

The University of Florida.

Department of English.

LIT 4233: African Literature in the 21st Century.

Fall 2023

Instructor: Apollo O. Amoko

Office: 4350 Turlington Hall

Times: M, 6-8

Office Hours: Wed 2-4pm

or by appointment

Location: Turlington 2303

Email: aanoko@english.ufl.edu,

aamoko@yahoo.com

Phone: 352 682 3789.

Course Description:

This addresses the complex relationship between works of arts and the politics of everyday life by highlighting late 20th century and early 21st century African fiction. In a complicated and vexing dynamic, aesthetics reflects, reproduces and critiques cultural, political, and economic realities. Modern African literature emerged as colonial rule gradually faded in volatile but hopeful 1950s and 60s. Beginning in the 19th Century, imperial powers, most notably, England and France, fundamentally remapped and remade the beleaguered Africa African continent in the image of Europe. In an irreversible transformation, colonial sovereignty disrupted longstanding communities to create incoherent nation states and transnational linguistic communities. Writers like Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe and Flora Nwapa came of age in optimistic late colonial contexts. Their realist fiction reproduced the anti-colonial nationalism that defined a continent on the cusp of freedom, self-determination, and prosperity. In stark contrast, successive generations of post-realist writers came of age in postcolonial contexts variously marred by disillusionment, disappointment, and pessimism. Against this backdrop, we will examine the work of art in of the era of globalization amid enduring neo-colonial relation between disempowered Africa and West.

Course Goals:

The course aims to introduce students to a wide variety of canonical African writers. As well, the course intends to introduce students to a wide variety of theoretical and critical perspectives with respect to reading aesthetic objects derived from and critiquing political, cultural, social, economic, and other perspectives with which the students will generally be unfamiliar, at least at the outset. Beyond mastering fifteen diverse texts, the students will acquire the expertise to enable critical engagement with other African fiction. We will seek to empower informed textual and contextual analysis that neither presumes radical difference or African otherness nor deploys a simplistic and dubious discourse of universality. As well, the course will seek to enhance student capacity for critical thinking, oral presentation, and formal academic essay writing apropos of African literature. In short, this is a General Education course providing student learning outcomes listed in the Undergraduate Catalog: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/general.education.requirement.aspx>.

Disability Accommodations:

In line with federal law, the university provides reasonable accommodations for students with diverse physical and mental disabilities including learning disabilities such as ADHD or severe dyslexia. However, it is your responsibility to contact the Office of Students with Disabilities and thereafter provide the instructor the required documentation. Kindly request assistance as early in the semester as possible. On a different note, I undertake to provide all students with a rigorous but safe and respectful learning environment by providing specific protection against harassment including sexual harassment.

Course Requirements:

- I. It is imperative that you submit all written assignments in within specified deadlines. Late papers. will not be accepted except in instances of illness and other unforeseen contingencies.
- II. Attendance and participation are mandatory for this class. Unforeseen contingencies will excuse you from a specific absence, but you will still be required to complete the assigned reading and submit a two-page response paper.
- III. As I elaborate below participatory constitutes 20% of the overall grade for the class. This requires you to complete reading assignments in a timely manner and thereafter remain attentive and engaged throughout class discussions. Please note that more than six unexcused absences will result in your failing the class.
- IV. Over the course of the semester, you will be required to write a total three formal academic essays, which will account for 80% of your final grade. A detailed breakdown is provided in the schedule provided below.

Grading Criteria.

- A.** An excellent essay that addresses a well-defined topic through a cogent and systematic argument. This paper outlines a substantive critique of a specific aspect the form and content of a particular primary text as well as any relevant secondary reading. After formulated a well-justified thesis, the paper will turn on close readings of two or three fully developed examples. I reward intellectual risk-taking and originality even in instances of somewhat questionable conclusions and minor typographical errors and other slips.
- B.** A generally well-formulated and argumentatively sound essay marred by such weaknesses as thoughtful but incomplete textual analysis. For instance, this paper will include a strong introduction with a clear well-defined thesis and potentially insightful but underdeveloped examples, that is, examples lacking sustained critical analysis required to elaborate a persuasive argument.
- C.** A satisfactory or average paper characterized by as many strengths as weakness. For instance, the grade will be awarded to an essay demonstrating a solid overall understanding of a key concept and/or text only to undermine specific arguments through unfocused discussions of too many decontextualized examples. Alternatively, potentially strong arguments may be marred by insufficiently critical engagement that does extend beyond paraphrasing cited passages.
- D.** A flawed paper that substantially fails to address a significant aspect of the relevant question, for example, by relying on sweeping generalizations with no examples that cite and critique specific textual examples. As well, the grade reflects a paper that misreads or misunderstands key concepts of the class or is replete with serious grammatical errors.
- E** is a paper that entirely fails to address the essay topic.

Academic Honesty

As you are aware, the university places a high premium on academic honesty. Accordingly, severe penalties are imposed for plagiarism and other instances of deception or fraud. Examples of academic

dishonesty include: i) possessing, using, or exchanging improperly acquired written or oral information in the preparation of research papers or exams, ii) submitting material that is wholly or substantially identical to material created or published by others, iii) making false claims regarding performance or work submitted for a class. The university's policies regarding intellectual honesty are detailed in the Academic Honesty Guidelines. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the guidelines and to ensure that all your work for this course is in compliance. If you are ever in any doubt regarding the appropriate use of research materials, please consult the instructor before turning in the assignment in question. You are advised to retain all graded papers until you have been assigned a final grade for this course.

Class Schedule (please note the schedule detailed above is not final and is subject to change).

Week 1: August 21: Introductions

Week 2: August 28: Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*.

Week 3: September 4: Labor Day; no class

Week 4: September 11: Cheikh Hamidou Kane, *Ambiguous Adventure*

Week 5: September 18: Sembene Ousmane, *Xala*

Week 6: September 25: Tsitsi Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*

Week 7. October 2: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Half of a Yellow Sun*

Week 8. October 9: Adichie, *Half of Yellow Sun*

Week 9. October 16: Uwem Akpan, *New York, My Village*.

Week 10: October 23: Akpan, *New York, My Village*

Week 11: October 30: Tsitsi Dangarembga, *The Book of Not*

Week 12: November 6: Yvonne Awuor Odhiambo, *Dust*.

Week 13. November 13. Odhiambo, *Dust*.

Week 14. November 20: Tsitsi Dangarembga, *This Mournable Body*

Week 15. November 27: Dangarembga, *This Mournable Body*

Week 16. December 4: Wanuri Kahiu, *Rafiki* (movie)