

## [PHL 315] African Philosophy (Spring Semester 2020)

Tuesday & Thursday PM Room 103 Berkey Hall

Dr. John H. McClendon III, Professor of Philosophy

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Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 11-12:00 PM. All other times are by appointment.

### Course Description

This course undertakes the examination of African philosophy via a focus on three primary areas, metaphilosophy, political philosophy and theories of African socio-economic development. Students will learn how African philosophy has addressed philosophical problems within the context of the struggle against imperialism and African development. Particular attention is given to how Dr. Kwame Nkrumah contributes to our understanding of the philosophical enterprise in the African struggle for liberation.

### Course Format

Lecture/discussion format and students are encouraged to apply the various philosophical tools of analysis in class discussions and written work. Our approach is multimedia incorporating readings and film.

### Course Objectives

1. Introduce basic philosophical concepts, and reasoning, as well as develop skills in the interpretation of philosophical problems as it relates to themes and philosophers within the African philosophical tradition.
2. Develop a critical understanding of the various African philosophers and philosophical schools of thought.
3. Enhance skills in reading, writing, and the articulation of philosophical argumentation.

### Course Requirements

1. Two quizzes each worth 20% or combined as 40% of the total grade. The quiz is unannounced and cannot be made up in the case of unexcused absences. One midterm exam and a final exam each constitute 30% of your grade or combined 60% of the total grade.
2. Class attendance as well as being on time to class is mandatory. There is one point grade deduction from your final grade for each unexcused absence.
3. Class presentations are assigned and constitute an integral part of class participation. Additionally assigned readings are made for each class presentation. Each student is assigned at least two class presentations. In case of absence, **students are still held responsible for all assignments made during absences**.
4. All required readings (or video assignments) designated in the syllabus should be read/viewed prior to the stipulated date of class. Thorough preparation for class and completion of assigned readings/videos are imperative for class participation.
5. **Test booklets are required for all quizzes and examinations**. Quiz and examinations must be written in black or blue ink. Not having a test booklet and writing in pencil will result in a failing grade for quizzes and exams. You should always carry a test booklet when attending class.

### **Policy on Academic Freedom and Integrity**

Article 2.3.3 of the *Academic Freedom Report* clearly stipulates “the student shares with the faculty the responsibility for maintaining the integrity of scholarship, grades, and professional standards.” In addition, the Department of Philosophy adheres to the policies on academic honesty as specified in *General Student Regulations* 1.0, Protection of Scholarship and Grades, and in the all-University Policy on Integrity of Scholarship and Grades, which are included in *Spartan Life: Student Handbook and Resource Guide*. Students who commit an act of academic dishonesty are subject to failing the course.

### **Policy on Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities should contact the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities to establish reasonable accommodations. For an appointment with a counselor, call 353-9642 (voice) or 355-1293 (TTY).

### **Policy on texting and use of electronic equipment**

All cell phones must be turned off during class. Texting or any other use of electronic equipment during class time not relating to class will result in an immediate dismissal from class and the loss of one credit point toward your final grade.

### ***Please Note***

**This syllabus is a guide for directing our study thus modifications and amendments may occur when deemed necessary. Students will be given sufficient time to make the needed adjustments if such changes are necessary.**

### **Required Texts**

Kwame Nkrumah, *Consciencism*; *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*; *Philosophia Africana* and *South African Journal of Philosophy* (both are Full Text Online Journals in MSU Library) *APA Newsletter on Philosophy and the Black Experience* (found on the American Philosophical Association website)

**Week 1 (1/7-9) Topic:** Introduction to Course: African Philosophy and Metaphilosophical Considerations

**Readings:** African Philosophy: Dr. Reginald Odour, Part 1 YouTube

**Week 2 (1/14-16) Topic:** African Philosophy in World History: The Special Case of African Philosopher Anton Wilhelm Amo

**Readings:** Charles Leander Hill, “William Ladd, the Black Philosopher from Guinea: A Critical Analysis of His Dissertation on Apathy” *APA Newsletter on Philosophy and the Black Experience*, (Spring 2003) V. 2, n. 2

**Week 3 (1/21-23) Topic:** The Special Case of African Philosopher Anton Wilhelm Amo

**Readings:** Andrej Krause, Anton Wilhelm Amo’s Ontology *Philosophia Africana* V12, n. 2 (Fall 2009) online journal MSU Library

**Week 4** (1/28-30) (1/21-23) **Topic:** The Question of African Philosophy and the Colonial Context: **Readings:** Souleymane Bachir Diagne, “Decolonizing the History of Philosophy” (video on YouTube)

**Week 5** (2/4-6) **Topic:** Considerations on Universality: How is Philosophy Relevant to Africa? **Readings:** Bernard Matolino, “Universalism and African Philosophy” *South African Journal of Philosophy*, 10/2015, **Vol.** 34, **Issue** 4, pp. 433–440 (Full Text Online)

**Week 6** (2/11-13) **Topic:** Historical Context for African Philosophical Inquiry

**Readings:** Edwin Etieyibo, “African Philosophy: Past, Present and Future” *Philosophia Africana* V. 18, n. 1 Online journal MSU Library, Theophile Obenga and Atomist Philosophy in Ancient Egypt (video on YouTube)

**Week 7** (2/19-21) **Topic:** Garveyism and Nkrumaism: Contending Ideas about Africa

**Readings:** McClendon, “On Assessing the Ideological Impact of Garveyism on Nkrumaism: Political Symbolism Contra Theoretical Substance” *APA Newsletter on Philosophy and the Black Experience*, (Spring 2003) V. 2, n. 2

**Week 8** (2/25-27) Special Note: **Topic:** Review on Tuesday & **Midterm Exam Thursday**

**Spring Break** March 2-6 2019

**Week 9** (3/10-12) **Topic:** What is Philosophical Consciencism?: The Notion of Philosophy in Nkrumah’s Consciencism **Readings:** *Consciencism*, Author’s Note and Introduction

**Week 10** (3/17-19) **Topic:** Philosophy in Retrospect: How is Philosophy Relevant to Africa?

**Readings:** Nkrumah, *Consciencism*, Chapter 1

**Week 11** (3/24-26) **Topic:** Philosophy and Society: African Social Context for Philosophical Inquiry **Readings:** Nkrumah, *Consciencism*, Chapter 2

**Week 12** (3/31-4/2) **Topic:** Ideological Struggle and the African Anti-Imperialist Movement

**Readings:** Nkrumah, *Consciencism*, Chapter 3

**Week 13** (4/2-4)

**Topic:** Political Philosophy and Consciencism

**Readings:** *Consciencism*, Chapter 4

**Week 14** (4/9-11)

**Topic:** Consciencism and the Logic of Set Theory

**Readings:** *Consciencism*, Chapter 5

**Week 15** (4/16-18)

**Topic:** Consciencism: The Philosophy of Nkrumaism

**Readings:** McClendon, "Notes on Consciencism" on D2L.

**Final Exam: Place** 103 Berkey Hall

Date: Wednesday 4/29/2020

Time: 10AM-Noon