

Introduction to Indigenous African Spirituality  
HRSP-1012  
3 units  
Starr King School for the Ministry – Graduate Theological Union  
Fall 2021

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Rev. Anthony Mtuaswa Johnson, is an Ordained Unitarian Universalist Minister currently serving as Minister at the Sedona Unitarian Universalist Fellowship in Sedona, AZ. He is a practicing Diviner in the Dagara tradition of Burkina Faso, West Africa and is a Graduate of the “Indigenous African Spiritual Technology” program taught by Malidoma Some. He has been a student of African philosophy and practice for over thirty years, has spent six-weeks with child soldiers in Liberia, West Africa and is also a former U.S. Army Captain. He holds a BA in Radio-TV-Film and a MA in Human Learning and Development.

Sept 9<sup>th</sup> - December 14<sup>th</sup>  
Thursday’s 9:45 am-12:30pm  
Online Synchronous

### Course Description

Exploring Indigenous African Spirituality is an interdisciplinary course that will examine the modern story of religion and spirituality from an indigenous African perspective. We will explore the history, philosophy, art, and technology of African Spirituality. African Spirituality refers to the native beliefs and rituals of the continent of Africa prior to the Christian and Islamic colonialization of Africa. Indigenous African Spirituality encompasses a vast, continent-wide-array of ethnic based beliefs informed by one’s family of origin. Indigenous African Spirituality is distinguished by its integration into the practices, habits, beliefs, and lifestyles of African people. It is woven into every facet of African life and is not separate from the culture or from the everyday lives of its practitioners.

### Learning Objectives

During this course student will:

- Form a basic knowledge of what encompasses Indigenous African Spirituality
- Explore the historical context of Indigenous African Spirituality
- Explore the broad and vast applications of Indigenous African Spirituality
- Articulate the relationship between African indigenous spirituality and modernity

- Engage fellow students in Spiritual space
- Deepen an understanding of Starr King's commitment to ECO (Educating to Counter Oppression) and how it applies to the African Diaspora

### Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this course students will:

- Have gained a deeper appreciation and understanding of Indigenous African Spirituality
- Have experienced a spiritual perspective centered around an indigenous worldview
- Have deepened their capacity to understand Starr King's commitment to Educating to Counter Oppression (ECO) in application to the African Diaspora

### Course Policies

Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes unless excused in advance by permission from the instructor. Attendance and participation in class discussions are *essential components of this course*. Students with special needs or learning disabilities that need to be accommodated to maximize their learning should identify those needs to the instructor. Communication in advance of the first day of the intensive will be helpful to assure adequate planning and preparation for special needs.

### Legal Statements

-Academic Conduct

<https://www.sksm.edu/current-students/statement-academic-integrity-misconduct/>

-Plagiarism

<https://www.sksm.edu/plagiarism/>

-Notice to Students About Your Privacy

<https://www.sksm.edu/academics/policy-statements/ferpa-family-educational-rights-and-privacy-act/>

-Disability Policy

<https://www.sksm.edu/students-with-disabilities-policy/>

## Course Assignments

Students should consider their class participation as their primary assignment. In addition, a 7-9-page reflection paper on your *major learnings* in this course.

NOTE: Essays should be double-spaced, font Times New Roman 12, with 1.25-inch margins.

Paper Delivery: Please e-mail the papers to the instructor by due date [ajohnson@sksm.edu](mailto:ajohnson@sksm.edu)  
Subject Line: African Indigenous Spirituality Writing Assignment.  
Please send all papers by the deadline.

DUE DATE: Week of Study Week      Final Due December 17, 2021

## Grading

In keeping with Starr King's educational philosophy, this course is offered on a credit/no-credit basis (grade recorded on the GTU system as P/F). The instructor will provide a narrative evaluation of your work which will assess both class participation and the required writing assignment.

If you need or desire to receive letter grades, please notify the instructor. For those requesting letter grades, we follow PSR guidelines (<http://.psr.edu/grades>).

Class Attendance - Attendance and participation in class discussions are essential components of this course and all students are expected to attend class and participate actively. Please be on time and refrain from texting, e-mailing, or surfing the Internet for personal reasons during the class.

Class Participation: it is essential to our individual and group learning that you approach this course prepared to engage and to share in the assigned reading assignments and Other classroom activities.

Credits and workload: this is a 3 credit graduate class.

## Course Schedule

Introduction to Indigenous African Spirituality Fall 2021 (subject to change)

Week 1 September 9<sup>th</sup>      Exploring an African Centered Worldview

9:45 Opening Ritual  
Introduction and Class Content Overview  
Participants Introduce Themselves

Introduction to the Reflection Writing Assignment  
11:00 body break (15 minutes)  
11:15 -12:30 Indigenous African Worldview

Week 2 September 16th African Traditional Religions in Contemporary Society

Read Chapter 1: “Insiders and Outsiders in the Study of Traditional African Religions” David Westerlund

9:45 Opening Ritual  
Chapter Review and Discussion  
11:00 Body break (15 minutes)  
11:15 -12:30 Chapter Review and Discussion

Week 3 September 23rd African Traditional Religions in Contemporary Society

Read Chapter 2: “Major Issues in the Study of African Traditional Religions”  
Jacob K. Olupona

9:45 Opening Ritual  
Chapter Review and Discussion  
11:00 body break (15 minutes)  
11:15 -12:30 Chapter Review and Discussion

Week 4 September 30th The Healing Wisdom of Africa

Read Chapters 1-3 “Healing in The Indigenous World” Malidoma Some

9:45 Opening Ritual  
Chapter Review and Discussion  
11:00 body break (15 minutes)  
11:15 -12:30 Chapter Review and Discussion

Week 5 October 7th The Healing Wisdom of Africa

Read Chapters 4-6 “Relationships of Healing: The Community” Malidoma Some

9:45 Opening Ritual  
10:00 Chapter Review and Discussion  
11:00 Body break (15 minutes)  
11:15 -12:30 Chapter Review and Discussion

Week 6 October 14th African Traditional Religions in Contemporary Society

Read Chapter 3 "The Place of Traditional Religion in Contemporary South Africa"

\_Gerhaudus Cornelius Oosthuizen

9:45 Opening Ritual  
Chapter Review and Discussion  
11:00 body break (15 minutes)  
11:15 -12:30 Chapter Review and Discussion

Week 7 October 21st African Traditional Religions in Contemporary Society

Read Chapter 4 "The Place of Traditional Religion in Contemporary Africa: The Yoruba Example" Wande Abimbola

9:45 Opening Ritual  
Chapter Review and Discussion  
11:00 body break (15 minutes)  
11:15 -12:30 Chapter Review and Discussion

Week 8 October 28th READING WEEK NO COURSES

Week 9 November 4<sup>th</sup> The Role of Women in African Traditional Religion

African Traditional Religion in Contemporary Society

Read Chapter 5 "Flowers in the Garden" John Mbiti

9:45 Opening Ritual  
Chapter Review and Discussion  
11:00 body break (15 minutes)  
11:15 -12:30 Chapter Review and Discussion

Week 10 November 11th The Healing Wisdom of Africa

Read Chapters 7-9 "Rituals of Healing" Malidoma Some

9:45 Opening Ritual  
Chapter Review and Discussion  
11:00 body break (15 minutes)  
11:15 -12:30 Chapter Review and Discussion

Week 11      November 17th    The Healing Wisdom of Africa

Read Chapters 10-14 "Rituals of Healing"                      Malidoma Some

9:45 Opening Ritual

11:00 body break (15 minutes)

11:15 -12:30 Chapter Review and Discussion

Week 12      November 25th Thanksgiving Holiday

Week 13      December 9th                      LAST CLASS: REFLECTION AND REVIEW

Indigenous African Spirituality and Unitarian Universalism

Student Reflections: Each student in the class will present a 3-5-minute

Integrative reflection in response to our work together this Semester.

Closing Ritual

Week 14      STUDY WEEK    MAKE UP WEEK

WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE: DEADLINE DECEMBER 17TH

Required Texts:

Olupona, Jacob K., 2000, *African Traditional Religions in Contemporary Society*, Paragon House  
ISBN: 0-89226-079-3, \$14.95.

Some, Malidoma Patrice, 1999, *The Healing Wisdom of Africa*, Jeremy Tarcher/Putnam  
ISBN: 0-87477-991-X, \$13.16.

Suggested Readings:

Some, Malidoma Patrice, 1994, *Of Water and The Spirit*, Jeremy Tarcher/Putnam  
ISBN: 0 14 01. 9496-7, \$15.49.

Cumes, David M. MD, 2004, *Africa in My Bones*, New Africa Books  
ISBN: 0-86486-556-2, \$21.45.

Scranton, Laird, 2006 *The Science of The Dogon*, Inner Traditions  
ISBN-10: 1-59477-133-2, \$16.95.