

**Proseminar in African History:
Exploring Newspapers from Ghana, c. 1945-1980**

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UCSB, History 147PP

Spring 2010

Wed: 3:00-5:50 HSSB 3202

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Office hrs: Wed. 1:00-3:00, or by appt.

Course Description:

In the 1950s and early 1960s, Ghana as the first British colony in sub-Saharan Africa to reach independence, was very much in the international spotlight. In 1957 the former model colony of the Gold Coast became the ambitious and proud nation of Ghana. Kwame Nkrumah, the country's dynamic and charismatic leader, represented the hopes of a new Africa. Under Nkrumah's leadership, Ghana became the center of Pan-African activities and a source of inspiration for other African countries struggling for liberation from colonial rule. During the 1950s, Ghana's government launched a series of large-scale development projects that included the construction of a deep-sea harbor and a new city at Tema, as well as the Volta River Project featuring the hydroelectric Akosombo Dam that promised to become the engine for the country's industrialization and electrification. These infrastructural projects, together with initiatives in mass education and expanded health care, reflected the aspirations and expectations of modernity in the new nation. The program of modernization did not only include economic investments and social services but also cultural innovations. Already in the postwar years, the British launched a colonial film unit that after independence became the Ghana Film Industry. New music styles such as highlife, popular theater groups, particularly the traveling "concert party", as well as the government sponsored Ghana Dance Ensemble and the National Drama Company transformed the cultural landscape. In the capital city of Accra, the British owned United Africa Company (UAC) and the Swiss Union Trading Company (UTC) both opened spacious department stores that introduced new ways of shopping to African urban consumers.

This proseminar seeks to explore the excitement and possibilities of the postwar period, followed by the economic decline and disappointments in the late 1960s and 1970s. The seminar introduces students to the practice of archival research and the writing of a scholarly paper. All students will be working with newspapers from Ghana, potentially rich sources for asking a variety of questions. Newspapers allow us to trace the course of Ghana's nationalist movement and the debates and political actions leading to independence. Studying newspapers, we can explore how political events were presented to and discussed by African readers, including the consumer boycott, strikes, and outbreak of violence before and during the Gold Coast "riots" of 1948; the establishment of self-rule in 1951 and subsequent struggle over the direction of independence between Nkrumah's Convention People's Party and the Asante-based National Liberation Movement; the coup against Nkrumah's regime in 1966; the return to parliamentary rule during the Second Republic in 1969, followed by the military coups of the 1970s. Yet a

study of newspapers is not limited to political history. These sources may answer questions about constructions of gender, everyday life, consumption, leisure, literary culture, education, nationhood, modernity, and belief systems. A close reading of letters to the editor and women's columns reveals changes in marriage ideals among literate Africans. A scrutiny of sport columns and advertising provides insight about leisure and consumer practices. Newspaper research enables to reconstruct the expectations of modernity and nationhood in Ghana. The detailed reporting about the planning and the construction of the Akosombo Dam sheds light on ideas about development, industrialization, and modernization. Newspaper research raises methodological questions: we will discuss issues about newspaper production, editorial control, circulation, and "reading publics".

The staff at the Davidson Library has compiled a substantial archive of Ghanaian newspapers covering the period from 1945 to 1980, with a focus on the 1950s and 1960s. Our archive of newspaper, available on microfilm reels, includes the following serials: *African Morning Post*, *Ashanti Pioneer*, *Daily Graphic*, *Sunday Mirror*, *Drum*, *Evening News*, *Ghanaian Times*, *Gold Coast Independent*. It is my hope that you will take advantage of this extraordinary archive and write a compelling research paper.

Requirements:

Each student will write a research paper (about 17-20 pages, 4500-5000 words). I am open to the option of team work: two students jointly doing research and authoring a paper. In your paper, you will explore your own research question based on your study of a body of Ghanaian newspapers. Potential topics may include: the political struggles of the 1950s; the promise of the Volta River Project; new forms of leisure and consumption; debates about marriage in advice columns; the project of a national culture; Ghana as the center of Pan-Africanism; labor conflicts such as the strike wave of 1947-1951, led by railway and mine workers; the personality cult around Nkrumah; the backlash against "Nkrumaism" and attempts of a new beginning under the National Liberation Council and the Second Republic, 1966-1972. I will provide additional guidance in identifying research questions. You are expected to relate your topic to scholarly articles and books relevant to your research. You will make your own interpretations of your sources and show how your findings engage with ideas of other scholars. We will discuss each other's work and progress, including two peer reviews. Background readings will introduce aspects of Ghanaian history, a selection of articles and chapters present examples of newspaper research and raise methodological issues.

Your research process (proposal, bibliography) will count as 20% of your grade, your final paper as 50%, your input in peer review as 20%, and your class participation as 10%. PLEASE: no late assignments. This is a collaborative seminar; it is crucial that everybody submits work on time!!

Readings and Newspaper Archive:

Readings are available on ERes at the Davidson Library; the password is *journalist*. The newspapers archive on microfilm is accessible through the circulation desk of the library.

Please do not take these microfilm reels from the library!

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Week 1

Wednesday, March 31, 2010

First hour: introductions

Then: Orientation to library resources (Pegasus, Melvyl, etc.) and microfilms (Sylvia Curtis).

Background readings:

R. Gocking, *The History of Ghana* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2005), chap. 7.

R. Ainslie, *The Press in Africa: Communications Past and Present* (New York: Walker, 1966), chaps. 2, 4 (especially pp. 21-5, 30-7, and 55-65, 72-3).

Recommended:

R. Gocking, *The History of Ghana*, chaps. 5-6, 8-10.

Week 2

Wednesday, April 7, 2010

First hour: presentation about background readings.

Second hour: discussion of readings on literary culture

S. Newell, *Literary Culture in Ghana* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), chaps. 1, 2.

Recommended:

D. Kallmann, "Projected Moralities, Engaged Anxieties: Northern Rhodesia's Reading Publics, 1953-1964," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 32, 1 (1999), 71-117.

Then: Report on research experiences and topic ideas.

Week 3

Wednesday, April 14, 2010

First hour: discussion of readings on gender politics and women's columns

A. Gadzekpo, "Gender, Discourses and Representational Practices in Gold Coast Newspapers," *Jenda: A Journal of Culture and African Women Studies* 1, 2 (2001), 1-27.

B. Murillo, "Ideal Homes and the Gender Politics of Consumerism in Postcolonial Ghana, 1960-70," *Gender and History* 21, no. 3 (2009), 560-75.

Recommended:

E. Akyeampong, "'Wo pe tam won pe ba' ('You like cloth but you don't want children') Urbanization, Individualism & Gender Relations in Colonial Ghana c. 1900-1939," in *Africa's Urban Past*, ed. D. M. Anderson and R. Rathbone, 223-34 (Oxford: James Currey, 2000).

Then: Discussion of research topics, bibliography, and research problems.

Week 4

Wednesday, April 21, 2010

First hour: discussion of readings on advice columns, courtship, and marriage

K. Mutongi, "Dear Dolly's' Advice: Representations of Youth, Courtship, and Sexualities in Africa, 1960-1980," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 33, 1 (2000), 1-23.

C. Nickerson, "Gold Beds, Gold Marriages: Advice Columns in Ghanaian Newspapers and the Changing Realities and Ideals of Marriage," final paper for History 147PP (2002).

Then: Presentations of *one* article or *one* book read.

* Research topic and bibliography due

Week 5

Wednesday, April 28, 2010

Presentation of your research question, preliminary thesis, and a brief outline of how you plan to pursue your problem

** Project proposal due, including revised bibliography, research statement, and paper outline.

Week 6

Wednesday, May 5, 2010

No class meeting. Complete your research and begin writing. Individual conferences.

Week 7

Wednesday, May 12, 2010

No class meeting.

Week 8

Wednesday, May 19, 2010

Peer review of first portion of your paper, including introduction (7-10 pages)

*** First peer review, first section must be circulated to your peer reviewers and the instructor by 2 pm, Friday, May 14, 2010.

Week 9

Wednesday, May 26, 2010

Discussion of first draft by assigned critics

**** Second peer review, complete draft must be circulated to your peer reviewers and the instructor by 12 noon Monday, May 24, 2010.

Week 10

Wednesday, June 2, 2010

Presentations of your findings and conclusions

***** Final papers due in class.