

## *Dr. Martin, African American Studies Professor*

---

Martin earned her undergraduate English degree from Georgia Southern University and her MA in Afro-American Studies from the University of California Los Angeles. She received her PhD. in English from Florida State University in 2006. Her area of focus is twentieth century African American literature with an emphasis on folklore and the African American conjuring tradition.

Martin's research explores the lore cycle of the conjure woman, or black priestess, as an archetype in literature and visual texts. Her monograph, *Conjuring Moments in African American Literature: Women, Spirit Work, and Other Such Hoodoo* (Palgrave Macmillan, Jan 2013), engages how African American authors have shifted, recycled, and reinvented the conjure woman figure primarily in twentieth century fiction. She develops a new vocabulary and framework (conjuring moments) with which to articulate a critical discourse surrounding the conjure woman and the use of African-centered cosmologies as a trope in African American literature. Arguing that the conjure woman is one of the most adept agents of mobility, resistance, and self-determination in the realm of African American womanhood, the objective of Martin's study is to construct a historiography of the conjure woman as a literary archetype, which investigates the authority of her power, the negotiation of gender and body politics, as well as questions of African-based spirit work and Christian spiritual ethics.

Martin's year in residence at the University of Houston is dedicated to the completion of a second manuscript, *Envisioning Voodoo: African Diasporic Religion in the Popular Imagination, 1985-2010* which interrogates the depictions of the black priestess in American visual media. In *Envisioning Voodoo* she analyzes several popular American films, in which black women perform variations of African diasporic religious practices commonly lumped under the sensationalized misnomer "voodoo." Martin critically evaluates what affect the inscription of African ritual cosmologies has on the identity, perception, and treatment of Africana women. She is specifically interested in how American popular culture projects a discourse of otherness onto African-centered Spirituality, which she attributes to early American attitudes toward Haiti and its national religion, *Vodou*. Martin's next book will theorize how race, gender, and African spirituality are appropriated in popular visual culture to satisfy a Western desire for the exotic *Other*.

Other areas of interest include the novels of Tina McElroy Ansa, Toni Morrison, Geechee/Gullah heritage and culture, black women and the blues tradition, and African American genealogical research. Martin is a member of the American Studies Association, National Council for Black Studies, College Language Association, Modern Language Association, and the African American Historical and Genealogical Society.

In the Fall 2012 semester, Martin will be teaching a new course in African American Studies, **AAS 3394: Voodoo and Visual Culture**. This class, taking literary studies as the foundation, is designed to both introduce students to African-based religion practiced in the Americas and to exam the role of visual iconography in such religions. How do we "read" visual representations of Voodoo? We will engage current research, contemporary fiction, and other critical resources to assess how visual culture and spirituality function together. We will consider such topics as representation and body politics; gender performance and the negotiation of power; spiritual authority and religious syncretization; as well as sexuality, authenticity, and ancestral reverence.