

**POSC 29, BLS 25, WAGS 61**

**Women and Politics in Africa**

**Amherst College, Spring 2008**

Mon/Wed 12:30-1:50 pm

Instructor: Catharine Newbury  
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Office Hours: Mon., 2:00-3:00pm,  
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This course explores how women in Africa have been affected by social and political changes during the past century, and how they have attempted to shape these transformations. We will study the genesis and effects of political activism by African women in different contexts, and the implications of this for contemporary state/civil society relations on the continent. Topics include the historical effects of colonialism on the economic, social, and political roles of African women, the nature of urban/rural distinctions, key issues facing women in the development process, and the diverse responses by women to the economic and political crises of postcolonial African polities.

We will view women as active participants in society with their own collective and individual strategies to enhance their autonomy. In assessing women's roles in politics and how politics affect women, we will address the following types of questions: How did changes in the colonial period affect women's access to resources, political power, and status, and how did women respond to these changes? How have women's political roles changed in postcolonial African states, since the 1960s? From the 1980s, changes associated with neoliberal economic policies have had important effects for women and gender relations. Have increased opportunities to earn incomes, such as in the informal economy, led to more power for women? In what ways does women's activism in the context of recent struggles for democratization represent a new African feminism? What state policies are particularly important for women and their families? What have been the effects of recent wars in Africa on women and gender relations?

**Organization**

Classes will be conducted through a combination of lecture and discussion. In addition to academic analyses, readings include novels, women's life histories, and accounts by journalists. We will also view videos that depict the lives and experiences of contemporary women in Africa. Since much of class time focuses on discussion of assigned material, it is important that students attend class regularly and complete the readings before each class session. During the semester there will be occasional screenings outside class of videos that are too long to fit within the class period. Students are also expected to attend the conference on the "Bamako" film, Saturday, March 1.

**Texts**

All students should purchase the required texts, available at Jeffrey Amherst Bookstore. A coursepack, "Readings on African Women and Politics," is available at the Political Science Department office, 103 Clark House.

Gwen Mikell, *African Feminism: The Politics of Survival in Sub-Saharan Africa*

Buchi Emecheta, *The Joys of Motherhood*

Wangari Maathai, *Unbowed: A Memoir*

Marie Béatrice Umutesi, *Surviving the Slaughter: The Ordeal of a Rwandan Refugee in Zaire*

Sheila Meintjes, et al., eds., *The Aftermath: Women in Post-Conflict Transformation*

Optional texts, also available at Jeffery Amherst Bookstore:

Virginia Lee Barnes and Janice Boddy, *Aman: The Story of a Somali Girl*

Jean Davison. *The Ostrich Wakes: Struggles for Change in Highland Kenya.*

Anne Marie Goetz & Shireen Hassim, eds., *No Shortcuts to Power: African Women in Politics and Policy Making*

Aili Mari Tripp, *Women and Politics in Uganda*

### Assignments

Evaluation for the course consists of class participation, 20%; map quiz and report on news item or website, 10%; a five-page essay, 10%; midterm exam, 20%; abstract & annotated bibliography for final paper, 10%; final paper of 10-12 pages, 30%.

Participation includes active involvement in class discussions and timely submission of responses to discussion questions, when assigned. Each student will prepare a two-page assessment of a news item or website on issues facing women in Africa. The essay topic will be assigned, but for the final paper students will be given a choice of topics. One month before the final paper is due, students must submit a title, abstract, and annotated preliminary bibliography for their final paper.

Please type all written work, with double-spacing and adequate margins; edit your work carefully, and include page numbers. Before handing in an assignment, be sure to make a copy to keep for yourself.

Map quiz: **Feb 18**

Essay is due: **Feb. 27**

Midterm exam: **March 26**

Report on news item or website is due: **April 2**

Title, abstract, and annotated bibliography for final paper are due: **April 11**

Final paper is due: May 9

### Special Events

During the semester I will inform the class of speakers and other events in the Valley that focus on Africa. Please note two events in February which students in this course are strongly urged to attend:

“Love During the War” – Wed., Feb. 20, 7:30pm, Massachusetts. Multicultural Film Festival, UMass, Mahar Auditorium (a film about rape as a weapon of war in the Dem. Republic of the Congo)

“Bamako”: Globalization on Trial in Africa, Feb. 28-Mar. 1, Smith College

### Topics and Readings

Most required readings are in the course texts or in the coursepack. Some are on electronic reserve or at online web sites, and a few readings will be handed out in class. In the listings below, readings in required texts are marked [P], for purchase. One copy of each text is also on Reserve in Frost Library. Readings in the coursepack are marked [CP]. Those on Electronic Reserve are marked [ER], and optional readings are marked [R], for paper reserve. Study guides and essay assignments will be handed out in class.

#### Jan. 28 Introduction

Christine Obbo, “A Fable by Way of Preface.” (hand-out)

#### Jan. 30 Geographical and Social Context

Jeffrey Neff, “Africa: A Geographic Preface,” in Gordon & Gordon, Understanding Contemporary Africa, (4th edition, 2001), pp. 7-22. [ER]

Betty Potash, “Women in the Changing African Family,” in Hay and Stichter, African Women South of the Sahara (2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1995), pp. 69-92. [ER]

**Feb. 4 Women's Roles in Family and Society**

Jeanne Maddox Toungara, "Changing the Meaning of Marriage: Women and Family Law in Côte d'Ivoire, in Mikell, ed., African Feminism, pp. 53-76. [P]

Video: "Legacy of Lifestyles" (Ali Mazrui series, "The Africans," Cassette #1)

**Feb. 6 Women and Political Transition in South Africa**

Shawn Riba Donaldson, "'Our Women Keep Our Skies from Falling': Women's Networks and Survival Imperatives in Tshunyane, South Africa," in Mikell, African Feminism, pp. 257-275.

Shirin Hassim, "Representation, Participation and Democratic Effectiveness: Feminist Challenges to Representative Democracy in South Africa," in Goetz & Hassim, No Shortcuts to Power, pp. 81-109 [CP]

Guest Speaker: Ayesha Kajee, Program Director, International Human Rights Exchange (Witwatersrand University, South Africa & Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY)

**Feb. 11 Concepts and Issues**

Carol Lancaster, "Development in Africa: The Good, the Bad, the Ugly," Current History 104, 682 (May 2005): 222-227. [CP]

Tina Sideris, "Rape in War and Peace: Social Context, Gender, Power and Identity," in Meintjes, Pillay, and Turshen, eds., The Aftermath, 142-158 [P]

Brooke Grundfest Schoepf, "AIDS, Gender, and Sexuality during Africa's Economic Crisis," in Mikell, African Feminism, 310-332. [P]

Mary Kimani, "Investing in the Health of Africa's Mothers," Africa Renewal 21, 4 (January 2008): 8-11.

"UN Special Envoy Urges More Action on AIDS in Africa" (Jan. 26, 2006) [<http://www.jhsph.edu/publichealthnews/articles/2006/lewis.html>]

"Africa Action Marks International Women's Day with Focus on HIV/AIDS" (March 8, 2007) [<http://www.africaaction.org/newsroom/release.php?op=read&documentid=2303&type=2&issues=1>]

Ernest Harsch, "AIDS Deaths are Declining, Reports U.N.," Africa Renewal 21, 4 (January 2008): 4, 19 [CP]

Optional: Stephen Lewis, Race Against Time (Anansi Press, 2006). [R]

**Feb 13 Theoretical Perspectives: Power, Ideology, and Women's Subordination**

Lynne B. Iglitzin, "The Patriarchal Heritage," in Iglitzin & Ross, eds., Women in the World, 7-24. [CP]

Cheryl Johnson-Odim, "Common Themes, Different Contexts: Third World Women and Feminism," in Mohanty et al., eds., Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism, 314-327. [CP]

Gwendolyn Mikell, "Introduction," African Feminism, pp. 1-33. [P]

**Feb 18 Colonial Transformations in Women's Roles**

**\*\*\*Map Quiz\*\*\***

Kenda Mutongi, "'Worries of the Heart': Widowed Mothers, Daughters & Masculinities in Maragoli, Western Kenya, 1940-60," Journal of African History 40, 1 (1999): 67-86. [ER]

Optional: Virginia Lee Barnes, Aman: The Story of a Somali Girl, esp. Chs. 2-3 [R]

**Feb 20 War and Violence Against Women in the DRC**

“U.N. Expert on Violence Against Women Expresses Serious Concerns Following Visit to Democratic Republic of Congo,” U.N. Office in Geneva (July 30, 2007)  
[http://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B9C2E/\(httpNewsByYear\\_en\)/A4F381EEA9D4AB6e](http://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B9C2E/(httpNewsByYear_en)/A4F381EEA9D4AB6e)

Ernest Harsch, "Building a State for the Congolese People: Beyond Peace and Elections, Fundamental Reforms are Essential in the DRC," *Africa Renewal* 21, 4 (January 2008): 12-18. [CP]

Human Rights Watch, "The War Within the War: Sexual Violence Against Women and Girls in Eastern Congo" (2002), pp. 8-91 [Context; Sexual Violence as a Weapon of War; The Aftermath of Rape and Other Forms of Sexual Violence; Individual and Community Responses; The Response of the Authorities; Legal Protection against Sexual Violence]  
<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2002/drc/>

Guest Speaker: Osvalde Lewat-Hallade

(Cameroonian Director of the film "Love During the War")

**7:30pm, UMass, Mahar Auditorium:** screening of "Love During the War"

**Feb 25 Neoliberal Economic Policies, Poverty, and Global Inequalities**

Thandika Mkandawire & Charles Soludo, *Our Continent Our Future* (Dakar: CODESRIA, 1999), Introduction and Chs. 2-3. [R] Available at: [http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-9389-201-1-DO\\_TOPIC.html](http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-9389-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html)

**Feb 27**

**\*\*\*Essay is due\*\*\***

Ruth Meena, "The Impact of Structural Adjustment Programs on Women," in Gladwin, ed., *Structural Adjustment and African Women Farmers*, (1991), 169-190. [CP]

Dzodzi Tsikata, "Effects of Structural Adjustment on Women and the Poor," *Third World Resurgence* No. 61/62 (Sept/Oct 1995). Available on Third World Network Website:  
<http://www.twinside.org.sg/title/adjus-cn.htm>

Lourdes Benería, "Structural Adjustment Policies," in Margaret Peterson and Margaret Lewis, eds., *The Elgar Companion to Feminist Economics* (1999).

**Conference: Feb 28 to March 1, "Bamako": Globalization on Trial in Africa**

Feb 28: Screening of "Bamako" – Neilson Browsing Room, Smith College, 7:30 pm

Feb 29 Screening of "Bamako" – Mahar Auditorium, UMass, 7:30 pm

Mar 1 Video Conference with scholars and civil society activists in Dakar, Senegal; Student Panel on globalization; Keynote address by Nicole Lee, , Smith College, 9:00am-5:00pm

**Mar 3 Theoretical Perspectives: Status of Women in Relation to Modes of Production**

Patricia Draper, "Kung Women," in Reiter, ed., *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, 77-109. [CP]

Video: "N'ai: Story of a Kung Woman" (excerpts)

**Mar 5**

Mona Etienne, "Women and Men, Cloth and Colonization: The Transformation of Production-Distribution Relations among the Baule (Ivory Coast)," in Etienne & Leacock, eds., *Women and Colonization*, 214-235. [CP]

Jeanne Koopman "Women in the Rural Economy: Past, Present, and Future," in Hay & Stichter, eds., *African Women South of the Sahara*, (2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1995), 3-13. [CP]

**Mar 10 Urban Life: Survival Strategies and Struggles to Achieve Autonomy**

- Koopman "Women in the Rural Economy, 13-22. [CP]  
 Claire Robertson, "Women in the Urban Economy," in Hay & Stichter, African Women South of the Sahara, 44-65. [CP]  
 Potash, "Women in the Changing African Family" (review pp. 88-91) [CP]  
 Begin reading Emecheta, The Joys of Motherhood

**Mar 12**

- Emecheta, The Joys of Motherhood, Chs. 1-10. [P]

**SPRING BREAK****Mar 24**

- Emecheta, The Joys of Motherhood, Chs. 11-18. [P]  
 Paulette Beat Songue, "Prostitution, a Petit-métier during Economic Crisis: A Road to Women's Liberation? The Case of Cameroon," in Sheldon, ed., Courtyards, Markets, City Streets: Urban Women in Africa, 241-255. [CP]  
 Lisa Lindsay, "Shunting Between Masculine Ideals: Nigerian Railwaymen in the Colonial Era," in Cornwall, ed., Readings in Gender in Africa, 141-147. [CP]  
*Review for midterm exam*

**Mar 26 Midterm Exam****Mar 31 Women, the Colonial State, and Rural Resistance**

- Georgina Waylen, "Analyzing Gender in the Politics of the Third World," in Waylen, Gender in Third World Politics (Ch. 1), 5-23. [CP]  
 Jean O'Barr and Kathryn Firmin-Sellers, "African Women in Politics," in Hay and Stichter, African Women South of the Sahara, 189-202. [CP]  
 Review: Mikell, "Introduction, African Feminism, esp. 16-22. [P]  
 Optional: Audrey Wipper, "Riot and Rebellion among African Women: Three Examples of Women's Political Clout," in O'Barr, Perspectives on Power, 50-72. [CP]

**Apr 2 Reassessing Nationalism through Women's Life Histories: Tanganyika****\*\*\*Report on News Item or Website due today\*\*\***

- Susan Geiger, "Tanganyikan Nationalism as 'Women's Work': Life Histories, Collective Biography and Changing Historiography," Journal of African History 37, 3 (1996): 465-478. [CP]  
 Marjorie Mbilinyi, "'I'd Have Been a Man': Politics and the Labor Process in Producing Personal Narratives," in The Personal Narratives Group, Interpreting Women's Lives (1997), 204-227. [CP]

**April 7 Postcolonial Politics: State Hegemony and Subordination of Women**

- Review: Mikell, African Feminism, esp. pp. 22-33. [P]  
 Geiger, TANU Women, Chs. 8-9. [CP]  
 O'Barr and Firmin-Sellers, "African Women in Politics," 202-212. [CP]

**Apr 9 Political Transitions: Uganda**

Aili Mari Tripp, "The Politics of Autonomy and Cooptation in Africa: The Case of the Ugandan Women's Movement," Journal of Modern African Studies 39, 1 (2001): 101-128. [CP]  
 Anne Marie Goetz, "The Problem with Patronage: Constraints on Women's Political Effectiveness in Uganda," in Goetz & Hassim, No Shortcuts to Power, 110-139.

**Friday, Apr 11\*\*\* Submit Title, Abstract, & Annotated Bibliography for Final Paper today\*\*\***

**Apr 14 Kenya: Expanding Political Space—Kenya**

Maathai, Unbowed, Chs. 1-8

**Apr 16**

Maathai, Unbowed, Chs. 9-11.

Maria Nzomo, "Kenyan Women in Politics and Public Decision Making," in Mikell, African Feminism, 232-254. [P]

[Optional: **Widows, Rights, and Inheritance**

"Zimbabwe: 'Information On Inheritance Inaccessible to Women,'" The Herald (Harare), May 19, 2006. [<http://allafrica.com/stories/200605190786.html>]

Gwendolyn Mikell, "Pleas for Domestic Relief: Akan Women and Family Courts," in Mikell, ed., African Feminism, 96-122.]

*Evening Screening of "Neria"*

**Apr 21**

Maathai, Unbowed, Chs. 12-13, Epilogue, & Afterword to the Anchor Edition

Frank Holmquist, "Kenya's Antipolitics," Current History 104, 682 (May 2005): 209-215.[ER]

Angelique Haugerud, "Kenya: Spaces of Hope," Open Democracy website (Jan. 23, 2008). [[http://opendemocracy.net/article/democracy\\_power/kenya\\_spaces\\_hope](http://opendemocracy.net/article/democracy_power/kenya_spaces_hope)]

**April 23 Genocide and War in Central Africa**

Umutesi, Surviving the Slaughter: The Ordeal of a Rwandan Refugee in Zaire, Prologue & Chs. 1-5.

**Apr 28**

Umutesi, Surviving the Slaughter, Chs. 6-11.

Codou Bop, "Women in Conflicts, Their Gains and Their Losses," in Meintjes, Pillay, and Turshen, eds., The Aftermath, 19-34. [P]

**Apr 30 Postcolonial Survival and Resistance: Zaire/Democratic Republic of the Congo**

Catharine Newbury, "Ebutumwa bw'Emiogo, The Tyranny of Cassava: A Women's Tax Revolt in Eastern Zaire" Canadian Journal of African Studies 18, 1 (1984): 35-54. [CP]

Catharine Newbury, "States at War: Confronting Conflict in Africa," African Studies Review 45, 1 (April 2002): 1-20. [CP]

**May 5           “Development” and Women’s Access to Resources**

Amartya Sen, “Women’s Agency and Social Change,” in Sen, Development as Freedom, pp. 189-203. [CP]

Ambreena S. Manji, The Politics of Land Reform in Africa: From Communal Tenure to Free Markets, Ch. 5 (“Contesting Law? ‘Gender Progressive Groups and Rural Movements’”), 99-121. [ER]

Kathleen Staudt, “The Impact of Development Policies on Women,” in Hay and Stichter, African Women South of the Sahara, 225-238. [CP]

*Video: “Kumekucha” [“From Sunup”]*

**May 7           Strategies for the Future**

Mikell, “Conclusions: Theorizing and Strategizing about African Women and State Crisis,” in Mikell, African Feminism, 333-346. [P]

Turshen, “Engendering Relations of State to Society in the Aftermath,” in Meintjes, Pillay, and Turshen, eds., The Aftermath, 78-99. [P]

CEDAW: Testimony submitted by UNIFEM/USA for the CEDAW hearings of June 13, 2002: <http://www.unifemusa.org/cedaw.html>

Goals and background of CEDAW: [www.womenstreaty.org](http://www.womenstreaty.org)

**Friday, May 9: Final paper is due by 4:00pm at the Political Science Department, 103 Clark Hall.**