

AFRICAN WOMEN WRITERS: SPRING 2020

SSW 4713 Sec. 7N79, LIT 3383 Sec. 44A9, AFS 4935 Sec. 14CF, WST 4930 Sec. 26AB

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: MAT 0105 R: MAT 0105
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

There will be introductory lectures to contextualize the set texts, and to place them within the perspective of their particular genres and geographical location. Students' reports on special topics, relevant criticism articles in the library reserve section (ARES), and online resources, such as interviews and speeches by the writers; will be used to compliment the textual study of the set texts.

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

- * “African Literature”. Eileen Julien. In *Africa*. Eds. Phyllis M. Martin & Patrick O’Meara, Indiana UP, 1995.
- * *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 Dangarembga: 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.

1. 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 will 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 the itemized activities. These are explained in more details within the syllabus.

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

Student Requirement.

Students are urged to read the texts and enjoy them even as they identify the main issues the writer wishes to convey. This should be done before the class discussion begins.

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 =15% (See special topic list on page 6)

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 and the politics that shape their narratives. This provides background information necessary for the understanding of the texts.

3. 3 Reaction Papers =15%

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. The instructor may ask students to share their perspectives orally with other students in class.

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 on all the background information on African feminism, status of African women, their writing, and forms of the texts.

5. Individual Class Presentation =10%

Each student will be expected to select a prominent African woman from any African country and give a brief presentation on their accomplishment. The instructor will provide a list of these women. The presentation will be given during the last weeks of teaching.

5. Final Paper =20%

This will be 8-10 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. The questions will focus on themes developed during the course of the semester. Students will be required to reference two or more texts read in class, in addition to consulting relevant articles on their chosen question and citing them in order to get full points.

Note: 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, SPRING 2020

Week 1: Jan 7 & 9

Tue: : Introduction to course /syllabus

Thur: Introduction to African Literature, stereotypes about Africa and African women

Week 2: Jan 14 & 16

Tue: A historical survey of African literature:

The male and female writing traditions in Africa. Lecture.

Thur: African women and literary production / motivation to write

Week 3: Jan 21 & 23

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

Feminist Consciousness and African Literary Criticism.

Week 4 : Jan 28 & 30

Tues: Tue. Student presentation, Group 2: The Swahili people of East Africa. **Jan 28th**

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

Thur: African women and the *Bildungsroman* / its unique characteristics.

Week 5: Feb 4 & 6

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

Reaction paper # 1 on *The Bride Price* due Feb 4th

Discussion of *The Bride Price* by Buchi Emecheta

Thur: Characterization/ response to students’ questions..

Week 6: Feb 11 & 13

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 11th

Thur: Discussion of *The Dilemma of a Ghost*

Week 7: Feb 18 & 20.

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

Characterization /response to students’ questions

Thur: Student presentation, Group 5: African women and excision, **Feb 20th**

Week 8: Feb 25 & 27

Tue: viewing movie— *Moolaade* (2007) by Sembene Ousmane

Thur: Discussion of the movie: Students reactions /impact of the movie

Week 9: February 29—March 7---- SPRING BREAK: NO CLASSES

Week 10: Mar 10 & 12**Tue: Mid-Term Exam—Tuesday March 10th****Thur:** Finalize discussion on *Moolaade***Week 10: Mar 17 & 19****Tue. Student presentation, Group 6:** Women and Islam / Women in SenegalMariama Ba's *So Long a Letter***Reaction # 3: 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 24 & 26.****Tue:** Documentary: *A Veiled Revolution* . Finalize discussion of *So Long a Letter***Thur: Student presentation, Group 7:** Women and Apartheid in S. Africa **March 26th****Week 12: March 31 & April 2****Tue.** Continue discussion of Lauretta Ngcobo's *And They Didn't Die***Thur.** Characterization/ students' questions. Questions for final paper will be given.**Week 13: April 7 & 9****Tue: Student presentation Group 8:** Contesting marginalization and Neo-colonialism/
Women in Zimbabwe.**Reaction paper # 4 on *Nervous Conditions* due Tuesday, April 7th**Discussion on Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*.**Thur:** Discussion of themes and issues.**Week 14: April 14 & 16****Tues.** Continue discussion of *Nervous Conditions*, and students' questions**Thur:** Individual students' presentation continue/ comments**Week 15: April 21-23****Tue.** Individual students' presentation continue/ comments**Thur:** Individual student presentation/ comments**Week 16: April 28****Tue:** Course conclusion The modern African woman.

The future of African women writers / current themes.

Week 17 May 4—8 Exam week**Final Paper due Wednesday May 6th 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 21st.

Similarities and differences
Feminist literary criticism

2. *The Poem of Mwana Kupona*. Jan 28th

---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* . Feb 4th

--- 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 11th

--- 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 20th

--- Sembene Ousmane—male feminist?
--- Female cutting: the controversy/ what is the basis?
---What is the current situation in African countries?
--- Critique of external and internal intervention

6. *So Long a Letter* . Mar 17th

--- 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 26th

--- 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 7th

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