

English 460
Spring, 2012
TTh 3:00-4:15
Oddfellows 206

Laura Quinn
Oddfellows 233 (ext. 4337)
lquinn@allegheny.edu
Office Hours:
12:30-1:30 MWF
1:30-3:00 TTh and by app't

Topics in Post-Colonial Literature: African Postcolonial Theory and Southern African Literature

Description: While we will be studying post-colonial theory that ranges more widely than the course subtitle indicates, we will still stay focused on theory generated by African writers. Most of our primary texts are South African, but we will read some fiction and poetry from Zimbabwe, Malawi, Zambia, and Mozambique and Kenya. One of the reasons for staying regionally focused in our reading is so we may develop a sense of a particular historical context for the literature we study. The aim of this course is to produce some understanding of what is at stake for some important African theorists and creative writers in the idea of the "post-colonial," as well as to explore the richness of the literary work that the contexts and energies of postcolonialism produce.

Required Texts:

Frantz Fanon: *Black Skin, White Masks*
Ngugi wa Thiong'o: *Decolonising the Mind*
Ngugi wa Thiong'o: *Weep Not, Child*
Lauretta Ngcobo: *And They Didn't Die*
Tsitsi Dangarembga: *Nervous Conditions*
Nadine Gordimer: *My Son's Story*
J.M. Coetzee: *Disgrace*
Printshop Packet

Schedule of Readings and Assignments:

- January 19 Introduction to course; poems (handout)
- January 24 Lecture on Post-Colonial Theory; read Achebe, "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*" and "Impediments to Dialogue Between North and South," from *Hopes and Impediments* (packet)
- January 26 Read Fanon, Introduction and Chapters 1-3; read Miriam Tlali's "Devil at a Dead End" (packet); first paper assignment handed out
- January 31 Read Fanon, Chapters Four and Five; Read Dan Jacobson's "Beggar My Neighbor" and Richard Rive's "The Visits" (packet)
- February 2 Read Fanon, Chapter Six; poems (TBA, packet)
- February 7 Finish Fanon; read Nadine Gordimer's "The Ultimate Safari" (packet)
- February 9 Read Ngugi's *Weep, Not Child*, chapters 1-8; first paper will be due on Monday, February 13 in my office by 4:00 p.m.

- February 14 Finish *Weep Not, Child*
 February 16 Continued discussion of *Weep Not, Child*; Read Ngugi, “The Language of African Literature” in *Decolonising the Mind*; second paper assigned
- February 21 Read Ngugi, “The Language of African Theater”
 February 23 Finish Ngugi; poems (TBA, packet)
- February 28 Read *Nervous Conditions*, Chapters 1-4
 March 1 Read *Nervous Conditions*, Chapters 5-7
- March 6 Finish *Nervous Conditions*
 March 8 Read *And They Didn't Die*, pages 1-71; second paper due in my office on Friday, March 9 by noon.
- March 13 *And They Didn't Die*, pages 72-180
 March 15 Finish *And They Didn't Die*; third paper (with research component) assigned
- March 17-25 **Spring Break**
- March 27 Read *Time of the Butcherbird*, to page 56 (packet)
 March 29 Finish *Time of the Butcherbird*
- April 3 Read *My Son's Story*, pages 3-62
 April 5 *My Son's Story*, pages 63-118
- April 10 *My Son's Story*, pages 119-195
 April 12 Finish *My Son's Story*
- April 17 Read Coetzee's *Disgrace*, pages 1-74
 April 19 *Disgrace*, pages 75-146
- April 24 *Disgrace*, pages 147-end
 April 26 Read “Recognition” and poems (TBA, packet)
- May 1 Final Day; continued discussion of poems and wrap-up discussion

We will not have a final exam. Your final paper will be due in my office on Monday, May 7 by noon—hard copies only.

Grade Distribution:

Paper One	20%
Paper Two	20%
Paper Three	40%
Participation	20%

Rules and Regulations:

1. You are expected to attend and to participate. Opportunities for participation will be structured into the course; in short, you will be assigned the task of leading discussions of certain texts on certain days; additionally, you will be expected to do the reading carefully in advance and to engage it in discussion during each class session.
2. Late papers will only be accepted in negotiated circumstances.
3. All work for the course must be completed if you are to pass. This includes anyone taking the course credit/no-credit.
4. Paper assignments will be specific and detailed. All papers must be word-processed, spell-checked, and carefully polished and proofread.
5. Any lapses into plagiarism will be forwarded to the Honor Board automatically.
6. The third paper will be a kind of modified research project. You will select (among choices that I provide) one African author and read one work by that author that we do not read in class. You will do basic research on that author and the particular African national/cultural context out of which he or she springs. In your paper you will relate this author and the particular work you read to the post-colonial theory and practice that we have studied throughout the semester, thereby demonstrating your ability to take the material we have studied in common and to apply it to a text and a context that we have not covered in class.

Criteria for Grading Class Participation:

A participation is marked by its active nature, its consistency, and its quality. An A participant doesn't wait to respond to questions that the instructor poses but initiates discussion by coming prepared with questions, ideas, observations about the reading assigned that day. This participant will also be consistently engaged in class discussion, always letting me know that she/he has engaged the reading thoroughly and thoughtfully. Finally an A participant will not try to substitute **quantity** of participation for **quality** (being consistent is not the same thing as dominating a discussion). To earn the highest grade for your participation, you will want to make it possible for others to participate productively too (this is not a competition); thus, habits such as interrupting others and taking up too

much conversational space will not enhance your grade. It will also do you no good to participate if you haven't done the reading. I expect participation to be firmly grounded in careful and thoughtful reading. As the **A** reader reads, she or he **prepares** to participate in a class discussion with other readers.

A **B** discussant is less consistent than an **A** in initiating discussion but is active in responding to questions or problems posed by the professor and other students. To get a **B** in participation, you will need to be in class and talk regularly--more, certainly, than once during a class session once a week or so. Regular means regular! This level of class participation will also communicate clearly to me that you have done **all** the reading for the day and that you have done it thoughtfully. This level will also include productive discussion habits, such as engaging the ideas of others, not dominating, listening carefully, etc.

A **C** grade for participation means that you have contributed in an **average** way to the discussion. Your contributions have been less frequent than those of the **B** participant or have let me know that you are not always keeping up with the reading or have, in some way, interfered with good discussion--for instance, a "dominator" would get credit for participating often but would get knocked down to a **C** for taking over and not engaging others in discussion. In short, you have not been silent or absent or altogether uninvolved, but your involvement did not work consistently to make the class a productive learning experience.

A **D** grade means that you were there physically most of the time and maybe even piped up three or four times during the semester but that's it. It's just the grade it should be--a minimal passing grade.

An **F** grade should need no explanation.

Criteria for Grading Papers:

1. An **A** paper will be
 - polished and error-free
 - insightful, going well beyond the obvious and well beyond what was said in class
 - thoroughly developed and logically structured
2. A **B** paper will be
 - well-written overall, but with some minor lapses
 - above average in insight, but less original than the **A** paper
 - competently developed but a little less thorough than an **A** paper
3. A **C** paper will be
 - competently written but with a number of minor or a few major lapses
 - average in insight and originality
 - readable in terms of organization and structure but in need of more coherence
4. A **D** paper will be
 - error-ridden and un-proofread
 - below average in insight and originality
 - disorganized and hard to follow
5. An **F** paper will be
 - unreadable because of writing errors
 - inaccurate and/or otherwise irresponsible in content
 - incoherent