

SYLLABUS

San José State University
Department of English and Comparative Literature
ENGL 123B: African Literature, Fall 2015 (GE Area V)

Instructor:	David Mesher
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Office Hours:	T-Th: 8:00-8:30am, 4:30-5:30pm
Class Days/Time:	T-Th 3:00-4:15pm
Classroom:	BBC 120
Section Code:	47140
Class Web Page:	http://www.sjsu.edu/people/d.mesher/engl123b/
Prerequisites:	Completion of core GE; satisfactory completion of the WST; completion of or concurrent enrollment in a 100W course.
GE/SJSU Studies Category:	Area V: Culture, Civilization, and Global Understanding

Faculty Web Page and MYSJSU Messaging

Course materials such as the syllabus, handouts, notes, assignment instructions, etc. can be found on my faculty web page at <http://www.sjsu.edu/people/d.mesher/engl123b/> . Written assignments for this class will be submitted on the Canvas learning management system course website (<http://sjsu.instructure.com>). You are responsible for regularly checking with the messaging system through MySJSU to learn of any updates.

Course Description

This course surveys contemporary literature written in Africa during the late colonial and postcolonial periods, focusing on novels originally written in English, but also including some novels in translation. Engl 123B satisfies Area V of the General Education (SJSU Studies) Requirements.

Course Goals and Student Learning Objectives

First, to train students in reading, discussing, analyzing, and writing about literature, with emphasis as much on form as on content. Second, to expose students to wealth of contemporary African literature. Third, to enhance students' understanding of the history, demography, geography, and cultural background of Africa and its peoples.

Student Learning Objectives (SLO)

In the Department of English and Comparative Literature, students will demonstrate the ability to:

1. read closely in a variety of forms, styles, structures, and modes, and articulate the value of close reading in the study of literature, creative writing, and/or rhetoric;
2. show familiarity with major literary works, genres, periods, and critical approaches to British, American and World Literature;
3. write clearly, effectively, and creatively, and adjust writing style appropriately to the content, the context, and the nature of the subject;
4. develop and carry out research projects, and locate, evaluate, organize, and incorporate information effectively;
5. articulate the relations among culture, history, and texts.

Assignments in this course are based on the expectation that students will spend 4-5 hours per week preparing for a 3-unit course.

Assignments: Weightings for Course Grade	Learning Objectives	Weight
Participation (quizzes, other assignments)	1	25%
Essay 1	1, 2, 3, 5	25%
Essay 2	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	25%
Final Examination	1, 2, 5	25%
Totals	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	100%

GE/SJSU Studies Learning Outcomes (Area V)

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. compare systematically the ideas, values, images, cultural artifacts, economic structures, technological developments, and/or attitudes of people from more than one culture outside the U.S. We will be reading three novels from Nigeria, three from southern Africa (Zimbabwe, Botswana, and South Africa), and one each from Egypt and Kenya.
2. identify the historical context of ideas and cultural traditions outside the U.S. and how they have influenced American culture. Our novels are all set in the last hundred years or so, from the rise of European colonialism in Africa (as portrayed in *Things Fall Apart*), through the movements for independence (in *The Joys of Motherhood* and *Weep Not Child*), and into the sort of contemporary themes involving identity and society that we might also expect in American fiction, such as class (in *Miramar*), gender and ethnicity (in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, *Maru*, and *Nervous Condition*), and race (in *The Life and Times of Michael K*). While many of these issues have had a direct impact on American culture, from colonialism to our involvement in the failed state of Somalia, those influences travel in both directions, and we should not be surprised to find echoes of American culture in African fiction.

3. explain how a culture outside the U.S. has changed in response to internal and external pressures. All cultures undergo constant change due to such pressures. We will be particularly interested in discussing the changes connected with or resulting from colonialism, independence, and contemporary social and political conflicts.

Course Content Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

1. learn to value individual experiences and perspectives, develop skills to work both individually and together in a cooperative manner; as they are grappling with very difficult material, emotionally; and come to appreciate differing viewpoints and ways of knowing.
2. understand some of the history, demography, geography, and culture of modern Africa and its colonial past, so as to appreciate the achievements of those societies and the obstacles that they face, and, in particular, to recognize these writers' contributions to the public dialogue about their societies' past, present, and future.
3. appreciate and analyze the literary texts, and be able to discuss them logically, with insight and creativity. Students will apply their comprehension and thinking skills in working with research materials to help them reach a level of understanding that leads to clarity, conciseness and coherence in writing.

Required Texts/Readings

Achebe, Chinua. *Things Fall Apart*. Anchor. ISBN: 9780385474542.

Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Anchor. ISBN: 9781400095209.

Coetzee, J.M. *The Life and Times of Michael K*. Penguin. ISBN: 9780140074482.

Dangarembga, Tsitsi. *Nervous Conditions*. Lynne Rienner, ISBN: 9780954702335.

Emecheta, Buchi. *Joy of Motherhood*. George Braziller. ISBN: 9780807616239.

Head, Bessie. *Maru*. Waveland Press. ISBN: 9781478607618.

Mahfouz, Naguib. *Miramar*. Anchor. ISBN: 9780385264785.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o. *Weep Not Child*. Penguin. ISBN: 9780143106692.

Other Texts

In addition to the required texts, students should have access to a dictionary, thesaurus, and composition handbook (from English 1A or 100W. for example). That dictionary, incidentally, should not be reserved for essays alone. Students are expected to look up any unfamiliar words encountered in the texts that are not explained in the notes, and to be able to define them when called upon to do so in class. Obviously, this is particularly important in a class covering works originally written at quite a distance from us in time and space, since many of the places, concepts, items, and expressions may be unfamiliar.

Please note: While it will probably be easier to follow the discussion in class using the editions listed above, you are not required to use those editions.

Course Requirements and Assignments

SJSU classes are designed such that in order to be successful, it is expected that students will spend a minimum of forty-five hours for each unit of credit (normally three hours per unit per week), including preparing for class, participating in course activities, completing assignments, and so on. More about student workload can be found in [University Policy S12-3](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-3.pdf) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-3.pdf>.

Library Liaison for English courses

- Toby Matoush, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Library
- Voice: 408-808-2096 — Email: Toby.Matoush@sjsu.edu
- Website: <http://libguides.sjsu.edu/profile.php?uid=14949>

Classroom Protocol

Preparation and Participation: Students should come to class having read the day's assignment and prepared to discuss it. Opportunities for such contributions may take the form of small-group or full-class discussions; in either situation, individual students may be called upon by the instructor to answer a question, interpret a passage, or express an opinion.

Quizzes: The best way to measure how carefully you are reading the texts, and how much of that reading you retain (at least for a day or so) is with short quizzes at the beginning of the class period. The quizzes will only cover significant information from that day's reading assignment, though that information may not be the sort readily accessible to you in plot summaries, outlines, or any other manner other than personally experiencing the text yourself. If you read well ahead of the assigned schedule, be sure to review your notes and come to class with a fresh and detailed impression of the works. A pattern of doing poorly on these quizzes should be taken as an indication that you are not doing the reading, or not reading attentively enough, or not reading with the care and analysis necessary to be successful as an English major and devotee of literature.

Resource Person: Novels from Africa may present a particular challenge to readers because of their specialized vocabulary and unfamiliar plants, animals, geography, and names (for people, places, and things), as well as their cultural differences, historical references, and other allusions and usages. Several times during the semester, each student will be designated one of two or three "resource persons" for the day's reading assignment; and will be on call that day to explain to the class any problematic terms or references in the text.

Written Work: There will be two essays, both about 1500 words and counting 25% of the final mark each, and a final examination counting 25%. There will also be frequent quizzes, which will help determine the remaining 25%, along with participation in class discussions, the timely completion of readings and written work, and your contributions as a "resource person." The first essay will require research beyond the class texts themselves. Grading will be on a 100-point scale for each assignment. For the final mark, 100-97 will be an A+, 96-94 an A, 93-90 an A-, 89-87 a B+, 86-84 a B, 83-80 a B-, 79-77 a C+, 76-74 a C, 73-70 a C-, and so on.

Submission of written work: The two essays must be double-spaced (and without a cover page), follow standard MLA format, and be submitted online only, through the course Desire2Learn page (at sjsu.desire2learn.com), by the beginning of class on the days they are due. Essays sent via Desire2Learn are automatically submitted to Turnitin.com, as well, to check for plagiarism. Late work will only be accepted by prior arrangement. Do not email or leave at my office any work for

this class, unless I specifically ask you to do so. Corrected papers will be returned online (in your Desire2Learn account) in pdf format. Please keep a copy of all work submitted on disk, and retain all graded work returned until the end of the semester; English majors should save the graded copies of their essays in all department classes, since these will be required for the portfolio in their senior seminar. Students should anticipate a significant delay in the return of late work. Please note that many people find it harder to proofread work on a computer screen than in printed form and, if that is true in your case, you may want to print out your final draft and make corrections to that, before submitting the finished file online. Finally, remember that I will also be keeping a copy of your marked work during the semester so that, when you submit your second essay, I will begin by reviewing the technical mistakes you made in the first one, and looking to see if you have made any progress in those areas on the second. You, too, should take the time to review those errors, and improve your writing—you know I will be checking.

Classroom Conduct

Please treat everyone – classmates, guests, and even the instructor – with respect and courtesy at all times, and comport yourself accordingly, in the classroom, and while entering or leaving it. During class, electronic devices, including phones, tablets, and laptops, may only be used for purposes related to classwork at that moment, such as note-taking; please remember that University policy recognizes any unauthorized use of mobile phones or other technological devices during an examination as grounds for failing the examination. Even during breaks, please refrain from eating in the classroom, and avoid other activities and behavior that might distract or upset others.

Assignments and Grading Policy

1. Class participation (including as a resource person), quizzes, annotations, and timely completion of work: 25%
2. First essay—proposal (5%), outline (5%), and 1500-word essay (15%): 25% total
3. Second essay (1500 words): 25%
4. Final exam: 25%

Grading will be on a 100-point scale for each assignment. For the final mark, 100-97 will be an A+, 96-94 an A, 93-90 an A-, 89-87 a B+, 86-84 a B, 83-80 a B-, 79-77 a C+, 76-74 a C, 73-70 a C-, and so on.

In English Department courses, instructors will comment on and grade the quality of student writing as well as the quality of ideas being conveyed. All student writing should be distinguished by correct grammar and punctuation, appropriate diction and syntax, and well-organized paragraphs. Grades issued will represent a full range of student performance and will adhere to the following SJSU academic standards of assessment:

The “A” essay will be well organized and well developed, demonstrating a clear understanding and fulfillment of the assignment. It will show the student’s ability to use language effectively and construct sentences distinguished by syntactic complexity and variety. Such essays will be essentially free of grammatical, mechanical, and usage errors.

The “B” essay will demonstrate competence in the same categories as the “A” essay. The chief difference is that the “B” essay will show some descriptably slight weaknesses in one of those categories. It may slight one of the assigned tasks, show less facility of expression, or contain some minor grammatical, mechanical, or usage flaws.

The “C” essay will complete all tasks set by the assignment, but show weakness in fundamentals (usually development), with barely enough specific information to illustrate the experience or support

generalizations. The sentence construction may be less mature, and the use of language less effective and correct than the “B” essay.

The “D” essay will neglect one of the assigned tasks and be noticeably superficial in its treatment of the assignment—that is, too simplistic or short. The essay may reveal some problems in development, with insufficient specific information to illustrate the experience or support generalizations. It will contain grammatical, mechanical, and usage errors that render some sentences incomprehensible.

The “F” essay will demonstrate a striking underdevelopment of ideas and insufficient or unfocused organization. It will contain serious grammatical, mechanical, and usage errors that render some sentences incomprehensible.

The Department of English reaffirms its commitment to the differential grading scale as defined in the SJSU Catalog (“The Grading System”). Grades issued must represent a full range of student performance: A= excellent; B= above average; C= average; D= below average; F= failure. Courses graded according to the A, B, C, No Credit system shall follow the same pattern, except that NC shall replace D or F. In such cases, NC shall also substitute for W (or Withdrawal) because neither grade (NC or W) affects students’ GPA.

University Policies and Resources

Dropping and Adding

Students are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures about add/drop, grade forgiveness, etc. Refer to the current semester’s [Catalog Policies](http://info.sjsu.edu/static/catalog/policies.html) section at <http://info.sjsu.edu/static/catalog/policies.html> . Add/drop deadlines can be found on the current academic year calendars document on the [Academic Calendars webpage](http://www.sjsu.edu/provost/services/academic_calendars/) at http://www.sjsu.edu/provost/services/academic_calendars/ . The [Late Drop Policy](http://www.sjsu.edu/aars/policies/latedrops/policy/) is available at <http://www.sjsu.edu/aars/policies/latedrops/policy/> . Students should be aware of the current deadlines and penalties for dropping classes.

Information about the latest changes and news is available at the [Advising Hub](http://www.sjsu.edu/advising/) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/advising/> .

Consent for Recording of Class and Public Sharing of Instructor Material

[University Policy S12-7](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-7.pdf), <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-7.pdf> , requires students to obtain instructor’s permission to record the course and the following items to be included in the syllabus:

- “Common courtesy and professional behavior dictate that you notify someone when you are recording him/her. You must obtain the instructor’s permission to make audio or video recordings in this class. Such permission allows the recordings to be used for your private, study purposes only. The recordings are the intellectual property of the instructor; you have not been given any rights to reproduce or distribute the material.”
 - It is suggested that the greensheet include the instructor’s process for granting permission, whether in writing or orally and whether for the whole semester or on a class by class basis.
 - In classes where active participation of students or guests may be on the recording, permission of those students or guests should be obtained as well.
- “Course material developed by the instructor is the intellectual property of the instructor and cannot be shared publicly without his/her approval. You may not

publicly share or upload instructor generated material for this course such as exam questions, lecture notes, or homework solutions without instructor consent.”

In this course, prior consent by the instructor and other students must be obtained before any audio or video is made, and use of that recording must be limited by whatever restrictions are requested by those recorded.

Academic integrity

Your commitment, as a student, to learning is evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University. The [University Academic Integrity Policy S07-2](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S07-2.pdf) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S07-2.pdf> requires you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development. The [Student Conduct and Ethical Development website](http://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/) is available at <http://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/>.

Campus Policy in Compliance with the American Disabilities Act

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. [Presidential Directive 97-03](http://www.sjsu.edu/president/docs/directives/PD_1997-03.pdf) at http://www.sjsu.edu/president/docs/directives/PD_1997-03.pdf requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with the [Accessible Education Center](http://www.sjsu.edu/aec) (AEC) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/aec> to establish a record of their disability.

Accommodation to Students' Religious Holidays

San José State University shall provide accommodation on any graded class work or activities for students wishing to observe religious holidays when such observances require students to be absent from class. It is the responsibility of the student to inform the instructor, in writing, about such holidays before the add deadline at the start of each semester. If such holidays occur before the add deadline, the student must notify the instructor, in writing, at least three days before the date that he/she will be absent. It is the responsibility of the instructor to make every reasonable effort to honor the student request without penalty, and of the student to make up the work missed. See [University Policy S14-7](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S14-7.pdf) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S14-7.pdf>.

Student Technology Resources

Computer labs for student use are available in the [Academic Success Center](http://www.sjsu.edu/at/asc/) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/at/asc/> located on the 1st floor of Clark Hall and in the Associated Students Lab on the 2nd floor of the Student Union. Additional computer labs may be available in your department/college. Computers are also available in the Martin Luther King Library. A wide variety of audio-visual equipment is available for student checkout from Media Services located in IRC 112. These items include DV and HD digital camcorders; digital still cameras; video, slide and overhead projectors; DVD, CD, and audiotape players; sound systems, wireless microphones, projection screens and monitors.

SJSU Writing Center



The SJSU Writing Center is located in Clark Hall, Suite 126. All Writing Specialists have gone through a rigorous hiring process, and they are well trained to assist all students at all levels within all disciplines to become better writers. In addition to one-on-one tutoring services, the Writing Center also offers workshops every semester on a variety of writing topics.

To make an appointment or to refer to the numerous online resources offered through the Writing Center, visit the [Writing Center website](http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter> . For additional resources and updated information, follow the Writing Center on Twitter and become a fan of the SJSU Writing Center on Facebook. (Note: You need to have a QR Reader to scan this code.)

SJSU Peer Connections

Peer Connections, a campus-wide resource for mentoring and tutoring, strives to inspire students to develop their potential as independent learners while they learn to successfully navigate through their university experience. You are encouraged to take advantage of their services which include course-content based tutoring, enhanced study and time management skills, more effective critical thinking strategies, decision making and problem-solving abilities, and campus resource referrals.

In addition to offering small group, individual, and drop-in tutoring for a number of undergraduate courses, consultation with mentors is available on a drop-in or by appointment basis. Workshops are offered on a wide variety of topics including preparing for the Writing Skills Test (WST), improving your learning and memory, alleviating procrastination, surviving your first semester at SJSU, and other related topics. A computer lab and study space are also available for student use in Room 600 of Student Services Center (SSC).

Peer Connections is located in three locations: SSC, Room 600 (10th Street Garage on the corner of 10th and San Fernando Street), at the 1st floor entrance of Clark Hall, and in the Living Learning Center (LLC) in Campus Village Housing Building B. Visit [Peer Connections website](http://peerconnections.sjsu.edu) at <http://peerconnections.sjsu.edu> for more information.

SJSU Counseling Services

The SJSU Counseling Services is located on the corner of 7th Street and San Fernando Street, in Room 201, Administration Building. Professional psychologists, social workers, and counselors are available to provide consultations on issues of student mental health, campus climate or psychological and academic issues on an individual, couple, or group basis. To schedule an appointment or learn more information, visit [Counseling Services website](http://www.sjsu.edu/counseling) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/counseling> .

ENGL 123B: African Literature, Fall 2015

Course Schedule

This schedule is subject to modification. If you miss class, please check for changes on the class web page at www.sjsu.edu/people/d.mesher/engl123b/. The numbers following the titles below are for chapters; page numbers, given parenthetically, are for the class edition. The proposal for the first essay will be due on October 1st, the outline and rough draft on October 20th, and the final draft on November 2nd. The second essay will be due on December 3rd, and the final exam on December 14th.

August	20	Thursday	Introduction
	25	Tuesday	Things Fall Apart, 1-7 (pages 3-51)
	27	Thursday	Things Fall Apart, 8-11 (pages 52-109)
September	1	Tuesday	Things Fall Apart, 12-18 (pages 110-161)
	3	Thursday	Things Fall Apart, 19-25 (pages 162-209)
	8	Tuesday	Joys of Motherhood, 1-4 (pages 7-55)
	10	Thursday	Joys of Motherhood, 5-8 (pages 56-100)
	15	Tuesday	No class -- Joys of Motherhood, 9-11 (pages 101-140)
	17	Thursday	Joys of Motherhood, 12-15 (pages 141-187)
	22	Tuesday	Joys of Motherhood, 16-18 (pages 188-224)
	24	Thursday	Half of a Yellow Sun, 1-3
	29	Tuesday	Half of a Yellow Sun, 4-12
October	1	Thursday	Essay 1 proposal due ; Half of a Yellow Sun, 13-20
	6	Tuesday	Half of a Yellow Sun, 21-27
	8	Thursday	Half of a Yellow Sun, 28-30
	13	Tuesday	Half of a Yellow Sun, 31-37
	15	Thursday	Weep Not, Child, Part 1 (pages 3-64)
	20	Tuesday	Essay 1 outline and draft due ; Weep Not, Child, Part 2 (pages 65-136)
	22	Thursday	Miramar, 1 (pages 1-51)
	27	Tuesday	Miramar, 2 (pages 52-86)
	29	Thursday	Miramar, 3 (pages 87-128)
November	3	Tuesday	Miramar, 4-5 (pages 129-181)
	5	Thursday	Essay 1 due ; Life and Times, 1 (first half, pages 3-60)
	10	Tuesday	Life and Times, 1 (second half, pages 61-126)
	12	Thursday	Life and Times, 2-3 (pages 127-184)
	17	Tuesday	Maru, Part 1 (pages 1-67)
	19	Thursday	Maru, Part 2 (pages 69-94)
	24	Tuesday	Nervous Conditions, Intro-3 (pages vii-57)
	26	Thursday	Thanksgiving - No class
December	1	Tuesday	Nervous Conditions, 4-5 (pages 58-104)
	3	Thursday	Essay 2 due ; Nervous Conditions, 6-7 (pages 105-149)
	8	Tuesday	Nervous Conditions, 8-10 (pages 151-208)
	14	Monday	Final Exam, 2:45 – 5:00 pm