DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
ENGLISH 516: Topics in 20th-Century Literature in English, Lec. 8:
AFRICAN LITERATURE – A SURVEY

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OFFICE HOURS
6181 H. C. White: Tuesday 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon &
1470 Van Hise: Thursday 2:30 – 3:00
by appointment

Map: contemporary Africa
The course is a detailed introduction to the major writers and diverse literary traditions of the continent. We will select texts from different genres—prose fiction, poetry, drama—and regions. We will study the historical and cultural contexts of the writing, publication, and reception or consumption of the literature. We will pay particular attention to the different forms and techniques with which the writers convey their ideas, and explore in detail some of the most interesting of those composite ideas and themes: colonialism and cultural imperialism; the possibility of an “African” literature in non-African but Europhone languages; cultural nationalism and the independent nation-state; and gender, sexuality and African cultural traditions. Some of writers we would read include Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Assia Djebar, Tsitsi Dangarembga, Nadine Gordimer, Ngugi wa Thiong’O, and Buchi Emecheta.

Required texts
Achebe, Things Fall Apart
Soyinka, Death and the King’s Horseman
Ngugi, Devil on the Cross
Emecheta, The Joys of Motherhood
Dangarembga, Nervous Conditions
Gordimer, The House Gun
Djebar, Fantasia

Texts and where to find them:
All the “required” texts are available at the University Bookstore. All secondary readings are available either as electronic reserve pdf files online—sign on to your MyUW for access, or as chapters in books, and those books are on hard copy reserve in College Library for 3-hour loan periods. At the beginning of the class on each text, I will walk you through the secondary readings

COURSE RULES (I reserve the right to change these, including the weekly schedule, at any time in the semester; students will be duly informed of such a change):
1. ~Regular attendance. Flu-related absences will not be penalized; please email me promptly on infection. Other unreported and unpermitted absences are subject to penalty. 4 such absences automatically earns a student F course grade.
2. ~20% for:
   ---(A). Active participation in class discussions
   ---(B). Class presentation. Those presenting on a particular day need not do #C below. Since there will likely be more than one presenter per day, all class presentations must be done as group work.
There are two kinds of class presentation:
   i. Performance/Reading of a short scene from the novel or play you are presenting on, followed by brief commentary on why you choose the scene its overall significance to understanding the play or novel. If you are presenting on poetry, read all the selections and then chose one or two for performed reading in class, followed by brief commentary on the overall significance of your selected poem/s to the poetry selection generally. To all: your “brief commentary” must be typed up and read in class and handed to me afterward.

OR
ii. **Written short critical reflection** on the required text for the day. This consists of two main parts: (1) a brief summary of the novel or play or the poetry selection, and (2) Critical discussion of whatever themes, ideas, and style elements you think are important in the text. You obviously can’t say everything, so use your judgment in deciding what to say or leave out. In addition, you may suggest issues for class discussion, e.g., those issues that you find difficult or intriguing in the text and you want to recommend them for class discussion.

For either i or ii:
::Multiple presenters should do group work, integrate their ideas and perform their selected scene and write their brief commentary, or write up one presentation only for one person to read.
::Presentations should last **no more than 20 minutes**, no matter the number of presenters. Write up the presentation, read, and hand a copy to me afterward.
::Presentations will be followed by questions from the rest of the class.

3. ~25% for: Exam Paper 1 of 5-7 pages double-spaced
4. ~25% for: 1-page typed Response Paper (see description below) on each of the required texts, **due at the end of our class discussion of the particular text (8 responses, total)**. The first response paper must be submitted in a folder, which will serve as a holder in my office for the remaining responses. Write your name, author’s name and text title on each response. The responses are not graded individually, but collectively at the end of the semester. However, please come to me during my office hours if you want some feedback. **Presenters on a text do not need to submit a response paper on that text.**

5. ~30% for Exam Paper 2 of 8-9 pages double-spaced

**On deadlines**: As a sign of exemplary responsibility and class citizenship, I expect all students to firmly observe course deadlines. Plan ahead and seek permission if you think you will be late in submitting a paper, whether “response paper” or “exam paper.” The instructor has **absolutely no obligation** to accept ANY unpermitted late paper. Except with prior permission or in cases of medical emergency appropriately documented, all unexcused lateness will be penalized. The appropriate penalty will be determined in each case by the instructor.

**What is a “Response paper”?**
A Response Paper is a brief commentary on a text. It is composed of two parts (1) identification of author and text and a few lines on what the text is about; and (2) a well-considered, judicious discussion of any part of the text. This could be what you like or dislike about the text and why; an assessment of a character or relationship between or among characters; or an exposition on some notable elements of the text’s style, etc.

**What is an “Exam Paper”?**
An Exam Paper is a timed take-home research paper. You will be given questions by email or in hardcopy and then a specified number of hours, e.g. 12, 24, 36, 48, etc, to write a research-caliber paper from home. You can consult all sources but you must properly document all of them. You will be given a separate set of instructions for the exam papers.
**Class email listserv**: the class email list is [english516-1-f09@lists.wisc.edu](mailto:english516-1-f09@lists.wisc.edu). Use it to post issues and questions about our class work only. Anything you send to the list will go to the whole class, so please do not mistake it for my personal email if you have a personal matter you want to email me about. My personal email is [tolaniyan@wisc.edu](mailto:tolaniyan@wisc.edu).

**WEEKLY SCHEDULE**

**WEEK 1**: Thursday September 3: **Introduction I**

**WEEK 2**: Tuesday September 8: **Introduction II: History, Themes & Forms**

**WEEK 3**: Tuesday September 15: **Achebe, Things Fall Apart (I)**
--Achebe, "The Novelist as Teacher," *Hopes & Impediments* 40-46
Thursday September 17: Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (II)
--continuing discussion

WEEK 4: Tuesday September 22: Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (III)
--conclusion

: Thursday September 24: Soyinka, *Death and the King's Horseman* (I)
--Olakunle George, “Cultural Criticism in Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman,*” *Representations* 67 (1999):

WEEK 5: Tuesday September 29: Soyinka, *Death and the King's Horseman* (II)
--conclusion

: Thursday October 1: Ngugi, *Devil on the Cross* (I)

**WEEK 6: Tuesday October 6: Ngugi, Devil on the Cross (II)**
--continuing discussion

: **Thursday October 8: Ngugi, Devil on the Cross (III)**
--conclusion

**WEEK 7: Tuesday October 13: Emecheta, Joys of Motherhood (I)**

: **Thursday October 15: Emecheta, Joys of Motherhood (II)**
--conclusion

--**Collect Exam Paper 1 questions. Take-home, 2 days.**

**Thursday October 18: No Class.**
--**Submit Exam Paper 1 answers, in both email and hardcopy**

**WEEK 8: Tuesday October 20: No Class. Read the poetry selections**

**Thursday October 22: Poetry Selections: “High” & “Low” (I)**
--from Penguin Book of Modern African Verse
--from Malibongwe
--from Rampolokeng, Horns for Hondo
--Ngara, Emmanuel. Ideology and Form excerpts
--McClintock, Anne. '"Azikwelwa' (We Will Not Ride): Politics and Value in Black South
WEEK 9: Tuesday October 27: Poetry Selections: “High” & “Low” (II)

--conclusion

: Thursday October 29: Dangarembga, Nervous Conditions (I)


--Clare Counihan, “Reading the Figure of Woman in African Literature: Psychoanalysis, Difference, and Desire,” Research in African Literatures 38.2 (Summer 2007): 161-80.


WEEK 10: Tuesday November 3: Dangarembga, Nervous Conditions (II)

--continuing discussion

: Thursday November 5: Dangarembga, Nervous Conditions (III)

--conclusion
WEEK 11: Tuesday November 10: Djebar, Fantasia (I)

: Thursday November 12: Djebar, Fantasia (II)
--continuing discussion

WEEK 12: Tuesday November 17: Djebar, Fantasia (III)
--conclusion

: Thursday November 19: tba

WEEK 13: Tuesday November 24: Gordimer, The House Gun (I)

: Thursday November 26: THANKSGIVING RECESS
WEEK 14: Tuesday December 1: Gordimer, The House Gun (II)
--continuing discussion

: Thursday December 3: Gordimer, The House Gun (III)
--conclusion

WEEK 15: Tuesday December 8: Exam paper tidbits/hints.
--**Collect Exam Paper 2 questions**

: Thursday December 10: TBA
--**Submit Exam Paper 2 answers, in both email and hardcopy**

ABBREVIATED BIBLIOGRAPHY
de Kok, Ingrid, & Karen Press, eds. Spring is Rebellious: Arguments about Cultural
Gikandi, Simon. Reading Chinua Achebe: Language and Ideology in Fiction. London:
Lindfors, Bernth (ed. and introd.). Conversations with Chinua Achebe. Jackson, MS:
UP of Mississippi, 1997.
Meyer, Herta. “Justice for the Oppressed”: The Political Dimension on the Language Use
Nfah-Abbenyi, Juliana. Gender in African Women's Writing: Identity, Sexuality, &
Ngate, Jonathan. Francophone African Fiction: Reading a Literary Tradition. Trenton, NJ:
Ngugi wa Thiong'O. Penpoints, Gunpoints, and Dreams: Towards a Critical Theory of the Arts


