

A Comparative View of Ghanaian & African American Health & Aging

Tentative Course Proposal

Summer: 2009

Instructor: Denise D. McAdory, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor

University of South Alabama

dmcadory@usouthal.edu or (251)460-7079

Office Hours: Students will have daily contact

Credit: 3

Course Description: This course will explore parallels in health and aging between elderly Ghanaians and elderly African Americans. Among the comparative health issues to be studied are: socioeconomic disparities, intergenerational family structure and emotional and spiritual effect of slavery. Particular attention will be given to the following: family dynamics, mental health issues, diet and the historical significance of home remedies. Since elders are the focal point of families in Ghanaian and African American culture, the art of storytelling and the contribution of oral history to both cultures will be considered for investigation.

My People

*The night is beautiful,
So the faces of my people,*

*The stars are beautiful,
So the eyes of my people,*

*Beautiful, also, is the sun.
Beautiful, also are the souls of my people.*

_____Langston Hughes

Intructor, Sam, & Scribner, Megan. (2003). *Teaching With Fire: Poetry That Sustains the Courage to Teach*. California: Jossey-Bassey.

Goals:

1. To recognize health issues plus determine if there is a difference in dietary consumption re: Ghanaian and African American elderly.
2. To examine socioeconomic patterns and determine if there is a weakening of the traditional family and/or community support for Ghanaian elderly.
3. To define strengths re: Ghanaian/African American family in relationship to elder care, home remedies, and the art of storytelling.
4. To determine heuristically the sociological/psychological aspects of health, aging and spirituality.

Proposed Texts:

Covey, Herbert. (2007). *Africa American Medicine: Herbal & Non-Herbal Treatments*. New York: Lexington Books.

Fett, Sharla. (2002). *Working Cures: Healing, Health & Power on Southern Slave Plantations*. University of North Carolina Press.

Franklin, John H. & Moss, Alfred. (2007). *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African Americans*. New York: Borzoi Publishers. (Read chapters pertaining to Ghana).

* Books must be read prior to the two week course!

Tentative Schedule of Field Trips May Include:

- Kumasi
- Culture & Craft Center
- Guided tour of Cape Coast
- Kumasi University of Science & Technology
- W.E.B. DuBois Cultural Center/Burial Site
- University of Ghana Library at Legion to obtain data re: health and aging, home remedies, socioeconomic disparities & possible university-faculty contact
- Aburi Botanical Gardens
- Nkruman Memorial Park
- Center for National Culture

Assignments:

1. Students will be expected to journal heuristic experiential encounters daily i.e. interaction with elders, data re: health issues, types of home remedies, the long-term effects of spirituality, personal insights/revelations re: historical slave sites, storytelling encounters and student-professor interaction. Journals must be submitted three days before departure for grading.
2. Students will be expected to present a brief comparative analysis presentation about the heuristic experiential effect of their journey as it relates to: elderly health issues in Ghana, Black elders in America and the text. Grading re: brief oral presentations will start the second week of class.
3. A critical component of this two week heuristic experience will be to submit a 10 page research paper on the following question: Has Ghana changed since slavery and what were the long-term health and/or socioeconomic effects on African elders currently called African Americans? This paper must be submitted by email one week after course completion to obtain a final grade.

Heuristic comes from the Greek word heuriskein, meaning to discover or to find. It refers to a process of internal search through meaning of experience and develops methods and procedures for further investigation and analysis. The self of the researcher is present throughout the process and, while understanding the phenomenon with increasing depth, the researcher also experiences growing self-awareness and self-

knowledge. Thus, heuristic inquiry is a process that begins with a question or problem which the researcher seeks to answer. The question is one that has a personal challenge and puzzlement in the search to understand one's self and the world in which one lives. The heuristic process is autobiographic, yet with virtually every question that matters there is a social-and perhaps universal-significance. Finally, heuristics is a way of engaging in scientific search through methods and processes aimed at discovery; a way of self-inquiry and dialogue with others aimed at finding the underlying meanings of important human experiences. (Moustakas, 1990).

Moustakas, Clark. (1990). *Heuristic Research: Design, Methodology, & Application*. New York: Sage Publications.

Course Requirements:

1. Journals: 50%
2. Individual Heuristic Presentations: 25%
3. Research Papers: 25%

Grading Policy: The final grade will be based on student's performance in meeting the course requirements.

90-100: A

80-89: B

70-79: C

60-69: D

59: Below: F

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, students with bona fide disabilities will be afforded reasonable accommodations. The Office of Special Student Services will certify a disability and will advise a faculty of reasonable accommodations.