

SYLLABUS

San José State University Department of English and Comparative Literature ENGL 123B: African Literature, Fall 2010 (GE Area V)

Instructor:	David Mesher
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Office Hours:	T-Th: 8:00-8:30, 4:30-5:30
Class Days/Time:	T-Th 1:30-2:45
Classroom:	SH 344
Class Web Page:	www.sjsu.edu/depts/jwss/mesher/engl/123b
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. Courses used to satisfy Areas R, S, and V must be taken from three separate SJSU departments, or other distinct academic units.

Faculty Web Page and MYSJSU Messaging

Copies of the course materials such as the syllabus, major assignment handouts, and so on, may be found on the class web page at www.sjsu.edu/depts/jwss/mesher/engl/123b. You will also need to access your account at Desire2Learn (sjsu.desire2learn.com), in order to turn in your essays, which will be submitted and returned online. You are responsible for regularly checking with the messaging system through MySJSU for any messages that may be sent pertaining to this class.

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.

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 two novels each from Nigeria, Egypt, and southern Africa (Zimbabwe and South Africa), as well as one each from Somalia 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 (in *Woman at Point Zero* and *Nervous Condition*), ethnicity (in *Maps*), 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.

Student Learning Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, students:

1. will have attained sufficient background in the literature of Africa to pursue more advanced studies in this area, as well as to appreciate the contributions and influences of traditional, colonial and postcolonial culture on African writers and their works;
2. will be able to transfer that knowledge of the African experience to the literatures of other nations, from those which endured a colonial experience similar to that of Africa, to those, especially in North America and Europe, which, despite their involvement in colonialism or neocolonialism, may still be affected by that experience through literature;

3. and will have demonstrated an understanding of the literary, historical, and cultural elements contained in these works, as well as expressed that understanding, logically and with insight, through their own analysis and arguments in their writing about the texts.

Required Texts/Readings

Achebe, Chinua. *Things Fall Apart*. Anchor. ISBN: 9780385474542.
Coetzee, J.M. *The Life and Times of Michael K*. Penguin. ISBN: 9780140074482.
Dangarembga, Tsitsi. *Nervous Conditions*. Lynne Rienner, ISBN: 9780954702335.
El Saadawi, Nawal. *Woman at Point Zero*. Zed. ISBN: 9781842778739.
Emecheta, Buchi. *Joys of Motherhood*. George Braziller. ISBN: 9780807609507.
Farah, Nuruddin. *Maps*. Penguin. ISBN: 9780140296433.
Mahfouz, Naguib. *Miramar*. Anchor. ISBN: 9780385264785.
Ngugi wa Thiong'o. *Weep Not Child*. Heineman. ISBN: 9780435908300.

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.**

Library Liaison

Toby Matoush, toby.matoush@sjsu.edu, 808-2096

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 do not read non-course related materials during class, and refrain from conversations or inappropriate comments while the instructor or your classmates are speaking. Turn off cell phones, music, and other likely distractions while in class. Laptops may be used only for note-taking in class; otherwise they must be turned off.

Dropping and Adding

Students are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures about adding and dropping classes, including deadlines and penalties. Deadlines for adding and dropping are listed on the course calendar, below. Other information about academic policies is available at <http://info.sjsu.edu/static/soc-fall/soc-fall.html>. Information about the late drop policy is available at <http://info.sjsu.edu/web-dbgen/narr/soc-fall/rec-333.html>. Exceptions to these policies must be granted by administrators, not instructors. **This semester, the last day to drop courses without an entry on your permanent record is September 7th. The last day to add courses or register late is September 14th.**

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

Academic integrity

Students should know that the University’s Academic Integrity Policy is available at http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/download/judicial_affairs/Academic_Integrity_Policy_S07-2.pdf. Your own commitment to learning, as evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University and the University’s integrity policy, require 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 website for Student Conduct and Ethical Development is available at http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/judicial_affairs/index.html.

Instances of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Cheating on exams or plagiarism (presenting the work of another as your own, or the use of another person’s ideas without giving proper credit) will result in a failing grade and sanctions by the University. For this class, all assignments are to be completed by the individual student unless otherwise specified. If you would like to include in your assignment any material you have submitted, or plan to submit for another class, please note that SJSU’s Academic Policy F06-1 requires approval of all instructors involved.

To discourage plagiarism and contribute to the student’s awareness of this issue, both essays for this class will be automatically checked for plagiarism by Turnitin.com when they are submitted online at Desire2Learn.com. More information about this will be contained in the essay assignments.

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 requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with the DRC (Disability Resource Center) to establish a record of their disability.

Student Technology Resources

Computer labs for student use are available in the Academic Success Center located on the 1st floor of Clark Hall and 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 digital and VHS camcorders, VHS and Beta video players, 16 mm, slide, overhead, DVD, CD, and audiotape players, sound systems, wireless microphones, projection screens and monitors.

Learning Assistance Resource Center

The Learning Assistance Resource Center (LARC) is located in Room 600 in the Student Services Center. It is designed to assist students in the development of their full academic potential and to motivate them to become self-directed learners. The center provides support services, such as skills assessment, individual or group tutorials, subject advising, learning assistance, summer academic preparation and basic skills development. The LARC website is located at <http://www.sjsu.edu/larc/>.

SJSU Writing Center

The SJSU Writing Center is located in Room 126 in Clark Hall. It is staffed by professional instructors and upper-division or graduate-level writing specialists from each of the seven SJSU colleges. Our writing specialists have met a rigorous GPA requirement, and they are well trained to assist all students at all levels within all disciplines to become better writers. The Writing Center website is located at <http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/about/staff/>.

Peer Mentor Center

The Peer Mentor Center is located on the first floor of Clark Hall in the Academic Success Center. The Peer Mentor Center is staffed with Peer Mentors who excel in helping students manage university life, tackling problems that range from academic challenges to interpersonal struggles. On the road to graduation, Peer Mentors are navigators, offering “roadside assistance” to peers who feel a bit lost or simply need help mapping out the locations of campus resources. Peer Mentor services are free and available on a drop-in basis, no reservation required. The Peer Mentor Center website is located at <http://www.sjsu.edu/muse/peermentor/>.

ENGL 123B: African Literature, Fall 2010

Course Schedule

This schedule is subject to modification. If you miss class, please check for changes to the greensheet on the class web page at www.sjsu.edu/depts/jwss/mesher/engl/123b. The proposal for the first essay will be due on October 5th, the outline on October 19th, and the essay itself on the second essay on November 2nd. The second essay will be due on December 2nd.

26 Aug.		Thurs	Introduction
31 Aug.		Tues	Things Fall Apart, chs. 1-7 (pp. 3-51)
2 Sept.		Thurs	Things Fall Apart, chs. 8-11 (pp. 52-109)
7 Sept.		Tues	Things Fall Apart, chs. 12-18 (pp. 110-161)
9 Sept.		Thurs	No class -- Things Fall Apart, chs. 19-25 (pp. 162-209)
14 Sept.		Tues	Joys of Motherhood, chs. 1-5 (pp. 7-63)
16 Sept.		Thurs	Joys of Motherhood, chs. 6-9 (pp. 64-110)
21 Sept.		Tues	Joys of Motherhood, chs. 10-14 (pp. 111-169)
23 Sept.		Thurs	Joys of Motherhood, chs. 15-18 (pp. 170-224)
28 Sept.		Tues	Weep Not, Child, Part 1 (pp. 3-64)
30 Sept.		Thurs	Weep Not, Child, Part 2 (pp. 65-136)
5 Oct.		Tues	Miramar, chs. 1 (pp. 1-51)
7 Oct.		Thurs	Miramar, ch. 2 (pp. 52-86)
12 Oct.		Tues	Miramar, ch. 3 (pp. 87-128)
14 Oct.		Thurs	Miramar, chs. 4-5 (pp. 129-181)
19 Oct.		Tues	Woman at Point Zero, pp. 1-51
21 Oct.		Thurs	No class -- Woman at Point Zero, pp. 51-108
26 Oct.		Tues	Maps, Part 1, chs. 1-2 (pp. 1-42)
28 Oct.		Thurs	Maps, Part 1, chs. 3-5 (pp. 43-99)
2 Nov.		Tues	Maps, Part 1, ch. 6-Interlude (pp. 100-138)
4 Nov.		Thurs	Maps, Part 2 (pp. 139-202)
9 Nov.		Tues	Maps, Part 3 (pp. 203-259)
11 Nov.		Thurs	Veterans Day - No class
16 Nov.		Tues	Life and Times, ch. 1 (first half, pp. 3-60)
18 Nov.		Thurs	Life and Times, ch. 1 (second half, pp. 61-126)
23 Nov.		Tues	Life and Times, chs. 2-3 (127-184)
25 Nov.		Thurs	Thanksgiving - No class
30 Nov.		Tues	Nervous Conditions, Intro-ch. 3 (pp. vii-57)
2 Dec.		Thurs	Nervous Conditions, chs. 4-5 (pp. 58-104)
7 Dec.		Tues	Nervous Conditions, chs. 6-7 (pp. 105-149)
9 Dec.		Thurs	Nervous Conditions, chs. 8-10 (pp. 151-208)
15 Dec.		Wed	Final Exam, 2:45 - 5:00pm