

AFRICAN WOMEN WRITERS: SPRING 2017
SSW 4713 Sec. 04F2, AFS 4935 Sec. 08GC, WST 4930 Sec. 079B

Instructor: Dr. Rose Sau Lugano
Office Location: 361 Pugh Hall
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Time: T 1:55-3:50, R: 3:00-3:50
Venue: T: TUR 2334 R: TUR 2336
Off. Hrs: Mon: 1-2. Wed: 1-2

Course Description:

This course is designed to provide students with both a specific and a general view of the status, achievements and experiences of African women in fiction. We will explore African women writers and critics, looking at their theoretical priorities and cultural positions. Using different genres (novels, poems, plays and films) we will endeavor to understand how women's literary expression has been shaped by history, culture, and their experiences, as well as see how they are addressing issues of gender in their respective societies.

Our discussions will focus on issues of identity, socialization, resistance, exile, language, translation and colonialism, as points of entry into a diverse set of texts. The framework for classroom discussion will revolve around two central issues

- 1) The way in which women authors represent gender as a crucial variable for social stratification.
- 2) The use of writing itself as a tool for social transformation and critique.

Course Objectives:

1. Introduce students to the different genres and literary themes presented by African women writers.
2. To understand the historical and social context in which African women's literary expressions have developed.
3. To help students appreciate the richness and variety of African women's literary production while endeavoring to understand more clearly the impact of colonialism, race, class, ethnicity and gender on African women.

Teaching Method

Introductory lectures to contextualize the set texts, and to place them within the perspective of their particular genres. Students' reports on special topics, a textual study of the set texts and reading of literary criticism articles.

Required Texts:

- * * "The Poem of Mwanakupona" in *Tendi*. New York: Africana P. C., 1971 (Copy).
- * Buchi Emecheta. *The Bride Price*. Glasgow: Fontana, 1978.
- * Tsitsi Dangarembga. *Nervous Conditions*. New York: Seal Press, 1988.
- * Laureta Ngcobo. *And they Didn't Die*. New York: The Feminist Press, 1999.
- * Mariama Bâ. *So Long a Letter*. Long Grove (IL): Waveland Press, Inc. 2012
- * Ama Ata Aidoo. *The Dilemma of a Ghost*. Accra: Longmans, 1965.

Movies:

Moolaade (2007) by Sembene Ousmane

References on criticism & theory: in Course Reserve-ARES-Library West

- * *Emerging Perspectives on Buchi Emecheta*. Ed. Marie Umeh, Trenton, N.J.: Africa World P, 1996. Library call # PR9387.9.N933 Z65 1998.
- * *Emerging Perspectives on Tsitsi Dangaremba: Negotiating the Postcolonial*. Eds. Anne E. Willey and Jeanette Treiber, Trenton, N.J.: Africa World P, 2002. Library call # PR 9390.9.D36Z66 2002
- * *African Women & Feminism: Reflecting on the Politics of Sisterhood*. Ed. Oyeronke Oyewumi. Trenton, N.J.: Africa World P, 2003. Library call # HQ1787.A372 2003
- * *Ngambika: Studies of Women in African Literature*. Ed. Carole Boyce Davies Trenton, N.J.: Africa World P, 1986. Lib # PL8010.N47 1986
- * *Francophone African Women Writers: Destroying the Emptiness of Silence*. Irene Assiba D'Almeida. Gainesville, UP of Florida, 1994. Lib # PQ3980.5.A46 1994
- Any other relevant articles of criticism on the texts.

REQUIREMENTS.

- I. Regular attendance at all classes is very important. Reading of the assigned class texts before class is necessary for meaningful participation in class discussion. The instructor may expect students to present on certain topics as part of their class participation.
2. Completion of all assignments and homework on time is an important aspect of the course. Late exercises may be accepted but will attract a 5% deduction in points.

ACADEMIC CONDUCT.

Cheating of any kind is a serious university policy offence. You can work with others on assignments but be sure to always write your own answer(s). Be sure to express your concern about your performance (especially if you are having problems) early instead of late in the semester.

“Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation.”

GRADING POLICY:

The following grading policy will be used in awarding grades. A =93-100, A- =90-92, B+ = 87-89, B =83-86, B- =80-82, C+ =77-79, C =73-76, C- = 70-72, D+ =67-69, D=63-66, D- =60-62, E less than 60.

COURSE EVALUATION.

There will be no final examination in this course. Evaluation will be based on six reaction papers of 2 pages each and a 10 page report based on independent study to be submitted by the last week of class. This paper will be presented to the class before collection.

1. Class attendance and participation:	15%
2. Special Topic presentation	10%
3. 4 Reaction papers of 5% each	20%
4. Mid-Term Exam	25%
5. Final Research Paper	30%
Total Points:	100%

Student Requirement.

1. A two-page reaction paper on certain texts must be handed in the first day of text discussion. Students must read the texts before the class discussion begins.
2. Each student will choose one special topic from an array of questions which deal with other topics that concern Africa, such as “the political atmosphere of South Africa during apartheid.”

1. Attendance and Class participation =15%

The course format is a combination of lecture and discussion, therefore regular attendance is required. Students may miss only one class meeting without penalty. This one day allow for absence due to illness, time conflicts, university activities, etc. You do not need to present an excuse for this absence. Beyond the one day allowable for absence, 1 point will be deducted for any subsequent absence from class.

2. Special Topic presentation =10% (See special topic list)

Students will work in groups to research on special topics on women in the countries represented by the texts, as well as supply background information on the writers.

3. 5 Reaction Papers =20%

A two-page (typed) reaction paper due on the day we begin discussion will be expected for selected texts. Your paper should be an analysis and not a summary of the work. Students should focus on one aspect of the text, for example: the narrator, the plot, gender roles, language, or any other relevant issues. Students must include at least one question on any aspect of the book they did not understand at the end of the reaction paper.

4. Mid-term exam = 25%

This will be an in-class exam based on issues raised in the analysis of texts read so far as well as all the background information on African feminism, status of African women, their writing, and form of texts.

5. Final Paper =30%

This will be 10 pages long, on double space and font 12. Students will be given a set of questions from which they can select one question to write about. Students will be expected to focus on a theme developed during the course of the semester, and in addition to consulting relevant articles on their chosen topics, they must also reference two or more texts read in class.

Note: Cheating of any kind is a serious university policy offence. You can work with others on assignments but be sure to always write your own answer(s). When you reference articles you must acknowledge the critics and not present the information as your own. If you find you are having problems with any part of the course, please see the instructor early in the semester. Do not wait until the end of the semester! There will be no extra credit opportunities.

AFRICAN WOMEN WRITERS: COURSE SCHEDULE

Tue: Jan 5

Thur: Introduction to course /syllabus

Introduction to African Literature and stereotypes about African women

Week 2: Jan 10 & 12

Tue: Survey of African literature:

The male and female writing traditions in Africa. Lecture.

Ref. "African Literature" in *Africa* by Phyllis M. Martin & Patrick O'Meara (1995)

Thur: African women and literary production.

Ref. "African Women Writers" . in *A History of African Literature in the Twentieth Century*. Ed. Oyekan Owomoyela.

Week 3: Jan, 17 & 19.

Tue. Student presentation, Group 1: Feminist movement /African Feminism.

"Feminist Consciousness and African Literary Criticism." In *Ngambika: Studies of Women in African Literature* (1990) Edited by Carole B. Davies & Anne A. Graves.

Ref: Carole Boyce Davies and Elaine Savory Fido,

Week 4 : Jan 24 & 26

Tues: Student presentation, Group 2: The Swahili people of East Africa. **Jan 24**

Discussing "The Poem of Mwanakupona" in *Tendi*. Pages 55-71 (Copies will be given in class). Structure, themes, and religious ideology.

Thur: Background on the *Bildungsroman*

Week 5: Jan 31 & Feb 2

Student presentation. Group 3: Cultural and social contestation/ Women in Nigeria

Written reaction paper # 1 on *The Bride Price* due January 31

Discussion of *The Bride Price* by Buchi Emecheta

Thur: Characterization/ response to students' questions..

Ref: *Emerging Perspectives on Buchi Emecheta*

Week 6: Feb 7 & 9

Tues. Student presentation, Group 4: Slavery / traditions and Societal expectations/ Women in Ghana

Reaction # 2: oral reactions on *The Dilemma of a Ghost* due on Tuesday, Feb 7th

Thur: Discussion of *The Dilemma of a Ghost*

Ref: *Emerging Perspectives on Ama Ata Aidoo*

Week 7: Feb 14 & 16.

Tues. Continue discussion of *The Dilemma of a Ghost*.

Characterization /response to students' questions

Thur: Student presentation, Group 5: African women and excision, **Feb 16th**

Week 8: Feb 21 & 23**Tue:** viewing movie— *Moolaade* (2007) by Sembene Ousmane**Thur:** Discussion of the movie: Students reactions**Week 9: Feb 28 & Mar 2.****Tue: Mid-Term Exam—Tuesday 28th****Thur:** Finalize discussion on *Moolaade***Week 10: Mar 4---11 SPRING BREAK: NO CLASSES****Week 10: Mar 14 & 16****Tue. Student presentation, Group 6:** Women and Islam / Women in SenegalMariama Ba's *So Long a Letter***Reaction # 3: Oral presentation on *So Long a Letter*****Thur:** Ref: Irene Assiba d' Almeida. "The Concept of Choice in Mariama Ba's Fiction" in *Ngambika*. Continue discussion of *So Long a Letter***Week 11: Mar 21 & 23.****Tue:** Documentary: *A Veiled Revolution* . Finalize discussion of *So Long a Letter***Thur: Student presentation, Group 7:** Women and Apartheid in S. Africa **March 23rd****Week 12: March 28 & 30****Tue.** Continue discussion of Lauretta Ngcobo's *And They Didn't Die***Written reaction paper # 4 on *And They Didn't Die*****Thur.** Characterization/ students' questions**Week 13: April 4 & 6****Tue: Student presentation Group 8:** Contesting marginalization and Neo-colonialism/
Women in Zimbabwe.**Written reaction paper # 5 on *Nervous Conditions* due Tuesday, April 4th**Discussion of Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions***Thur:** Discussion of themes and issues**Week 14: April 11 & 13****Tues.** Continue discussion of *Nervous Conditions***Thur:** Characterization and students' questionsRef. *Emerging Perspectives on Tsitsi Dangarembga: Negotiating the Postcolonial***Week 15: April 18****Tue.** Course conclusion The modern African woman.

The future of African women writers / current themes.

Study Days: April 20-21.

Week 16: April 22-28Exam week: **Final Paper due Tuesday April 25th in my mail box.**

SPECIAL TOPICS FOR CLASS GROUP PRESENTATION

Each student must choose one of the listed topics for presentation in class. These serve as background information for the understanding of the texts.

1. The Feminist movement / African Feminism . Jan 17th.

- Similarities and differences
- Feminist literary criticism

2. *The Poem of Mwana Kuponu*. Jan 24th

- Writer's biography and the introduction of Islam in East Africa
- Islam and the status of Swahili woman then and today
- Role of poetry among the Swahili / role of Swahili language today.

3. *The Bride Price* . Jan 31st

- Writer's biography and the colonial situation in Nigeria in the 1940s
- the Igbo-speaking people of Nigeria & Traditional gender socialization.
- the African perspective of bride price
- Beliefs and superstitions—what are they? Their significance in society.

4. *The Dilemma of a Ghost* . Feb 7th

- Writer's biography and the colonial history of Ghana
- Domestic and international slave trade in Ghana
- Continental African and African-American relationships
- Ghanaian women today

5. *Moolaade* Feb 16th

- Female cutting: the controversy/ what is the basis?
- What is the current situation in African countries?
- External and internal intervention

6. *So Long a Letter* . Feb March 8th

- Writer's biography and divorce in Islamic tradition
- Polygamy and Islam, Women in Senegal
- Can one generalize about the situation of women in the Islamic world?
- The role of the veil/ women and dress

7. *And They didn't Die* . Mar 17th

- Writer's biography and the arrival of Europeans in South Africa
- What was Apartheid? How did it affect Black South Africans?
- Effects of urbanization and migration on S. African women
- Present political climate in South Africa

8. *Nervous Conditions*. April 4th

- Writer's biography and the colonization of Zimbabwe
- Conditions leading to Zimbabwe's independence
- Present political climate in Zimbabwe