



INCL 340: African traditional culture and religion

Professor: **Dr. Peter Wasswa Mpagi**

Course Description:

The course deals with an overview of African traditional cultures and religion (ATR) as well as the challenges African cultures pose to Christians 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.

Goals:

To help students:

- 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 Objectives:

Students will:

1. Perceive the “unity in diversity” of African society.
2. Understand some of the significant aspects of the African traditional cultures.
3. Understand the basic beliefs and practices in ATR.
4. Learn more about different cultures.
5. Participate in the African culture. (Each student is assigned a local field assistant to help in this regard.)
6. Understand the various aspects of African cultures and the challenges they pose to the Christians in Africa.
7. Understand our world and the world of other cultures.
8. Develop self-awareness and analysis of other cultures.

Course Outline:

Class normally begins at 8:30 and concludes at 11:00 except where noted otherwise.

Date	Topic
1	African Culture and Religion (before Christianity) <ol style="list-style-type: none">i. The situation in Africa before Christianity and Islamii. A brief History of the coming of Christianity in Africaiii. What happened when Christianity penetrated Africa
2	The Concept of Culture <ol style="list-style-type: none">i. What is culture and Religionii. Evolution of African cultureiii. Cultural challenges to Christianity in our modern times
3	Social Groupings <ol style="list-style-type: none">i. Type of social groupings in African traditional cultures: nation, tribe, community, kinship, clan, lineage, family, the household and the individual.ii. Challenges African traditional social groupings pose to Christians.



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- 11 **Nature, training and role in society of Religious Leaders**
 - i. Priests
 - ii. Mediums
 - iii. Diviners
 - iv. Herbalists
 - v. Witchdoctors
 - vi. Kings and chiefs
 - vii. N.B. Look at their nature, role, purpose, training & value
 - viii. The sources of challenges that African Tradition Religion pose to Christians
- 12 **Mystical Forces**
 - i. Introduction
 - ii. Magic and sorcery
 - iii. Divination and witch craft
 - iv. Protective charms and amulets
 - v. Challenges mystical forces pose to Christians
- 13 **African Traditional Religion Experience**
 - i. Worship – prayer/sacrifices/offerings
 - ii. Festivals-purpose/benefits of festivals/singing & dancing
 - iii. Rituals-meaning and importance/Personal rituals
- 14 **Ethics and Morality**
 - i. Meaning and value of morals
 - ii. Individual morals
 - iii. Family morals
 - iv. Community morals
 - v. Sacred and secular morals
 - vi. Challenges African ethics and morals pose to Christians

Required Textbooks:

- Mbiti John, African Religions and Philosophy.

Recommended Books:

- Ayisi, E.O., An Introduction to African Culture.
- Mpagi Wasswa P., African Christian Theology.
- Bahemuka Judith, Our religious heritage.
- Murikwa Julius, A Study of Kikuyu Culture and the Communication of the Gospel.
- Good, C.M. Dimensions of East African Cultures.
- Kenyatta Jomo, Facing Mount Kenya.
- Kirwen Michael, The Missionary and the Diviner.
- Gehman Richard J., African Traditional Religion in Biblical Perspective.
- Roscoe, The Baganda.
- Magesa Laurenti, African Religion.
- Imasogie Osador, Guidelines for Christian Theology in Africa.
- Bolaji Idowu, African Traditional Religion. A Definition
- Mugambi Jesse, African Heritage and Contemporary Christianity.
- Onwuejeogwu M.A., Social Anthropology of Africa.



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Course Requirements / Assignments:

In order to meet our course objectives the following things will be required:

1. Regular class attendance and active participation in lecture discussions.
2. Completion of assigned readings for each class lecture and field trips. There are sixteen lectures and the course is also expected to meet for sixteen days.
3. A one page hand written summary indicating that one has read the assigned readings. See reading schedule. Reading summaries will be collected unannounced four times. Come to class prepared.
4. One field experience per week. This is expected to take place mid-week except the rural visit which will be Friday-Sunday. There will be at least three field experiences (during this three week period).
5. A one page typed double spaced font size 12 report for each cultural theme field interview. Thus there are three separate reports expected for the field experiences.
 - 1) Cultural Theme #1
 - 2) Cultural Theme #2
 - 3) Cultural Theme #3
 Further direction will be provided.
6. A ten page research paper to be submitted towards the end of the course profiling a specific ethnic group in Uganda or a topic of particular interest related to this course.

Course Evaluation:

The above mentioned assignments will be evaluated as follows:

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| 1. Class attendance and active participation in lecture Discussions | = | 20 points |
| 2. Reading the assigned texts and a one page summary Readings | = | 20 points |
| 3. Weekly one page report for the three field Experiences | = | 20 points |
| 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. | 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