

ISEP Ghana Summer Program
University of Ghana

ARCH 331: Art History o

Course Syllabus

Course Instructor: William Narteh Gblerkpor, PhD

Email: wngblerkpor@ug.edu.gh

Tel: +233-244-996-682 (WhatsApp and calls)

Class Days and Hours: TBA

Mode of delivery: On-site and in-person

ARCH 331: Art History of Ghana

Course Description

The course focuses on the character and meaning of art works in Ghana over the period 2000 B.C. to the present. Lectures cover topics such as the geography and people of Ghana, the development of art history as a discipline, artist, and art. Regional case studies of prehistoric, historic and contemporary art in Ghana, as well as continuity and change in art through time and space.

Course Objective and Expected Outcomes

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to Ghana and its visual cultures, especially art and art history. At the end of the course, students should be able:

- To understand the various concepts of art and art history, and be conversant with the theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of art history.
- To understand the relationship between art history and other disciplines such as archaeology and ethnography.
- To be able to recognize the art and other artistic expressions of Ghana, and be able to understand the uniqueness and commonalities in the body of art work of Ghana.
- To understand the socio-cultural and political contexts within which the art and artistic traditions of Ghana emerged and evolved over time and space.
- To understand how local and global dynamics such as human and environmental factors collectively shaped the art and art traditions of Ghana.
- To know how the art and visual cultures of Ghana reflect the country's historical path, environment, world view, religion, people, and cultures.

This syllabus represents my current plans and objectives. As we go through the semester, those plans may need to change to enhance the class learning opportunity. Such changes, communicated clearly, are not unusual and should be expected.

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Major Topics and Themes

1. Introduction to Course

- Self-introduction: Faculty and students
- Course Overview:
 - o Course objectives
 - o Expected outcomes
 - o Requirements and expectations
 - o structure and mode of course delivery
 - o Mode of assessments: Tests, Quizzes, and final paper
 - o Course materials and online resources
 - o Q & A Session
- Fieldwork/Trips and Experiential Learning
 - o There will be visits to selected art galleries and museums in the Greater-Accra and Eastern Regions of Ghana:
 - Museum of Archaeology, University of Ghana
 - Museum of Natural and Cultural Heritage at Shai Hills
 - Cedi Beads Industry
 - Art Centre, Accra
 - Artists Alliance Gallery, Accra

2. Introduction to Ghana

- Geographical location
- Environment
- Neighbours
- Peoples
- languages
- Archaeology
- History

3. Art and artist – Definition and discussion

- Art history and other disciplines:
 - o Art and anthropology
 - functionalism
 - structuralism
 - symbolism
 - historical particularism
 - o Art and archaeology
 - Chronology
 - Environment
 - o Art and ethnography
 - Art as culture
 - Art in rites of passage
 - o Art and science and technology
 - Photographic art

4. Terms, concepts, and approaches in art history

- o Art as culture

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- Art as creative process
- Iconology
- Iconography
- Form
- Style
- Monochrome and polychrome
- Realism
- Abstraction and expressionistic styles
- Stylistic analysis
- Formal analysis
- Concept of evolution
- Functional analysis
- Functionalism
- Symbolism
- Diffusionism
- Media
- Prehistoric
- Pre-Atlantic
- Atlantic
- Colonial and post-colonial
- Modernist and post-modernism

5. Survey of art and art traditions in Africa:

- Rock art of Africa
 - Saharan/North Africa
 - West African
 - Southern Africa
- Terracotta art
 - Koma land, Ghana
 - Mali
- Bronze art of West Africa:
 - Akan
 - Ife and Benin

6. Art History of Ghana

- Overview
- Survey of art and art history of Ghana
- Art history: Methods, techniques, and theory
- Prehistoric and pre-European art of Ghana and Africa
 - Rock art
 - Terracotta art
 - Pottery
- Art history and Ghana's past
 - Kintampo Complex
 - Koma land terracotta arts
 - Akan gold weights
 - Akan funeral terracotta art
 - Art and society/culture

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- Art and technology
- Art and environment
- Art and encounters
- Art and politics
- Art and entertainment
- Bodily talks: Ephemeral and scarification arts of Ghana
 - Bodily decorations among the Ga, Dangme and Ewe of Ghana
 - Facial and bodily scarification in Ghana
- Fabric of a nation
 - Kente
 - Fugu
 - Tie-and-dye
- Art and architecture
 - Tongo tenu, decorating buildings, Asante traditional buildings,
- Art and Religion
 - Dipo
 - Akan funerary terracotta art
 - Ewe Gbetsi
- Beads and bodily adornments
- Contemporary art of Ghana
 - Photography art
 - Painting (the Almighty in Kumasi)
 - Recycled Glass beads (Cedi Beads)
- Plastic and Ceramic arts

Ghana Arts in Globalized market system

- Cultural rights
- Copy rights
- Indigenous knowledge
- Art and education
- Art and tourism

Course Materials

Required texts:

1. Cole, Herbert M. and Doran H. Ross. 1977. *The Arts of Ghana* (1st edition). Museum of Cultural History, University of California.
ASIN: B00136Z8GG <https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00136Z8GG/ref>
2. Kwasi Konadu and Clifford C. Campbell (Editors). 2016. *The Ghana Reader: History, Culture, Politics* (The World Readers). Paper ISBN: 978-0-8223-5992-0 / Cloth ISBN: 978-0-8223-5984-5

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Recommended texts will be added

Electronic and online resources

Social Media Handles for the Museum of Natural & Cultural Heritage at Shai Hills

<https://www.instagram.com/ghanaparksandmuseums/>

<https://twitter.com/ghanaparks?lang=en>

Art and Architecture in Northern Ghana, University of IOWA

<https://africa.uima.uiowa.edu/topic-essays/show/10>

The Many Powers of Gold: Akan Art, Princeton University Art Museum

<https://artmuseum.princeton.edu/learn/explore/collections-themes/many-powers-gold-akan-art>

Art of the Asante Kingdom, Met Museum

https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/asan_1/hd_asan_1.htm

Contemporary artist – street art

Rufai Zakari

<https://youtu.be/pJ5Il1X-Cgc>

Winfred nana Amoah

https://youtu.be/ol_CMZ6TouA

Bernice Ameyaw, Scrap metals

<https://youtu.be/3jE-HbuHuTc>



Biography of the Course Instructor – Dr. William Narteh Gblerkpor

Dr. Gblerkpor is a Senior Lecturer in Archaeology and Heritage Studies at the University of Ghana. He holds a PhD in Anthropology from The University of Texas at Austin, and Master of Philosophy degree in Archaeology from the University of Ghana. His research and writing explore the dynamic role of material culture and landscapes in the historical and contemporary construction and maintenance of social identities in West Africa. He is interested in the archaeology of identities; archaeology and community development; cultural resource management; digital archaeology; environmental archaeology; biodiversity heritage conservation, landscape archaeology, art history and visual cultures, and conservation photography. Gblerkpor is the Principal Investigator of two archaeological projects in Ghana: Shai Hills Archaeological Research Project and the Krobo Mountain Archaeological Project. He is currently coordinating the West Africa Biocultural Heritage Conservation Program, a research partnership initiative between the University of Ghana and Forestry Commission (Wildlife Division). Gblerkpor is the founding Director and Curator of the Museum of Natural and Cultural Heritage at Shai Hills.

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Sample images of art/art forms in Ghana



Fig. 1: Koma land terracotta figurines (left) pottery chalice from Shai Hills (right)



Fig. 2: *Dipo* – Historical (left) and contemporary (right) decorative and ornamental art in *dipo* rite of passage among the Dangme Krobo and Shai Area, South-eastern Ghana.



Fig. 3: NYC Mayor Adams' visit the Museum at Shai (left) and a book cover on Ewe Kente of Ghana