## Course Information

**College/School**

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

**Department**

African & African American Studies, School of Social Transformation

**Prefix**  

AFR

**Number**  

466

**Title**  

Peoples and Cultures of Africa

**Units**  

3

**Is this a cross-listed course?**  

Yes

**If yes, please identify course(s)**

ASB 466 (Peoples and Cultures of Africa)

**Is this a shared course?**  

No

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**Note**

For courses that are cross listed and/or shared, a letter of support from the chair/director of each department that offers the course is required for each designation requested. By submitting this letter of support, the chair/director agrees to ensure that all faculty teaching the course are aware of the General Studies designation(s) and will teach the course in a manner that meets the criteria for each approved designation.

**Is this a permanent numbered course with topics?**  

Yes

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Chair/Director Initials  

(Required)

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**Course description:**

The course provide an in-depth study of the diversity of African people and culture from an interdisciplinary perspective. Special focus is placed on basic social, political, and economic relations, inequality, world-view, art, resource use and development, gender roles, Europe and Africa, processes of change, and impact of colonial rule.

**Requested designation:**

Social-Behavioral Sciences-SB

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**Note**

- a separate proposal is required for each designation requested

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**Eligibility:**

Permanent numbered courses must have completed the university's review and approval process. For the rules governing approval of omnibus courses, contact Phyllis.Lucie@asu.edu or Lauren.Leo@asu.edu.

**Submission deadlines dates are as follow:**

For Fall 2016 Effective Date: October 6, 2015  
For Spring 2017 Effective Date: March 15, 2016

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**Area(s) proposed course will serve:**

A single course may be proposed for more than one core or awareness area. A course may satisfy a core area requirement and more than one awareness area requirements concurrently, but may not satisfy requirements in two core areas simultaneously, even if approved for those areas. With departmental consent, an approved General Studies course may be counted toward both the General Studies requirement and the major program of study.

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**Checklists for general studies designations:**

Complete and attach the appropriate checklist

- Literacy and Critical Inquiry core courses (L)
- Mathematics core courses (MA)
- Computer/statistics/quantitative applications core courses (CS)
- Humanities, Arts and Design core courses (HU)
- Social-Behavioral Sciences core courses (SB)
- Natural Sciences core courses (NS/NG)
- Cultural Diversity in the United States courses (C)
- Global Awareness courses (G)
- Historical Awareness courses (H)

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**A complete proposal should include:**

- Signed course proposal cover form
- Criteria checklist for General Studies designation(s) being requested
- Course catalog description
- Sample syllabus for the course
- Copy of table of contents from the textbook and list of required readings/books

**It is respectfully requested that proposals are submitted electronically with all files compiled into one PDF.**

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**Contact information:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Desi Usman</th>
<th>E-mail</th>
<th><a href="mailto:usman@asu.edu">usman@asu.edu</a></th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>480-727-7563</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Department Chair/Director approval:**

Chair/Director name (Typed):  

Elaine Moore  

Date: 8/29/2017

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Rev. 4/2015
Arizona State University Criteria Checklist for

SOCIAL-BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES [SB]

Rationale and Objectives

Social-behavioral sciences use distinctive scientific methods of inquiry and generate empirical knowledge about human behavior, within society and across cultural groups. Courses in this area address the challenge of understanding the diverse natures of individuals and cultural groups who live together in a complex and evolving world.

In both private and public sectors, people rely on social scientific findings to consider and assess the social consequences of both large-scale and group economic, technological, scientific, political, ecological and cultural change. Social scientists' observations about human interactions with the broader society and their unique perspectives on human events make an important contribution to civic dialogue.

Courses proposed for a General Studies designation in the Social-Behavioral Sciences area must demonstrate emphases on: (1) social scientific theories, perspectives and principles, (2) the use of social-behavioral methods to acquire knowledge about cultural or social events and processes, and (3) the impact of social scientific understanding on the world.

Revised April 2014
**ASU--[SB] CRITERIA**

A SOCIAL-BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES [SB] course should meet all of the following criteria. If not, a rationale for exclusion should be provided.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>Identify Documentation Submitted</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>1. Course is designed to advance basic understanding and knowledge about human interaction.</td>
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<tr>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>2. Course content emphasizes the study of social behavior such as that found in:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>- ANTHROPOLOGY</td>
</tr>
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<td>☒</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>- ECONOMICS</td>
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<td>☒</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>- CULTURAL GEOGRAPHY</td>
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<td>☐</td>
<td>- HISTORY</td>
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<td>☒</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>- Anthropology, cultural geography</td>
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<tr>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>3. Course emphasizes:</td>
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<tr>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>a. the distinct knowledge base of the social and behavioral sciences (e.g., sociological anthropological).</td>
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<tr>
<td>☒</td>
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<td>OR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>b. the distinct methods of inquiry of the social and behavioral sciences (e.g., ethnography, historical analysis).</td>
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<tr>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>4. Course illustrates use of social and behavioral science perspectives and data.</td>
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</table>

**THE FOLLOWING TYPES OF COURSES ARE EXCLUDED FROM THE [SB] AREA EVEN THOUGH THEY MIGHT GIVE SOME CONSIDERATION TO SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE CONCERNS:**

- Courses with primarily arts, humanities, literary or philosophical content.
- Courses with primarily natural or physical science content.
- Courses with predominantly applied orientation for professional skills or training purposes.
- Courses emphasizing primarily oral, quantitative, or written skills.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Prefix</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<tr>
<td>AFR</td>
<td>466</td>
<td>Peoples and cultures of Africa</td>
<td>SB</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Explain in detail which student activities correspond to the specific designation criteria. Please use the following organizer to explain how the criteria are being met.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria (from checksheet)</th>
<th>How course meets spirit (contextualize specific examples in next column)</th>
<th>Please provide detailed evidence of how course meets criteria (i.e., where in syllabus)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This is an anthropology course designed to provide an in-depth study of the diversity of African people and culture from an interdisciplinary perspective.</td>
<td>The course cover African societies that range from simple foraging and traditional ones to complex, industrialized nations. Special emphasis is placed on basic social, political, and economic relations, inequality, world-view, art, resource use and development, gender roles, slavery and slave trade, processes of change, and the impact and legacy of colonial rule. How relationships between men and women are contextualized and negotiated is also found throughout the course materials.</td>
<td>Module 1 deals with the geographical context and African diversity. Module 2 discusses about peopling of Africa - major developments in African prehistory, stone age, farming revolution, and settled communities. Module 3 is about traditional social and political organization. Here students learn about African family, kinship and non-kin, marriage, sex, and age, political and economic institutions. In Module 4, students learn about religion, music, art, and their relationships with African culture. Module 5 is on European and African - the contact period, European trade in Africa, Atlantic trade, European colonization, European legacy and social changes in Africa. Module 6 is about women in Africa, roles of women in society and changes through time. Modules 8, 9, 10 focuses on African nationalist movement, African economy and globalization, and African migration - particularly contemporary migrations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PEOPLES AND CULTURES OF AFRICA

AFR/ASB 466, AFR 598

Fall 2017
Session C

Class Time: T/Th 3p – 4:15p
Room: Tempe WXLR A203

Professor: Dr. Desi Usman
Office: African & African American Studies (Wilson Hall 145)
Office hrs: MW: 9:30 am – 11:30 am.
Phone: Office: (480) 727-7563
E-mail: Usman@asu.edu

SYLLABUS

Course Description

This is an upper division course designed to provide an in-depth study of the diversity of African people and culture from an interdisciplinary perspective. Those societies covered range from simple foraging and traditional ones to complex, industrializing nations. Special emphasis is placed on basic social, political, and economic relations, inequality, world-view, art, resource use and development, gender roles, slavery and slave trade, Europe and Africa, processes of change, and the impact and legacy of colonial rule are considered. How relationships between men and women are contextualized and negotiated is a theme found throughout the readings and films, as well as struggle of people in different circumstances to build new relationships with traditional beliefs and practices. The course meets social/behavioral, historical and global requirements.

Approaches to the course material and Examination

In learning about Africa, the themes transcend local events and personalities to reveal recurrent patterns of historical change that extend throughout the continent. The thematic approach means students studying the first weeks’ lectures and readings carefully to identify the “key themes” that will develop during the remainder of the term. It also means that the examination will test students’ abilities to draw these themes together into a coherent understanding on how and why people in Africa behaved as they did, both in their distinctiveness and in ways comparable to history in more familiar parts of the globe.

The course will follow four complementary approaches: (1) the lectures provide overviews of large themes and periods; they illustrate general points with examples and case studies. The lectures thus present the instructor’s interpretation of the subject but make no systematic attempt at comprehensive coverage; (2) the readings which are to be completed before the week for which they appear in the syllabus, provide detail and texture to the themes covered in lecture; (3) class discussions give students opportunity to contribute and ask questions about parts of the readings and lectures that either confuse or
inspire their interest. (4) Finally, examinations consist of 3 sets of multiple-choice questions and short answers, one in-class map quiz, and a 10-15 pages paper, including bibliography.

Requirements

Research Paper

Students will be required to research and report in type-written form on any one of these African groups – Kikuyu, Igbo, Ashanti, Nuer, Yoruba, Zulu, Hausa, Tuaregs, and Dogon – focusing on one or combination of the following: history, socio-political organization, religion, art, music, dance, economic activities, European colonization, and changes in the society. Students must obtain the instructor’s agreement for their topics by the end of the third week of class (September 12). The paper assignment should include the following:

- Titles, introduction, main issues, conclusion
- Relevant geographical and demographic information
- Importance to African history and culture
- Important to the world civilization
- Most important contribution
- Lesson learned (personal)

For your paper, use 12 point, Times New Roman font, double-spaced, with no more than 1.25” margins. Include in-text references, and bibliographic references at the end. For writing style, use APA format. Your sources MUST be in the form of Books and Journal articles. Avoid lengthy online sources such as Wikipedia or related form.

The topic or title of your research paper is DUE by 5pm on Tuesday September 12. Your title or topic must include your name, student identification number, and a half-to-one-page description of your topic; stating your methodology, what kind of sources to be used, etc. Please, submit hardcopy. No electronic submission. Final paper is DUE Tuesday November 28.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY!

Plagiarism and other form of cheating will result in automatic failure, and may lead to students facing serious penalties imposed by the University.

In the “Student Academic Integrity Policy” manual, ASU defines “Plagiarism” [as] using another's words, ideas, materials or work without properly acknowledging and documenting the source. Students are responsible for knowing the rules governing the use of another's work or materials and for acknowledging and documenting the source appropriately.” You can find this definition at:
http://www.asu.edu/studentaffairs/studentlife/judicial/academic_integrity.htm#definitions
Disability Policy Statement

Qualified students with disabilities who will require disability accommodations in this class are encouraged to make their requests to me at the beginning of the semester either during office hours or by appointment. Note: Prior to receiving disability accommodations, verifications of eligibility from the Disability Resource Center (DRC) is required. Disability information is confidential.

Students who feel they will need disability accommodations in this class but have not registered with the Disability Resource Center (DRC) should contact DRC immediately. Their office is located on the first floor of the Matthews Center Building. DRC staff can also be reached at: 480-965-1234 (V), 480-965-9000 (TTY). For additional information, visit: www.asu.edu/studentaffairs/ed/drc. Their hours are 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday.

POLICY AGAINST THREATENING BEHAVIOR

Threatening behavior of any kind is not tolerated by the university and will not be allowed in this class. Please refer to ASU’s policy against threatening behavior (Student Services Manual SSM 104-02 “Handling Disruptive, Threatening or Violent Individuals on Campus”):

All incidents and allegations of violent or threatening conduct by an ASU student (whether on-or off campus) must be reported to the ASU Police Department (ASU PD) and the Office of the Dean of Students. If either office determines that the behavior poses or has posed a serious threat to personal safety or to the welfare of the campus, the student will not be permitted to return to campus or reside in any ASU residence hall until an appropriate threat assessment has been completed and, if necessary, conditions for return are imposed. ASU PD, the Office of the Dean of Students, and other appropriate offices will coordinate the assessment in light of the relevant circumstances.

Exams

In addition to the research paper, there will be one in-class map quiz, and three online tests. Tests will consist of multiple choice questions to come from both readings and class lectures.

Attendance/Participation:

Since both attendance and participation are required for the successful completion of this course, I will be taking attendance at the end of each class. Remember, it is your responsibility to sign the attendance sheet during class. If your name does not appear on the attendance sheet for any reason, you will not receive the attendance and participation points for that class. More than 2 absences will result in the lowering of your grade by a
significant amount. I also expect you to read and be ready to contribute to the discussion and dialogue each and every day. Sometimes it becomes necessary to make changes in the assignment schedule and requirements of the course. It is your responsibility to be in class if and when such announcements are made. Tardiness will also not be tolerated, so please come to class at the scheduled class time. If you come to class late on a consistent basis, your grade will be lowered accordingly. I understand that emergencies do sometimes occur; therefore, emergency absences will be excused at the discretion of the instructor. Please, inform me if you need to miss class because of sickness, a religious holiday, or some other legitimate excusable reason.

+++ NO CELL PHONE (must be turned off while in class), NO TAPING OF LECTURE, NO FOOD in class.

Make-up exams. – Make-ups will be given only when exams are missed for unavoidable reasons, and when you provide documentation.

You are responsible for getting me all of your work by the time and date it is due. All assignments are due by the end of class time on the assigned due date. Anything submitted after that time is considered late and will not be accepted. All assignments must be handed in to me in hardcopy and cannot be sent over e-mail.

Extra Credit: If you need extra credit, you must discuss this with me latest three weeks before the end of the semester. Also, there will be numerous campus and community events this semester that you can attend for extra credit points. I will give you more information about these events as the semester begins.

Requirements for superior achievement in the course (i.e. an A or better) include regular attendance with no unexplained absences, always completing the reading for each week before the class meeting, regular and active participation in discussions, and thoughtful and well-written papers.

Your primary responsibility as a student is to attend class regularly and master the material presented in class and in the readings. If you have ANY questions or feel unclear of any class material, see me after class or during office hours. DON’T wait until the end of the semester to discuss your problems.

Graduate Requirements

Students registered for graduate credit are expected to perform at graduate levels. Graduate students are expected to exhibit leadership in class discussion and may be asked to comment on key issues raised in class. In addition to class attendance, readings, participation in discussion, and test, graduate students will do a 20-25 pages research on a topic approved by me (Please see me for further discussion on this).

Summary of Evaluation Criteria:

A - 3 Exams (70 points each, 210 points total) (52.5%)
B- Paper 100 points (25%)
C- Map Quiz 50 points (12.5%)
D- Attendance/participation 40 points (10%)
Total = 400 points

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>98-100%</td>
<td>400-390</td>
<td>A+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90 avg</td>
<td>389-370</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>88-89 avg</td>
<td>369-355</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<tr>
<td>85-87 avg</td>
<td>354-340</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<tr>
<td>80-84 avg</td>
<td>339-320</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>319-310</td>
<td>B-</td>
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<tr>
<td>70-75 avg</td>
<td>309-300</td>
<td>C+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69 avg</td>
<td>299-278</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>&lt;60%</td>
<td>&lt;270</td>
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</table>

Texts (All Required)


Lecture, Examinations, and Readings Schedule

The following schedule is subject to change. Any changes will be announced in class.

I. General Introduction

**Thu: 8/17**
- Introduction of students and instructor. Syllabus Review
- Goals and aims of the course

**Tue: 8/22**
- Africa: Myths and Realities
- Africa: geographical diversities (peoples, countries, languages, etc.)
  Readings:
  * Gordon & Gordon, chps 1-2

**Thu: 8/24**
- Africa, geographical diversities contd.
Tue: 8/29
++ Map Quiz (20 minutes)

II  The Peopling of Africa
Thu: 8/31
- Overview of major developments in African prehistory, Stone Age, Agricultural beginnings, and Iron Age.
Readings:
* Gordon & Gordon, chp 3 (read p25-33)

Tue: 9/5
- Lecture: Overview of major developments in African prehistory contd.
+ Video: The mystery of Mankind – National Geographic: watch video posted on blackboard

III  Traditional Social and Political Organizations
Thu: 9/7
- African family, kinship, marriage, sex, age
Readings:
* Gordon & Gordon, chps. 9, 3 (p.33-46), 5 (p.115-117)
+ Polygamy –Boserup
+ Ancestors – Kopytoff
+ Lele economy – Mary Douglas

!!!Note: Start reading Mariama Ba, ‘So Long A Letter’

Tue: 9/12
- Family and Kinship contd.
Readings:
+ The !Kung Bushmen of the Kalahari desert – Lorna Marshall
+ The Yoruba of Nigeria – P. C. Lloyd
+ The Northern Pastoral Somali of the Horn – LM Lewis

!!!Note: Your paper topic is DUE today by 5pm

Thu: 9/14
- Traditional political and economic institutions: Mariama Ba - So Long A Letter - Discussion
Tue: 9/19
- Traditional political and economic institutions contd

Thu: 9/21
VIDEO: Africa: The Legacy of Lifestyles (Ali Mazrui)

EXAM 1
Sat 9/23- Sun 9/24
++ Test 1 – AVAILABLE ONLINE (Blackboard)
(This exam will cover lectures from August 17 through September 21). Test will be available online from 7am Saturday 9/23 to midnight Sunday 9/24

IV. Religion, Art, Music & Culture
Tue: 9/26
--- Religion in Africa
Readings:
* Gordon & Gordon, chp 11
+ Dele Jegede, ‘Art,’ (pp. 66-88)
+ African music – Steven Salm

Thu: 9/28
-Religion contd.

Tue: 10/3 – NO CLASS (Attending Conference)

Thu: 10/5
- Art and culture.

Fall Break – October 7-10: Class Excused

Thu: 10/12
- Art and culture contd.
- VIDEO: ‘West African Dogon Masks Documentary by BBC.’ [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)
+ VIDEO: African Art (blackboard)

Tue: 10/17
- Music, Dance & Culture
V  Europe and Africa
Thu: 10/19
- Europeans in Africa
Readings:
* Gordon & Gordon, chp 3 (read p. 46-58), chp 4 (p. 61-92)
+ Colonial Rule – Frederick Lugard

!!!!NOTE: Start reading ‘The River Between’ by Ngugi wa Thiongo.

Tue: 10/24
- Atlantic slave trade and slavery, abolition of slave trade, impact and challenges

Thu: 10/26
- The partition of Africa, African reaction, colonial rule

Tue: 10/31
- Impact of colonialism, Social Change in Africa

Thu: 11/2
++ Discussion: The River Between (Ngugi wa Thiongo)

EXAM 2
Saturday 11/4 and Sunday 11/5
++ TEST 2 ONLINE. Exam will open from 7am Saturday 11/4 to midnight Sunday 11/5. You will be assessed on materials covered from 9/26 through 11/2.

VI  Women in Africa
Tue: 11/7
- Women in Africa, roles of women in society and changes
Readings
* Gordon & Gordon, chp 10
+ Igbo women – Judith Allen

Thu: 11/9
- VIDEO: Asante Market Women (watch on Youtube and provide a 2-page written report on the film). Your paper must be typed.

VII  African Nationalist Movements
Tue: 11/14
- European settlements, apartheid, nationalist movements, protests, black majority rule
Readings
+ South Africa- Patrick Furlong
+ Mau Mau – Bruce Berman

VIII  African Economy and Globalization
Thu: 11/16
- African mineral resources and development
Readings:
* Gordon & Gordon, chp. 5

IX  African Population, Urbanization
Tue: 11/21
- population, urbanization, AIDS
Readings:
* Gordon & Gordon, Chap. 7

Thu: 11/23: Thanksgiving Holiday (CLASS EXCUSED)

Readings: as above

!!!!NOTE: Your Research Paper is DUE today by 5pm prompt. (Hardcopy)

X  Research Presentation
Thu: 11/30 (5-7 minutes presentation)
Class Round-up
Discussion/Revision

EXAM 3 FINALS

Tue 12/5 and Wed 12/6
++ Test 3 ONLINE (from materials covered from 9/26 through 11/30)
Time: Test available from 7am on December 5 to midnight of December 6.

Keys:
* required text books
++ important information (e.g., examination, quiz, due date)
+ items on blackboard
Important DUE Dates

- Paper Topic: Tuesday September 12
- Final Paper (Hardcopy): Tuesday November 28
UNDERSTANDING
CONTEMPORARY
AFRICA

EDITED BY
APRIL A. GORDON
DONALD L. GORDON
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A powerful impact both at home and overseas.

His work is known throughout the world and has made
form and he writes, lecturers and critics extol its
African language and

Ngugi is an active representative for the African language and
stories, plays and numerous essays.

The author has also written collections of short
stories in 1965. The novel, which was written in English for the African
peace and transcribed into English for the African

Ngugi's novel, *A Grain of Wheat*, was published in English in
other languages. His other works include *This Green
Language*, *This Green and Fierce Darkness* and many

When I went there was this first work to be published in his own

reason and workers of the play *Wagahana* was

Kenyans where he was held without trial after the performances by

and written during the author's one-year detention in prison, in

His novel, *A Grain of Wheat*, was published in 1966 and this was

Makere University, Uganda and at the University of Leeds.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o was born in Limuru, Kenya in 1938. He

Heinemann

Introduction by Kenneth W. Harrow

By Gilbert Bour-Delomatic
Translated from the French

So Long a Letter

Mariama Ba
from January 1994 on, the Nigerian writer \textit{Chinua Achebe} has written several novels which give a personal account of African women. Achebe's

\textit{A Soldier's Daughter} (1978), \textit{Tears, Trials and Traditions} (1985), \textit{The Radio House} (1987) and \textit{Things Fall Apart} (1967) are some of his novels that have been widely read and appreciated. These novels provide a unique perspective on the cultural and social aspects of African women.

\textit{The Joy of Motherhood} (1986) by \textit{Ngozi Okonkwo} is another novel that highlights the experiences of African women in the context of their struggles for survival.

In his novel \textit{The Achebe's Way} (1989), the Nigerian writer \textit{Wole Soyinka} explores the complex lives of African women, emphasizing their role as mothers and leaders.

Another important work in this genre is \textit{The African Woman} (1988) by \textit{Chinua Achebe}, which offers a critical examination of the cultural and social expectations placed on African women.

In conclusion, the role of African women in literature has been portrayed through various contexts, highlighting their struggles, challenges, and achievements.

\textit{An African Woman's Story} (1990) by \textit{Ita Beche} is a novel that explores the lives of African women in the context of their cultural and social backgrounds.

\textit{The African Woman's Journey} (1991) by \textit{Ngozi Okonkwo} is another novel that provides a unique perspective on the experiences of African women.

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The New Africa is composed of the ways it has grown for a process of the promotion of African women. (5) This is the idea as of which we are old.
INTRODUCTION

When Mariama Ba's So Long a Letter appeared in 1979, it was one of the first novels by a Senegalese woman in French, and in a sense became one of the foundational texts for Francophone women writers. It was the first African novel to win the prestigious Noma award in 1980.

Written as a semi-autobiographical account, its protagonist Ramatoulaye is a woman who came of age during the period of late colonialism, married a Senegalese nationalist and gave birth to twelve children as their country passed into independence. She faced her husband's rejection and then his death as the country experienced the passage from colony to modern nation.

Both the intimacy of its address and its turn to the epistolary mode marked So Long a Letter as a unique form of fiction writing in contemporary African women's literature. Moreover, it broke new ground as a deeply personal account of the trials that are peculiar to the Muslim Senegalese woman of today. Ramatoulaye writes out the story of her present tribulations, the past events that led up to them, and the anxieties she faces as a mother, in a series of letters to her 'sister' Aissatou, who herself faced the trauma of a long-term marriage coming to an end as her husband chose to take a young woman as his second wife. Ramatoulaye and Aissatou evoke the situation of the mature, troubled woman, of those who have only each other to turn to for sustenance. As such Aissatou

1 Four years earlier, Nafissatou Diallo had published her autobiography, A Dakar Childhood. In 1976, Aminata Sow Fall had published Le Revêtement and in 1979 The Beggars' Strike.

2 See Christopher Miller's brilliant analysis of the novel, and especially its unique role as an epistolary novel, in Theories of Africans (1990). In fact, this form, common to novels of the eighteenth century, is extremely rare in African literature.