles, proverbs and wise sayings VI. Tradition and the challenge to other truth authority structures 	Mbiti J.ch.12 & 13 Parrinder E.G.ch.7
9	Visit to Ssezibwa Falls & Namugongo shrines	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Visit to the Catholic Martyrs' shrine Namugongo II. Visit to the Anglican Martyrs' shrine Namugongo III. Visit to Ssezibwa Falls 	Faupel .ch1; A one page written work about Ssezibwa & Namugongo shrines
10	African Traditional Religion	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. The nature of African Traditional Religion II. Significance of African Traditional Religion III. Interactions and relationship of ATR with Christianity in Africa 	Magesa ch.1 Ayisi O.E.ch.10 Parrinder E.G.ch.1
11	Basic African World View	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. The Supreme Deity II. Divinities III. Ancestors IV. The world of man and spirits 	Mbiti J.ch.7 Kirwen ch.3 Mugambi J.N.K.ch6
12	African basic values	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Marriage, pregnancy, birth & naming II. Childhood, education, initiation & African community III. Work & Leisure 	Kirwen ch.9,7 Mbiti ch.9 & 10
13	Nature, training and role of Religious Leaders	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Priests, Mediums, Diviners, Herbalists, Witchdoctors, king and chiefs II. Their nature, role, purpose & training III. Challenges for Christians engaging ATR. 	Mbiti J.ch.14 Kirwen ch.12
14	Mystical Forces	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Magic, sorcery and witchcraft II. Divination and witchcraft III. Protective charms and amulets IV. Challenges for Christians engaging ATR. 	Mbiti J.ch.15 Parrinder E.G.ch.2 Kirwen ch.13 & 14
15	African Traditional Religious Experience	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Worship-prayer/sacrifices/offerings II. Concrete examples of African worship 	Jomo Kenyatta .ch.



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16	Ethics and Morality	I. Meaning and value of morals II. Individual & family morals III. Community morals IV. Sacred and secular morals V. Challenges of African ethics & morality	Mbiti J. ch.16 Mugambi J.N.K .ch12
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