

AFST 351A 001 (Lecture)

Perspectives in African Studies: Literary and Theoretical Approaches

Contemporary African Literature on these Indigenous Lands

Tuesday/Thursday 11:00am -12.30pm

The purpose of this course is to acquaint students with writing about, of, and by African writers as well as writing and theories deriving from African experience. Through a selection of readings by contemporary African writers, students will read and think with Canadian Indigenous writers about it means to be in relation, to remember and to resist. Students will learn to evaluate these works as spaces of political solidarity and critical thinking between writers writing across continents.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will

- have developed an appreciation for the world relevance of contemporary African literature.
- develop an understanding of the dialogue between African literature and contemporary Canadian Indigenous writers writing on decolonization, reconciliation in the aftermath of a history of colonization.
- be able to demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between storytelling, worldmaking, erasure and power.

Week 1 September 6 Introduction & course overview

Introduction: What is African Literature?

1. Course overview
2. 1962 Makerere Conference

Billy Kahora. "Penpoints, Gunpoints, and Dreams: A History of Creative Writing Instruction in East Africa." <https://chimurengachronic.co.za/penpoints-gunpoints-and-dreams/>

Samuel Omo Asein. Okot p'Bitek: Literature and the Cultural Revolution in East Africa. *Journal of African Studies* (Fall 1978) 5:3 p357

Language players & naysayers

Reflection: What does "Wakanda Forever" (Marvel Comics), "Shit hole countries" (Donald Trump), "Wildest Dreams" (Taylor Swift) and the *Genius* edition of this month's *National Geographic* have in common? What does African literature *do*? Why should we study African literature?

Week 2 September 11, 13

Why does African Literature Matter?

Decolonizing the Mind Ngugi wa Thiong'o

Why Indigenous Literature Matters Daniel Heath Justice "Preface: Notes for the Long Rebellion". Also "Conclusion: Keeping a Fire."

reflection A: What is the work of African Literature?

Week 3 September 18, 20
Politics and African Literature: Who controls the narrative?
Decolonizing the Mind Ngugi wa Thiong'o
Artist, the Ruler Okot p'Bitek "Artist, the Ruler"
Injun Jordan Abel "Appendix"

presentations

reflection B: What is the responsibility of the African artist?

Week 4 September 25, 27
Women Writing/African Writing by Women
Homegoing Yaa Gyaasi
Page as Bone/Blood as Ink Jónina Kirton
*Mwangi, Wambui. "Silence is a Woman" *The New Inquiry*.

<https://newint.org/blog/majority/2014/10/16/women-wambui-mwangi>

presentations

reflection C: How does the lens/gaze affect the story? Mwangi text here in the context of the gaze.

Week 5 October 2, 4
African Women in Literature cont'd
Homegoing Yaa Gyaasi
Page as Bone/Blood as Ink Jónina Kirton
Dear Mr Shakespeare Phoebe Boswell

presentations

reflection D: How does the protagonist change your view of the African story/story by an African?

Week 6 October 9, 11
Writing from the African Diaspora
Warsan Shire "How to Give Birth to my Mother"
Lemonade Beyoncé

NO REFLECTION THIS WEEK

MIDTERM: Book review and/or comparing texts. Open book exam.

Week 7 October 15, 17
History, Memory and Power
*Mwangi, Wambui. "Silence is a Woman" *The New Inquiry*.

<https://newint.org/blog/majority/2014/10/16/women-wambui-mwangi>

Boswell, Phoebe *Mutumia*

presentations

reflection E: What is the relationship between memory and power?

*Notedly, Mwangi re-appears here in discussion on history and memory.

Week 8 October 22, 24
Sexuality in African Writing
African Sexualities Sylvia Tamale

Diriye Osman *Fairy Tales for Lost Children*
Binyavanga Wainaina "The Missing Chapter"
Billy-Ray Belcourt *This World is a Wound*

presentations

reflections F: In African Sexualities, Tamale seeks to "deconstruct, debunk, expose, contextualise and problematize concepts associated with African sexualities in order to avoid essentialism, stereotyping and othering" (1). To what extent to the readings this week attempt to do the same?

Week 9 October 29, 31

Sexuality in African Writing cont'd

Diriye Osman *Fairy Tales for Lost Children*

Sylvia Tamale "Researching Sexualities in Africa: A Historical Trajectory" (African Sexualities 13-18)

Monica Arac de Nyeko "Jambula Tree"

Inxeba (The Wound) (2017)

<https://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/the-film-inxeba-is-harmful-from-a-cultural-perspective-says-judge-20180628>

Keguro Macharia "Inxeba Readings" <https://gukira.wordpress.com/2018/03/17/inxeba-readings/>

presentations

reflection G: In reviewing *Inxeba*, Kenyan scholar Keguro Macharia provokes us to think about "we learn to despise our own vulnerability? To hate our softness? What has survival cost?" (<https://gukira.wordpress.com/2018/04/17/inxeba-kwanda/>) What is the relationship between imagination, sexuality and censorship?

Week 10 November 6, 8

WW1 in African Literature

Fred Khumalo *Dancing the Death Drill*

presentations

reflection H: What is the relationship between memory and history?

Week 11 November 13, 15

WW1 in African Literature

Fred Khumalo *Dancing the Death Drill*

"Dancing the Death Drill: Historical Fiction that Tells Us About Today"

<http://theconversation.com/dancing-the-death-drill-historical-fiction-that-tells-us-about-today-81141>

Juliane Okot Bitek "Remembrance Day Reflections"

<https://zocalopoets.com/2013/11/11/remembrance-day-reflections-juliane-okot-bitek/>

presentations

reflection I: What is the work of the African writer in representing history?

Week 12 November 20, 22

Historiography in African Literature

Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi *Kintu*

Layli Long Soldier “Dakota 38” from *Whereas*

presentations

reflection J: What is the relationship between literature, history and the present? *Kintu* is prefaced by a quote from Speke who “profess[ess] to describe naked Africa ...[as] a striking proof of the Holy Scriptures”. To what extent is this title a critical examination of African history? Does it succeed?

Week 13 November 27, 29

Historiography and expression in African Literature

Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi *Kintu*

Wangechi Mutu Collage

presentations

reflection: course overview

Final exam 2 short answers and 1 essay

Term Paper:	20%
Final Exam:	30%
Reflections:	20%
Participation:	5%
Presentations:	15%
Midterm:	10%

Selected readings:

Achebe, Chinua. “An Image of Africa: Racism in Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*”

Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness*

Mwangi, Wambui. “Silence is a Woman” *The New Inquiry*.

<https://newint.org/blog/majority/2014/10/16/women-wambui-mwangi>

Osman, Diriye. *Fairytales for Lost Children*

Mahfouz Naguib. “Half a Day”

Nansubuga Jennifer. *Kintu*

Owuor, Yvonne Adhiambo. *Dust*

----- “The Weight of Whispers”

Patel, Shailja. “The Politics of Contempt” <https://thenewinquiry.com/politics-of-contempt/>

P’Bitek, Okot. *Artist, the Ruler*

P’Bitek, Okot and Kwasi Wiredu. *Decolonizing African Religions*

Patel, Shailja. *Migritude*

----- Postcolonial Gaffe <https://brittlepaper.com/2018/02/shailja-patel-molara-wood-reply-chimamanda-adichies-comments-postcolonial-theory/>

----- Interview with Emmanuel Iduma. <https://www.wasafiri.org/article/emmanuel-iduma->

[interviews-shailja-patel/](https://www.wasafiri.org/article/emmanuel-iduma-interviews-shailja-patel/)

Wa Thiong’o, Ngugi. *Decolonizing the Mind*

----- *Re-Membering Africa*

“ Wainaina Binyavanga. “Chapter Thirty Three.”

<https://brittlepaper.com/2017/10/chapter-thirtythree-binyavanga-wainaina-memoir/>

-----“The Missing Chapter.”

----- “How to Write about Africa”

----- & Diriye Osman. *The London Session* YouTube