Course Rationale:
Marriage was the widely expected norm for men and women within African societies. The institution was an important marker of adulthood and it linked individuals and lineages in a network of mutual cooperation and support. Marriage practices and their concomitant gender expectations varied significantly from one society to another, and over time. As a result, marriage and divorce are especially rich terrain for exploring social history, women's agency, discursive constructions of 'woman', masculinity, and gender relations of power. This course explores some of the newest scholarship on marriage by Africanist scholars. The readings demonstrate the wide cultural variety in marriage as well as the dynamic relationship between marriage and historical change. They especially highlight women's roles and expectations in marriage, masculinity as well as the ways in which men and women constantly negotiated the rules and boundaries of marriage. When available, we will draw on other sources as well such as film, fiction and life histories.

Course Aims and Objectives:
By the end of this course, students will be familiar with critical debates in the field of social history and in the literature on women and gender in African studies. Students will have an appreciation of the ways in which studies of African women challenge and engage theories on gender emerging from other world regions, and they will be able to illustrate a variety of historical questions that be addressed through an analysis of marriage and divorce. Finally students will be able to express clearly the ways in which marriage reveals the impact of historical forces on gender relations and demonstrate the fluidity of gender roles and expectations in time and space.

Format and Procedure:
This class will meet once a week for one hour and fifty-five minutes. Students are expected to attend each class session, arrive to class on time, actively listen and participate. Active participation includes taking notes, asking questions, contributing insights and ideas to the discussion. During discussion you are expected to bring copies of the readings under discussion. This class is discussion based. Therefore, you are expected to come to each class prepared to offer an analysis of the readings. Each week, one student will be assigned the task of providing some observations or commentary about the readings and given 10 – 15 minutes to share his/her ideas. Nonetheless, everyone must come prepared to discuss the author’s most salient points, the larger literature in which the work is located and the evidence the author uses to illustrate or prove his/her argument. Also consider the ways in which the readings resonate with each other.
Finally, learning is a collaborative process therefore individually and collectively we share the responsibility of creating a respectful atmosphere where knowledge and critical insights are exchanged, disagreements inspire and learning occurs.

**Course Requirements:**

**Attendance:** Students are allowed two unexplained absences. Each subsequent absence will result in the loss of one third of a letter grade (i.e. B+ to B, etc.).

**Assignments:** Each student is expected to write three short essays (5 pages each), a movie review and a final research paper of 20 pages.

- The topics will be provided to you. The first short essay is due **September 18th**, the second **October 16th**, and the third essay **November 8th**. You may use sources not discussed in class to supplement the discussion in your short essays, however they cannot be used in place of a sustained discussion of the readings on the syllabus.

- Several films are required viewing. The library obtained streamed rights on some therefore you can access them through our Blackboard site. Those not streamed are available on Reserve in Uris library. The movie review must be 5 pages. It must provide an overview of the film and discuss how it relates to our readings. The review is due by **noon, Nov. 6th**.

- The final assignment is a 20-page research paper. The paper must engage some of the theoretical insights we discuss over the course of the term and show how those insights apply to your topic. **A draft of your introduction (3 pages), an outline and annotated bibliography (min. 7 entries) are due on November 16th. The final research paper is due noon, Tuesday December 13th.**

*Use of sources: Reference citations must be clear and correct, and the use of information from other sources must be clear and responsible. A consistent style for citations must be used (e.g., MLA or Chicago) throughout the paper.*

**Grades:** Your performance on the papers and class participation will be factored into your final grade. Your grades will be calculated along the following guidelines. The essays will account for 30% of the final grade, a movie review 10%, the research paper 50% and in-class participation 10%.

**Academic Integrity**

Each student in this course is expected to abide by the Cornell University Code of Academic Integrity. Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student's own work.

You are encouraged to study together and to discuss information and concepts. You can give "consulting" help to or receive "consulting" help from such students.
However, this permissible cooperation should never involve one student having possession of a copy of all or part of work done by someone else, in the form of an e-mail, an e-mail attachment file, a diskette, or a hard copy.

Should copying occur, the student who copied work from another student and the student who gave material to be copied will both automatically receive a zero for the assignment. Penalty for violation of this Code can also be extended to include failure of the course and University disciplinary action.

**Accommodations for students with disabilities**
In compliance with the Cornell University policy and equal access laws, I am available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that may be required for student with disabilities. Requests for academic accommodations are to be made during the first three weeks of the semester, except for unusual circumstances, so arrangements can be made. Students are encouraged to register with Student Disability Services to verify their eligibility for appropriate accommodations.

**Religious observance**
Some students may wish to take part in religious observances that fall during this academic term. Should you have a religious observance that conflicts with your participation in the course, please speak with me before the end of the second week of the term to discuss appropriate accommodations.

**Commercial Internet Sites for Course Materials**
Materials prepared for this course, *Marriage and Divorce in Africa*, whether in hard copy or in digital formats and posted on Blackboard are intellectual property belonging to the author. Materials include, but are not limited to: syllabi, exams, lecture notes, course assignments. Students are not permitted to buy or sell any course materials without the express permission of the instructor. Such unauthorized behavior constitutes academic misconduct.

**Required books:**
The required books may be purchased from the Cornell book store. Articles and book chapters are available on Blackboard in the Content section. In addition, all required books and films will be on reserve in Uris Library.


Week I

Aug. 24th  Overview of Syllabus - Introduction

Recommended Readings:


Week II

Aug 31st: Preparing for Marriage
Readings:


Film: Finzan

Week III

Sept. 7th: Myth, Legends and Marriage
Readings:


Film: Keita
Week IV

Sept. 14th: Marriage and the pre-colonial state
Readings:

*First Essay Due Sunday Sept. 18th by 8:00 pm.*

Week V

Sept. 21st: Marriage, Imperialism and Social Change in the 19th Century
Reading:


Week VI

Sept. 28th: Marriage, Imperialism and Social Change in 19th Century
Readings:

Week VII

Oct. 5th: Women and Marriage in Colonial Society
Readings:


Week VIII

Oct. 12th: Marriage, Colonialism and Urbanization
Readings:

Second Essay Due Sunday, October 16th, 8:00 pm

Week IX

Oct. 19th: Marriage and Nationalism
Readings:


Louise White, “Matrimony and Rebellion: Masculinity in Mau Mau” in Lisa Lindsay, Stephan Miescher (eds). Men and Masculinities in Modern Africa (Heinemann, 2003), 177 - 191.


Week X

Oct 26th: Love and Marriage in Contemporary Africa
Readings:


Film: Faat Kine

Week XI

Nov. 2nd: Marriage and Divorce in the 21st Century
Readings:


Film: Everything Must Come to Light

Film Review due Sunday, Nov. 6th, 8:00 pm

Week XII

Nov. 9th: Library Research Visit

Third Essay Due Tuesday Nov. 8th, 8:00 pm.

Week XIII

Nov. 16th: Discussion of Final Research Paper
Readings: Introduction (3 pgs.), Outline and Annotated bibliography (min. 7 entries).

Week XIV

Nov. 23rd: Happy Thanksgiving

Week XV

Nov. 30th: Discussion of Final Research Paper
Readings: First seven pages of research paper.