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*
Optional texts, also available at Jeffery Amherst Bookstore:
Virginia Lee Barnes and Janice Boddy, *Aman: The Story of a Somali Girl*
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**


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


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


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]


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


Feb. 18  **Colonial Transformations in Women’s Roles**

***Map Quiz***


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)/A4F381EEA9D4AB6


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]

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


Feb 27 ***Essay is due***


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

Koopman “Women in the Rural Economy, 13-22. [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]
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]

Apr 2  
**Reassessing Nationalism through Women’s Life Histories: Tanganyika**

***Report on News Item or Website due today***


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]
Apr 9  Political Transitions: Uganda

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.

[Optional: Widows, Rights, and Inheritance

Evening Screening of “Neria”

Apr 21
Maathai, Unbowed, Chs. 12-13, Epilogue, & Afterword to the Anchor Edition

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


Video: “Kumekucha” [“From Sunup”]

May 7  Strategies for the Future

Goals and background of CEDAW: www.womenstreaty.org

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