

Africana Philosophy  
Professor Casey Woodling  
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Office hours:

<u>Monday</u>	<u>Wednesday</u>	<u>Friday</u>
8:15 to 8:45 AM	8:15 to 8:45 AM	8:15 to 8:45 AM
12:30-1:45 PM	12:30-1:45 PM	12:30-1:45 PM

### **Catalog description**

This course is an introduction to Africana thought and philosophy. It focuses on what Africana Philosophy is, how it should be practiced, and how it should be approached by Westerners. We will examine how traditional African conceptions of personhood, metaphysics, time, epistemology, and morality relate to traditional Western ways of thinking of those notions. We will also consider race and gender in African thought.

### **Course objectives**

Students will understand the following:

- The various methods and topics in Africana philosophy
- The appropriate methods Westerners can employ to understand Africana thought
- Key Africana philosophical concepts and how they relate to Western notions
- Issues of race and gender in Africana philosophy

### **Learning outcomes**

Students will be able to:

- Articulate a definition of Africana philosophy
- Summarize and evaluate the ideas of major philosophers and the major problems in Africana philosophy
- Explain unique Africana philosophical concepts and how they relate to Western notions
- Explain how issues of race and gender manifest in Africana philosophy
- Express complex ideas clearly and logically in both speech and writing

### **Text**

- *The African Philosophy Reader*, edited by P.H. Coetzee and A.P.J. Roux (required)
- *African Philosophy: New and Traditional Perspectives*, edited by Lee Brown (recommended)

### **Evaluation/Grading**

- Weekly quizzes will count for 20% of your final grade. There will be 13 online reading quizzes. I will drop your lowest 3.
- The mid-term and final will each count as 20% of your grade.
- The final paper will count for 20% of your final grade.
- Your presentation will count for 20% of your final grade.

### **Grading Scale**

A	90-100
B+	89-85
B	84-80

C+	79-75
C	74-70
D+	69-65
D	64-60
F	59 or below

**Attendance, participation and course guidelines**

- To avoid automatically failing the class due to a lack of attendance, you must attend at least 75% of our meetings. This is CCU policy. If you are sick or have another legitimate excuse for missing class, see me and I can excuse you for such absences. I will take roll at the beginning of class. If you are late to class, please see me after class so that I can mark you as present. See the course page on Moodle for a link to the official policy.
  
- There should be no use of electronic devices in class other than for the purpose of taking notes. Studies are showing that taking notes the old-fashioned way is superior to taking them on a computer, so my general advice is to take notes by hand and leave your computer at home, but I think there are exceptions to this general rule. Should your use of a cell phone or other electronic device interfere with class, you may be asked to leave for the day. Also, you may lose points for the participation exercises if you are using your device and not participating.
  
- Participation exercises can be made up in cases of an excused absence. Here I follow the definition given in the CCU Class Attendance Policy, which says an absence is excused only in documented cases of:
  - incapacitating illness
  - official representation of the University (excuses for official representation of the University should be obtained from the official supervising the activity)
  - death of a close relative
  - religious holidays

In such cases, the participation exercise is due the day that the student returns to class. If you are in a situation that falls outside of the four types of cases listed above, and you believe it ought to be excused, please talk to me about it.

**Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is a very serious violation of academic honesty. Plagiarism occurs when one misleadingly represents the work of another as one’s own. The penalties for plagiarism can range from an automatic failing grade for an assignment to disciplinary action at the university level. Remember the standards to which you have committed yourselves. We all have pledged ourselves to academic honesty and integrity. I expect everyone to remain committed to these standards throughout the semester.

**Course Schedule**

Please note that the schedule is subject to change.

Week	Topic(s)	Readings	Assignments/Updates
<u>1</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fundamental issues in Africana Philosophy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The struggle for reason in Africa,” Mogobe B. Romose [Coetzee and Roux pages 1-9]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quiz 1</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Categories of cross-cultural cognition and the African condition,” Emevwo Biakolo [Coetzee and Roux pages 9-20]</li> </ul>	
<u>2</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fundamental issues in Africana Philosophy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “On decolonizing African religions,” Kwasi Wiredu [Coetzee and Roux pages 21-38]</li> <li>• ‘Ideology and culture: The African experience,” H. Odera Oruka [Coetzee and Roux pages 69-75]</li> <li>• “The critique of Eurocentrism and the practice of African philosophy,” Tsenay Serequeberhan [Coetzee and Roux pages 75-93]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quiz 2</li> </ul>
<u>3</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fundamental issues in Africana Philosophy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Is there an African philosophy in existence today?,” Issiaka P. Laleye [Coetzee and Roux pages 101-114]</li> <li>• “Four trends in current African philosophy,” H. Odera Oruka [Coetzee and Roux pages 141-147]</li> <li>• “An alienated literature,” Paulin J. Hountondji [Coetzee and Roux pages 147-162]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quiz 3</li> </ul>
<u>4</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding African thought in its own terms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Seeing through the conceptual languages of others,” Lee Brown [Brown pages 3-20]</li> <li>• How Not to Compare African Thought with Western Thought, Kwasi Wiredu [see Moodle]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weekly Quiz 4</li> </ul>
<u>5</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theories of personhood</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Akan and Euro-American Concepts of the Person, Kwame Appiah,” [Brown pages 21-34]</li> <li>• “Personal Identity in African Metaphysics,” Leke Adeofe [Brown pages 69-83]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weekly Quiz 5</li> </ul>

<u>6</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Theories of personhood</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“The Concept of the Person in Luo Modes of Thought,” D.A. Masolo [Brown pages 84-106]</li> <li>“Èniyàn: The Yoruba concept of a person,” Segun Gbadegesin [Coetzee and Roux pages 208-237]</li> <li>“Self as a problem in African philosophy,” Chukwudum B. Okolo [Coetzee and Roux pages 247-258]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Weekly Quiz 6</li> </ul>
<u>7</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Metaphysics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Themes in African metaphysics,” Lebisa J. Teffo and Abraham P.J. Roux [Coetzee and Roux pages 192-208]</li> <li>“The concept of cause in African thought,” Godwin S. Sogolo [Coetzee and Roux pages 228-237]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mid-term exam on Friday</li> </ul>
<u>8</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Time Conceptions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“The Concept of Time as a Key to the Understanding and Interpretation of African Religions and Philosophy,” John Mbiti [Moodle]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quiz 7</li> </ul>
<u>9</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Time Conceptions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Time Concepts and Communication: When the Future Comes from Behind,” Øyvind Dahl [Moodle]</li> <li>“Malagasy Time Conceptions,” Casey Woodling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quiz 8</li> </ul>
<u>10</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Epistemology</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“African epistemology,” Didier N. Kaphagawani and Jeanette G. Malherbe [Coetzee and Roux pages 259-270]</li> <li>“The philosophy of ubuntu and ubuntu as a philosophy&lt;” Mogobe B. Ramose [Coetzee and Roux pages 270-280]</li> <li>“The concept of truth in the Akan language,” Kwasi Wiredu [Coetzee and Roux pages 280-304]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quiz 9</li> </ul>

<p><u>11</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Morality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Particularity in morality and its relation to community,” Pieter H. Coetzee [Coetzee and Roux pages 321-337]</li> <li>• “The moral foundations of an African culture,” Kwasi Wiredu [Coetzee and Roux pages 337-348]</li> <li>• “Person and community in African thought,” Kwame Gyekye [Coetzee and Roux pages 348-366]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quiz 10</li> </ul>
<p><u>12</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Morality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “An Akan perspective on human rights,” Kwasi Wiredu [Coetzee and Roux pages 366-379]</li> <li>• “The ethics of <i>ubuntu</i>,” Mogobe B. Ramose [Coetzee and Roux pages 379-387]</li> <li>• “The ethics of <i>fhavanana</i>,” Casey Woodling and Arianala Ratiarivelo [See Moodle]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quiz 11</li> </ul>
<p><u>13</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Race and Gender</li> </ul>	<p>“South African women and the ties that bind,” Jennifer R. Wilkinson [Coetzee and Roux pages 401-422]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Should women love ‘wisdom’?,” Gail M. Presbey [Coetzee and Roux pages 422-435]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quiz 12</li> </ul>
<p><u>14</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Race and Gender</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Race, culture, identity: Misunderstood connections,” Kwame Appiah [Coetzee and Roux pages 435-456]</li> <li>• “Essence of cultures and a sense of history: A feminist critique of cultural Essentialism,” Uma Narayan [Coetzee and Roux pages 486-501]</li> <li>• “The colour of reason: The idea of ‘race’ in Kant’s anthropology,” Emmanuel C. Eze [Coetzee and Roux 501-539]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quiz 13</li> <li>• Drafts of papers due Friday</li> </ul>

<u>15</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review and presentations</li></ul>		
<u>16</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Final papers and final exam</li></ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Final exam</li></ul>