

Course Syllabus: African Spirituality and Education

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Please check the online course for the most up-to-date version of course materials and assignments.

Course Information

If the online materials differ from this print study guide, the online materials take precedence.

Course Description

The aim of this course is to study one of the world's invaluable sources of **spirituality and education: the African Indigenous cultural tradition**. We shall explore the meanings that Indigenous people give to **knowledge (education for a living)** and **wisdom (education for life)**. We shall have the opportunity to see the world through their lens: **a holistic worldview that sees all of life and ALL that is as Inter-connected and Inter-dependent**.

Through a documented case study of one of the ethnic groups of Tanzania, East Africa, the course will gradually **walk** you through several fundamental cultural vessels seen by these people as transmitters of knowledge and wisdom, namely: **story telling, proverbs, riddles, music, dance, rituals, role playing and art**. **The awesome reflections of Sobonfu Some will season the case study in a way that gives you a taste of Indigenous Spirituality and Education from two corners of Africa: West Africa and East Africa**. You are invited to see this as a journey through Africa in which you are called forth to fully engage yourselves with the people and with the cultures that you meet.

As you take this online course you will deepen your experience of life as **holistic and inter-connected**. In fact, all indigenous cultures have always

understood life and all that is as such, so this will be a unique opportunity for each of you in the online class to remember and reclaim this life enhancing and cosmic sustaining dimension of life.

Throughout the course the instructor and students will dig into this indigenous well of knowledge and wisdom so that, armed with new findings and insights, we may deepen our experience of life as **harmonious** and **holistic**. In the final analysis, the course will sharpen your abilities to: analyze new findings and insights from a global perspective; appreciate the power of stories, proverbs, riddles, music, dance, art and rituals in the **transmission of culture and values**; and assist you to translate these timely and timeless emerging values into your own spiritual development and that of others.

Course Learning Goals

After completing this course, you will be able to:

- Identify and appreciate the African Indigenous Worldview and try to learn from it.
- Demonstrate how knowledge and wisdom are inseparable and inter-connected.
- Appreciate the power of stories, proverbs, music, etc in the transmission of values.
- Explain how virtue and wisdom are nurtured in the young of Indigenous Africa.
- Use all emerging findings and insights for your own spiritual development.
- Apply these findings to the spiritual development of others, like: family, your local community, mentoring the young on your block, modeling in virtue for an 8th grade class, a college freshman class with students of various cultures and religions, etc.

Course Resources

To buy your books, go to <http://www.mbsdirect.net> .

Hint: type “DePaul” for name of the school.

Textbooks:

1. Mosha, R. Sambuli. (2000). *The Heartbeat of Indigenous Africa. A Study of the Chagga Educational System*. New York: Taylor and Francis Group.

Your instructor is the author of this book, a case study of how Indigenous children were raised among his own people, the Chagga of Northern Tanzania. The main question which the book tries to answer is not **what children were taught**, but rather, **how children were helped to acquire the knowledge and wisdom** cherished by their families and communities. The author raises the issues discussed in the book to the level of the global stage by making references to other disciplines such as philosophy, theology, anthropology, psychology, spirituality, ethics, and other related areas of knowledge and wisdom, thus making the work **inter-disciplinary and inter-connected** with other formation traditions.

2. Some, Sobonfu. (2002). *The Spirit of Intimacy. Ancient Teachings in the Ways of Relationships*. New York: HarperCollins Books.

Sobonfu Some, a native of Burkina Faso in West Africa, gives rich reflections mined from the Wisdom and lives of her West African Dagara village elders, brothers and sisters. She speaks about the importance of a living, breathing, continual connection with **Spirit** and **Community**, about the ways of experiencing a genuine intimacy with life itself. You will find her reflections peace-inducing, inspiring and life enhancing.

Course Competences

In this course, you will develop the following competences:

Competence	Competence Statement and Facets
H-5:	Can analyze issues from a global perspective
A-1-H	Can explain folk arts in the transmission of culture and values
A-3-B	Can explore a model of spiritual development and apply it to self or others.

How the Competences will be Demonstrated in this Course

All of you will explore the African Indigenous paradigm of community and inter-connectedness and on this basis go on to study and analyze the issue of the world as one community. You will also have the opportunity to study in some detail how culture and values are transmitted in Indigenous Africa, and then be invited to use the emerging findings and insights in imagining more effective ways of transmitting culture and values in our times. In your short papers, discussions, debate, and role playing, you will be able to apply the findings and insights of this course to formation situations that are familiar to you, such as: family, your local community, your local school, or college classroom.

In addition:

H-5: Can analyze issues and problems from a global perspective.

Facets of this competence:

1. **Analyzes one or more global issues, problems, or opportunities facing the human race.**
2. **Explains how these issues affect individuals or societies in both positive and negative ways.**

If you opt for this competence, please write your short papers as follows:

In Module One: Show how community and inter-connectedness are fundamental global issues that need more discussion and attention in a world that is becoming increasingly a small village.

In Module Two: Demonstrate how the use of stories, proverbs, ritual, art, music, etc is a global value as found in your experience and that of the Chagga and Dagara peoples.

In Module Three: Indicate how the six virtues in Mosha's chapter 3 and 4 are in some way also global values. Identify your own list of values that are needed on the global stage.

In Module Four: Imagine you have a college freshman class from all over the world and from all religions. How would you initiate a discussion on spirituality and moral values in this class? What virtues would you suggest for their discussion, and what concerns do you foresee as emerging in this discussion? How would you address these concerns?

A-1-H: Can explain the function of folk arts in the transmission of

culture and values.

Facets of this competence:

- 1. Explains the characteristics of folk arts.**
- 2. Describes dynamics or mechanisms of how culture and values are transmitted.**
- 3. Describes the role folk art may play in the transmission of culture and values.**
- 4. Applies (3) to one or more specific examples.**

If you opt for this competence, please write your short papers as follows:

In Module One: Demonstrate the power of community, family, elders, and peers in the transmission of culture and values. Use your own experience and that of the Chagga and the Dagara peoples to demonstrate this power.

In Module Two: Show how stories, proverbs, music, dance, art, ritual, etc. transmit culture and values. Give examples from the readings and from your own experience.

In Module Three: Compare and contrast the ways of teaching wisdom and values in the African experience and your own experience. What is common in both experiences? How do both experiences enrich each other?

In Module Four: Initiate a conversation in an 8th grade class on the transmission of values. Using Mosha's chapter 5 and 6, help these pupils to appreciate the importance of positive moral values in their lives. You can make use of stories, proverbs, music, art or ritual to inspire them.

A-3-B: Can explore a model of spiritual development and apply it to oneself or others.

Facets of this competence:

- 1. Discusses the assumptions and implications of a model(s) of spiritual development.**
- 2. Discusses the model in relation to one's or other's experience.**

If you opt for this competence, please write your short papers as follows:

In Module One: How would you apply the African themes of community, spirit and interconnectedness in your spiritual development? How are you inspired by these perspectives?

In Module Two: With reference to the reading materials of this Module, show how some or all of the following have inspired your own spiritual journey: stories, proverbs, art, music, dance, ritual, role playing.

In Module Three: Relate the virtues discussed in this Module to your own life journey. Which of the six virtues best resonate with you and why?

In Module Four: Pretend you are an 8th grade teacher, How would you relate the insights and findings of this Module to these pupils. How would you model for them? You can design a play, a piece of art, a conversation, a talk, or anything that would help these students understand the insights and findings that you appreciate in this Module.

Assessment Criteria for Papers by Competence

Each short paper for the competence chosen will be assessed as excellent if you adhere to the required topic and content, which should be in accordance material covered in a particular Module. To write an excellent paper, keep in mind the material of that particular Module, refer to your experience as well, and make use of ideas and insights from other students and the instructor. Acknowledge all sources, write well and systematically, and put your entire mind and soul in the work and reflections.

Course Structure

This course consists of 5 modules. The estimated time to complete each module is 2 weeks.

Module One addresses the African Indigenous Worldview and its four aspects. It also studies the ipvunda concept, the role of family, elders, the community, and peers in raising children, and looks at Sobonfu Some's reflections on community and spirit.

Module Two deals with the transmitters of culture and values, namely, story telling, proverbs, riddles, song/music, dance, art, ritual and role playing.

Module Three addresses six specific virtues of the Chagga people and shows how these are nurtured in the young.

Module Four summarizes the main findings and insights and tries to apply these to your own personal spiritual development and that of others, specifically in your family, local community, or school.

Module Five allows you to integrate your learning in your final integrative paper.

To view the course schedule, click on the **Schedule** link on the left-hand navigation bar. This page contains the most recently updated listing of the topics and assignments due for each week of the course.

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Assessment

Assessment of Learning

THE FOUR SHORT PAPERS:

The topics for each short paper has been given for you above in the section of COURSE COMPETENCES. Each Module has a variation of the material needed to be included. If you have chosen one competence, you will write a total of four short papers as indicated in each Module. If you have chosen two competences, you will write a total of eight short papers also as indicated in each Module.

Each short paper will have a minimum of 300 words, or one full page written in 12 font size. Make use of all materials emerging from the course, your own experience and reflection on all of them. Properly acknowledge all sources and clearly identify your own experience, reflection, findings and insights.

The final integration paper will have a minimum of 1200 words or four full pages written in 12 font size. This paper will summarize your learning experience and growth in the course.

THE FOUR QUIZZES:

Each bi-weekly quiz on the Friday of the first week of each Module will be one question requiring a written answer in a minimum of 300 words. A quiz will test your knowledge and analysis of assigned readings. To do well in quizzes, please study reading materials thoroughly, jot down in your notebook main themes and ideas, make summaries, and relate new findings and insights to your experience.

Percentage distribution of Assessments

The four quizzes	20%
The short papers	20% (all short papers)
Participation in class discussion	21%
Debate and role play group discussions	3%
Art description and discussion post	4%
On time submission of assignments etc	7%
Final Integrating Paper	25%
	100%

Grading Policies and Practices

HOW TO DO WELL IN THIS COURSE:

1. Participate in class discussions. The class discussions and homework exercises are worth a large percentage of your grade. All Modules ask you post an opinion and include a follow-up. Don't miss the follow-up posting.
2. Do not fall behind. In general once a discussion is graded its over. Don't think you can post discussion items several weeks after they are graded and expect credit. The class has moved on and it is difficult for course administrators to find your postings after they have been graded.
3. Read the assignments carefully and follow directions for each assignment.
4. Give a large chunk of time to this course, about 10 or more hours per week.
5. Post all assignments by the specified due date. This will give 7% points.

General Assessment Criteria for All Writing Assignments

In general, grading of all writing assignments will be based on the following:

Content: refers to the treatment of your topic, logically and analytically. This is the substance, the *what* of the paper; what you had to say about the topic, what you presented in defense of your position, and what your analysis revealed about your thought processes and grasp of the material you grappled with.

Organization: is the way your paper is laid out and presented, including both the overall organization and the arrangement of individual sections. These include: a relevant title, and subheadings; introductory material, where needed; summaries, where appropriate; connections and transitions; and what used to be called “rhetoric”: the skillful arrangement of the pieces for the maximum persuasive impact on the reader.

Mechanics: refers to the use of your Spelling and Grammar checker, the use of Standard English, proper sentence structure and punctuation, and effective and sensitive word choice. Mastery of basic communication and writing skills is a must for undergraduate and graduate students. The paper you prepare should also use proper **APA citation** form for the in-text references as well as the bibliography.

It is important that your essays and papers:

- Specifically address the competence that you are fulfilling in this course.
- Organize your supportive evidence into relevant paragraphs that address your subject.
- Take into account a variety of points of view.
- Demonstrate your appreciation of other points of view, demonstrates empathy and the ability to account for the vantage points of others.
- Demonstrate that you are able to integrate the evidence derived from your chosen sources into your argument according to standard English using proper grammar, mechanics, and sentence structure.
- Use proper quotation form, including introduction of your quotation as well as your commentary following the quotation.
- Have an introduction, the body of main content, and a concluding paragraph.

- Contain proper APA citation form for in-text references as well as for the bibliography.

Assessment Criteria for Online Discussion Participation

Here are some common expectations for discussion, debate, role playing:

- Quality, quantity, depth, breadth.
- Frequency of discussion participation and interaction;
- Relative emphasis to be placed on facts, concepts, critical thinking, and analysis, writing, format, and quantitative reasoning;
- Deadlines for participation: first comment by mid-week so there is time for discussion;
- Appropriate discussion etiquette;
- Frequency of check-ins, at least four times a week.

Course Grading Scale

A = 95 to 100	A- = 91 to 94	B+ = 88 to 90
B = 85 to 87	B- = 81 to 84	C+ = 77 to 80
C = 73 to 76	C- = 69 to 72	D+ = 65 to 68
D = 61 to 64	F = 60 or below	INC

For SNL courses taken for Pass/Fail, a “Pass” represents a grade of “A” for purposes of financial aid and employer reimbursement.

Students wishing to declare a Pass/Fail option must do so before the end of the 2nd week of the quarter.

Online Participation Guidelines

A significant part of your online learning experience involves learning **with and from your classmates** and the **instructor** in the online discussions and group assignments.

Active participation means sharing information and resources and posting your ideas and critiquing and expanding on the ideas of others in a collegial fashion. This discussion is informal in the sense that it is meant

to encourage interested discussion. As participation in discussion is a **graded portion** of the course, you are expected to follow accepted standards of English spelling, grammar and usage in your contributions. You are also required to be **respectful** of your instructor and other students.

These discussions are for you to exchange your reflections with your classmates and instructor about what you are learning. The discussion will be organized around the particular topic you studying each week.

You may be asked by the instructor to **take leadership in a certain group** for a certain time of the course. You will receive further instructions from your instructor if this occurs.

You are asked to contribute your responses to the particular assignment for that particular discussion heading which will be posted. For each general **Discussion Topic**, you are required to make **at least three original, substantive contributions (posts) to each topic each week.**

Class Discussions

General Discussions are a forum for discussion and sharing information among students.

At the beginning of the quarter, your instructor will set up three discussion topics. These three topics will help you and your classmates get off to an immediate start on the course, by providing conversational spaces for necessary, ongoing social and administrative activities. These discussions are:

- Introductions
- Course Q&A
- Village Meeting Place

The Q&A discussion topic is where the management and administrative tasks of the course are conducted, and where you can ask 'process' questions and receive answers. You will also find the schedule of specific dates for your course in this Forum, and the emails sent out to the whole class.

The Village Meeting Place can be used freely for your own conversation (like setting up groups or teams, if these are used in the course). The instructor will not monitor this space; it is for you to share.

Group discussions are private to each group, and only you, your team mates and the instructor can see any of the elements of this discussion. You can also share documents, send emails, and chat with the rest of your group.

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Policies

Academic Integrity

DePaul University is a learning community that fosters the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas within a context that emphasizes a sense of responsibility for oneself, for others and for society at large. Violations of academic integrity, in any of their forms, are, therefore, detrimental to the values of DePaul, to the students' own development as responsible members of society, and to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Violations include but are not limited to the following categories: cheating; plagiarism; fabrication; falsification or sabotage of research data; destruction or misuse of the university's academic resources; alteration or falsification of academic records; and academic misconduct. Conduct that is punishable under the Academic Integrity Policy could result in additional disciplinary actions by other university officials and possible civil or criminal prosecution. Please refer to your Student Handbook or visit <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/homehandbook.html> for further details.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is a major form of academic dishonesty involving the presentation of the work of another as one's own. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to the following:

- The direct copying of any source, such as written and verbal material, computer files, audio disks, video programs or musical scores, whether published or unpublished, in whole or part, without proper acknowledgement

that it is someone else's.

- Copying of any source in whole or part with only minor changes in wording or syntax, even with acknowledgement.
- Submitting as one's own work a report, examination paper, computer file, lab report or other assignment that has been prepared by someone else. This includes research papers purchased from any other person or agency.
- The paraphrasing of another's work or ideas without proper acknowledgement.

Plagiarism, like other forms of academic dishonesty, is always a serious matter. If a instructor finds that a student has plagiarized, the appropriate penalty is at the instructor's discretion.

Disability Accommodations

Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with disabilities on an individualized and flexible basis. The Office of Students with Disabilities (OSD) determines appropriate accommodations through consultation with the student. For certain learning disabilities and/or attention deficit disorders, the Productive Learning Strategies Program (PLuS) determines the appropriate accommodations. See the instructor for more information or call OSD at 773-325-7290 (phone) or 773-325-7296 (TTY); or call PLuS at 773-325-1677.

Incomplete Grades

The intent of the Incomplete grade is to allow students extra time to complete their final assignments. This need arises because, in the closing weeks of the course, they have an event of significant magnitude that adversely affects their ability to complete the course, e.g. serious illness, death in the family, overseas deployment, or natural disaster.

You must request an incomplete grade in writing two weeks before the end of the quarter. Incomplete grades will be considered only after you have satisfactorily completed at least 75 percent of the coursework, and you have such an unexpected, uncontrollable event that prevents you from completing your course. Do not assume that you will qualify for an incomplete. Students who are failing the course at the point where they

request an incomplete will not receive one, nor will they be granted after the end of the quarter. Incomplete grades are given at the discretion of the instructor.

If you do receive permission from the instructor to take an incomplete in the course, you will be required to complete a contract with the instructor, specifying how you will finish the missing work within the next two quarters (excluding summer). Incompletes not finished by the end of the second quarter (excluding summer) will automatically become an F grade on your transcript.

Instructors may not change incomplete grades after the end of the grace period without the permission of a college-based Exceptions Committee.

NOTE: In the case of a student who has applied for graduation and who has been approved for an Incomplete in his or her final term, the incomplete must be resolved within the four week grace period before final degree certification.

Protection of Human Subjects

For more information see: <http://research.depaul.edu/>.

Demonstrating the acquisition of competences in this course can involve “interactions”—interviewing and or observing other people—discussing those interviews or observations with other class members and writing them up in one or more final report(s). As such, these activities qualify as “research” with “human subjects” and are subject to University and Federal guidelines. Because it takes place in the context of this course, your research is exempt from approval by the School for New Learning’s Local Review Board only under the following conditions:

1. The information you collect is **EXCLUSIVELY** for the purpose of classroom discussion and will **NOT** be used after the term is over. If there is any possibility that you will **EVER** use it in further research or for publication, you must obtain approval from the Local Review Board before you begin.
2. You assess and ensure that no “harm”—physical, mental, or social—does or could result from either your interviews and/or observations or your discussion and/or reports.

3. The privacy and confidentiality of those that you interview or observe must be protected. Unless you receive specific permission, in writing, from the person (s) you interview or observe, please change their names, and make sure that their identity cannot be readily ascertained from the information you provide.
 - a. If you want to use real names and relationships, they must sign an “informed consent” document. For information on creating an “informed consent document” see, for example, <http://www.research.umn.edu/consent>.

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Course Expectations

Time Management and Attendance

SNL’s online courses are not self-paced and require a regular time commitment EACH week throughout the quarter.

You are required to log in to your course at least four times a week so that you can participate in the ongoing course discussions.

Online courses are no less time consuming than "face to face" courses. You will have to dedicate some time every day or at least every second day to your studies. A typical four credit hour “face to face” course at SNL involves three hours of classroom meeting per week, plus at least three to six hours of study and homework per week.

This course will require at least the same time commitment, but your learning activities will be spread out through the week. If you have any problems with your technology, or if you need to improve your reading or writing skills, it may take even longer.

The instructor should be notified if your life events do not allow you to participate in the course and the online discussions for more than one week. This is particularly important when there are group discussions or you are working as part of a team.

If you find yourself getting behind, please contact the instructor immediately.

Your Instructor's Role

Your instructor's role in this course is that of a discussion facilitator and learning advisor. It is not their responsibility to make sure you log in regularly and submit your assignments. As instructor, s/he will read all postings to the general discussion forums on a daily basis but may not choose to respond to each posting. You will receive feedback to assignments.

The instructor may choose to designate "office hours" when s/he will be online and available and will immediately respond to questions. Depending on the instructor, this response may be by e-mail, instant messenger or telephone. Otherwise, you will generally receive a response to emailed or posted queries within 48 hours.

Your Role as a Student

As an online student, you will be taking a proactive approach to your learning. As the course instructor's role is that of a learning guide, your role is that of the leader in your own learning.

You will be managing your own time so that you can complete the readings, activities and assignments for the course, and you will also be expected to take a more active role in peer learning.

Credits

This course was designed and produced by Raymond Moshia and staff of SNL Online at DePaul University.

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