

San José State University
Department of English & Comparative Literature
122, Topics in Comparative Literature, Section 02, Fall, 2021

Course and Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. Meghan Gorman-DaRif
Office Location: FOB 216
Email: meghan.gorman-darif@sjsu.edu
Office Hours: Tuesday 10-12 via Zoom, and by appointment
Class Days/Time: MW, 9:00-10:15
Classroom: Online

Course Description

An exemplary theme as treated in various literatures from different national sites, e.g., war, love, freedom, colonialism, environmental disaster.

The Pirate and the Freedom Fighter in Contemporary Postcolonial Fiction

This course focuses on the tradition of resistance literature in postcolonial texts, focusing on the figure of the pirate and the freedom fighter in novels and plays from India, Kenya, and Nigeria. Through a study of how authors choose to represent such resistant (and violent) figures, the course aims to examine the function of literature as site of political resistance and to consider the following questions: How do the authors choose to frame contemporary struggles? In what ways does literature reframe, revise or resist dominant notions and assumptions? How might the study of such literature itself cultivate practices of resisting oppressive social, cultural, and political structures or open new horizons of hope?

Course Format

Technology Intensive, Hybrid, and Online Courses

This is an online course. Students must have a computer (preferably with a camera), access to reliable internet connectivity, and the ability to log in to Canvas. All work will be submitted online. Class will meet virtually each week during our meeting times MW (9:00-10:15). Short recorded lectures, videos, quizzes, readings, and blog post discussions will be presented asynchronously using Canvas.

Faculty Web Page and MYSJSU Messaging

Course materials such as syllabus, handouts, notes, assignment instructions, etc. can be found on [Canvas Learning Management System course login website](#). You are responsible for regularly checking with the messaging system through [MySJSU](#) on [Spartan App Portal](#) to learn of any updates. For help with using Canvas see [Canvas Student Resources page](#).

Course Goals

Program Learning Outcomes of the Department of English & Comparative Literature (PLO)

This course helps students in the major to achieve the BA Program Learning Outcomes set forth by the Department of English and Comparative Literature in so far as they are required to develop and 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.

To those ends we will engage in all phases of close reading, thinking, and writing processes that produce clear and purposeful critical essays that demonstrate an understanding of and illuminate for others how literature contains and conveys its effects and meanings.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)

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

- 1) Analyze, contextualize, and critically respond to the content, structure, and style of literary texts through close reading.
- 2) Use interdisciplinary research to explicate the meaning of texts, especially through their relationship to their social, political, and historical moment.
- 3) Develop rhetorically sophisticated writing out of critical reading, as appropriate to upper-division university discourse.
- 4) Compare how literature from different national sites takes up a common theme, with close attention to and comparison between how literary expression has developed in different historical, geographical, cultural, political, and social contexts.

Required Texts/Readings

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*
Mahasweta Devi, *Mother of 1084*
Jhumpa Lahiri, *The Lowland*
Nurrudin Farah, *Crossbones*
Helon Habila, *Oil on Water*

Library Liaison

Peggy Cabrera Email: Peggy.Cabrera@sjsu.edu Phone: 408-808-2034

Course Requirements and Assignments

Blog Posts

You will be asked to contribute to the course blog at least once a week. Your contributions will include both an original post (300 words) and a response to a classmate's post (50-100 words).

Original posts are due Monday at midnight; responses are due Wednesday by the time class meets. Blogs should center on the course readings for that upcoming week, focusing on critical analysis through close reading skills and/or addressing texts' social, political, and historical contexts to produce analytical readings as discussed in class. Blog posts should make an argument about some element of the text, as well as providing support for the argument with textual evidence and your own interpretation and analysis of the evidence to support your point or idea. The audience for this will be your peers - educated readers familiar with the text - therefore, the goal is to produce a value-added piece of writing for the class that hinges on persuading your readers that your interpretation is valid (though debatable). Examples might include: a pattern or theme you have noticed developing in the text, and what you think the author is trying to reveal through it; a close reading of a particular scene in an attempt to get at its possible meaning or implications; the use of outside research to contextualize the text and make an argument about it; a consideration of how the text's conditions of production may relate to or influence its meaning, etc. These posts are designed for you to be able to practice your analytical skills, and receive substantive weekly feedback on your writing and critical thinking in preparation for our longer writing assignments, and to encourage attentive reading practices to facilitate class discussion.

Close Reading Exercises and Research Summaries

Over the course of the semester you will be asked to complete structured close reading exercises to practice and fine-tune this skill leading up to essay assignments. In addition, you will also be asked to complete several research summaries in preparation for the research component of papers. These summaries will include an MLA citation of the summarized source, a brief review of the venue of the text, and a concise summary of the text's argument. These assignments are intended to provide support for developing ideas for essays, as well as to provide frequent opportunities for feedback on close reading and research skills necessary for successful completion of the larger writing assignments.

Quizzes

You will be quizzed on reading, viewing, and lecture materials covered in readings or during class time. If you are regularly attending class and keeping up with readings, these should be an easy way to keep your grade up – I see them as built-in accountability to encourage you to stay on top of materials.

Participation

As you may have discovered, active participation is key to success in online learning. Active participation will help us develop a community to discuss ideas, collaborate, and discover new insights into the texts and films through the perspectives of others. Participation includes more than merely attending class, as I expect each of you to arrive prepared by having carefully read assigned readings, and to actively participate in full class discussions and smaller group discussions and in class projects and activities. Part of this active engagement in class and participation in the group dynamic of the classroom is to **have your camera on during Zoom meetings** (and especially in breakout rooms), and be sure to speak up during class discussions and on the chat in Zoom. Please be in touch if any of the above pose challenges so we can brainstorm how you can participate.

Paper One: Textual Analysis

Length: 1000-1250 words double-spaced. Use standard margins and 12-point Times New Roman.

Essay Guidelines: This essay focuses on close reading skills to develop a textual analysis two or more of the course's texts (*The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*, *Mother of 1084*, *The Lowland*). First, you will select a topic and gather evidence from the texts related to your topic to conduct close readings on your selected passages, focusing on stylistic and formal elements of the prose. Your paper will then make an argument about the meaning or message of the texts' representational choices related to your topic. You may select any topic of your choosing across two or more texts, including: representations of the state/police/authority; the depiction of freedom fighters; the representation of class/wealth and its impact on identity; definitions of freedom; gender and the freedom struggle; etc. **In addition to stating *what* you think your evidence means, your thesis should also explain *how* the authors create that meaning.** This means that your thesis should address which features of the text you'll be discussing in your paper and note their function in developing the larger meaning.

Note on **Audience:** As with the blog posts, remember your audience will be others familiar with the poem, so the idea is to add value through your specific interpretation and analysis of the poet's diction, style, use of figurative language, etc., and to persuade your readers that your interpretation valid through the inclusion and analysis of relevant evidence from the text.

Final Paper: Contextual Analysis

Length: 1250-1500 words double-spaced plus a separate Works Cited list. Use standard margins and 12-point Times New Roman font.

Essay Guidelines: The purpose of this essay is to analyze how a pair of texts responds to one specific historical/political or social issue at the time of writing. The goal is not to write a comprehensive explanation of the texts, but to focus closely on a set of passages, verbal patterns, or recurring images that can help readers understand one specific aspect of the texts' relationship to its historical/political/social context. You have some autonomy in choosing a second text for comparison, but at least one of the texts for this essay must be *Oil on Water* or *Crossbones*. Possible topics might be: the representation of and message about piracy in *Oil on Water* and *Crossbones*; the depiction of postcolonial governments in *Oil on Water* and *Mother of 1084* or *The Lowland*; the connection between colonialism and neocolonialism in *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* and either *Oil on Water* or *Crossbones*, etc.

Your **introduction** should briefly introduce the context you're focusing on (Piracy, Neocolonialism, State violence, etc.) and state your **thesis:** your central argument about how you think the authors represent or implicitly respond to a specific cultural/historical/political issue. For example, do the texts you're analyzing suggest that contemporary literature affirms or subverts dominant depictions of today's pirates? Do your passages indicate a challenge in the text to a common understanding or stereotype? What are the author's trying to get us to understand about the context you are analyzing?

Research: Unlike your first paper, this assignment requires you to gather evidence from outside of your main literary text. You are required to incorporate **at least 3 credible scholarly sources:** one source that provides background information on your historical topic, one critical essay that makes an argument related to your historical topic, and a third source (could be either informational or

critical). Cite all of your sources within the paper using parenthetical citations (Author #), and include a Works Cited page citing in MLA style.

To locate sources in the SJSU library system, visit the MLK Library's English and Comparative Literature research guide: <https://libguides.sjsu.edu/english>. The research guide includes contact information for the English and Comparative Literature librarian, who can help with research questions. For more guidance, please visit my office hours, the Writing Center, or the MLK Library's Research help desk

Grading Information

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.

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. Within any of the letter grade ranges (e.g., B+/B/B-), the assignment of a + or - grade will reflect stronger (+) or weaker (-) completion of the goals of the assignment.

There will be a series of short writing assignments and longer essays that make up the majority of the grade for this class. **Should you choose to revise essay 1, the deadline for revisions is one week from the date you receive your paper back with comments.** There will also be weekly blog posts, assignments and reading/lecture quizzes:

Essay 1	25%	CLO 1, 2, 3
Essay 2	25%	CLO 1-4
Weekly Blog Posts	15%	CLO 1-4
Short writing assignments	15%	CLO 1, 2, 3
Quizzes	15%	
Participation	5%	CLO 1, 4

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>A</i>	<i>93 to 100%</i>
<i>A minus</i>	<i>90 to 92%</i>
<i>B plus</i>	<i>86 to 89 %</i>
<i>B</i>	<i>83 to 85%</i>
<i>B minus</i>	<i>80 to 82%</i>
<i>C plus</i>	<i>76 to 79%</i>
<i>C</i>	<i>73 to 75%</i>
<i>C minus</i>	<i>70 to 72%</i>
<i>D plus</i>	<i>66 to 69%</i>
<i>D</i>	<i>63 to 65%</i>
<i>D minus</i>	<i>60 to 62%</i>

Classroom Protocol (Delete if not applicable)

Late Work: Unless arrangements have been made well ahead of time (at least 2 days prior to due date), late work will be penalized by a grade reduction of 10% per day and will not be accepted after a week.

Attendance: Your success in this class will largely be dependent on your attendance and active participation in our zoom lectures and discussions, as well as your keeping closely up to date with our reading schedule. Staying on top of lecture and reading material will result in a better understanding of the material, which will translate into higher grades on assignments and quizzes. Please plan accordingly and develop a schedule to manage the variety of assignments for this course, including readings, blog posts, and written assignments like papers, close readings, and

research summaries.

Scholastic Honesty: Turning in work that is not your own, or any other form of scholastic dishonesty, will result in a major course penalty, possibly failure of the course. This standard applies to all drafts and assignments, and a report of the incident will be submitted to the appropriate Dean's office on campus.

University Policies

Per [University Policy S16-9](#), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on [Syllabus Information web page \(https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php\)](https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php). Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

SJSU's Credit Hour Requirement

Success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend, for each unit of credit, a minimum of 45 hours over the length of the course (normally three hours per unit per week) for instruction, preparation/studying, or course related activities, including but not limited to internships, labs, and clinical practica. Other course structures will have equivalent workload expectations as described in the syllabus.

Classroom Protocol

Accessibility: Universal design is an accessibility principle by which expanding access to a space (like a classroom) or a conversation (like a curriculum) benefits everyone. I aim for universal design in my courses, and at the same time, I assume that each student learns differently. If you are facing a barrier to access in my class, I invite (and encourage!) you to talk with me about it in my office hours or by e-mail. In addition, the university and San Jose community offer many kinds of support services

- **Accessible Education Center** is online at <http://www.sjsu.edu/aec/> and on Facebook. You can also reach them at 408-924-6000 (voice) or by email at aec-info@sjsu.edu. AEC is the office that handles requests for accommodations (<http://www.sjsu.edu/aec/current-students/accommodation-information/index.html>). Their office is in the Administration Building (110), and they offer a variety of services to facilitate access for students at SJSU:
 - **Accessible Software and Training** (<http://www.sjsu.edu/aec/current-students/center-for-accessible-technology/accessible-software-and-training/index.html>)
 - **Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services** (<http://www.sjsu.edu/aec/current-students/deaf-and-hard-of-hearing-services/index.html>)
- **Gender Equity Center** is online at <http://www.sjsu.edu/genec/> and provides a variety of spaces and services including drop-in social spaces, free condoms, pads, and tampons, a lactation room, as well as events throughout the year. They are located in the Student Union, First Level, Room 1650. You can also reach them at 408-924-6500 or via email at sjsugenec@gmail.com
- **MOSAIC Cross Cultural Center** is online at <http://www.sjsu.edu/mosaic/> and on Facebook. They provide support and services for students from historically underrepresented groups, including educational and leadership opportunities through programming and training, a resource library and database of speakers, funding opportunities, and a space to study or connect. You can find them on the 1st floor of the Student Union Main Building. You can also reach them at 408-924-6255 or via email at mosaic@sjsu.edu
- **Pride Center** is online at <http://www.sjsu.edu/pride/> and provides support on campus to LGBTIQQA

students. Their library has a variety of resources and the space is also available for meeting, studying, or socializing. They are located in the Student Union in the Main Section on the 1st Level.

- **Student Counseling and Psychological Services** is online at <http://www.sjsu.edu/counseling/> and are located in the Student Wellness Center, Third Floor (300B). You can schedule an appointment by calling 408-924-5910 or email them at counseling.services@sjsu.edu. You can also access their after hours crisis service by calling their main number, and pressing 4. If you are experiencing an emergency you can also reach the police at 911, campus police at 408-924-2222, the County Suicide and Crisis Line at 855-278-4204, or text ANSWER to 839863 to get a response from the Crisis Call Center.
 - **SCPS** has also compiled a list of local and community resources including resources for mental health, addiction issues, legal aid, and community and cultural groups, including veterans etc., which you can find at: http://www.sjsu.edu/counseling/students/Off-Campus_Assistance/Community_Resources/index.html - alcohol
- **The Office of Student and Faculty Success** is online at <http://www.sjsu.edu/sfs/> and they have a wide range of services to provide support for the campus community, including:
 - **#FinishIn4** (<http://www.sjsu.edu/californiapromise/>)
 - **Project Succeed** (<http://www.sjsu.edu/projectsucceed/>)
 - **Academic Advising and Retention Services** (<http://www.sjsu.edu/aars/>)
 - **CommUniverCity** (<http://cucs.org/>)
 - **E-Campus** (<http://www.sjsu.edu/ecampus/>)
 - **Peer Connections** (<http://peerconnections.sjsu.edu/>) offers peer mentoring and tutoring services
 - **Student-Athlete Success Services** (<https://sjsuspartans.com/sports/2018/8/3/ot-sjsu-academic-services-html.aspx>) offers academic and study skills services for student athletes
 - **Office of Supported Instruction** (<http://www.sjsu.edu/supportedinstruction/index.html>) offers courses in Math and Writing to first year students for college success.
 - **TRIO ASPIRE Program** (<http://www.sjsu.edu/aspire/index.html>) offers support services to students from underrepresented groups.
- **Student Health Center** is online at <http://www.sjsu.edu/studenthealth/>. In addition to general medicine, they also have a Wellness and Health Promotion Unit which provides support relating to nutrition, substance abuse, body image, sleep, sexual health, and violence prevention. Appointments can be made online, or you can call them at 408-924-6122.
- **YWCA Silicon Valley** (<https://ywca-sv.org/>) is a community center providing shelter and resources for survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and dating violence. Their 24-hour # is: 800-572-2782
- **San José State Writing Center** is online at <http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/> and offers free consultations about student writing. They're not line editors, they're way better: trained writing instructors who can help you at any point in your writing process. You can schedule an appointment online, or contact them at 408-924-2308. They are located on the second floor of the MLK library, as well as offering drop-in tutoring in Clark Hall 126.

122, Fall 2021, Course Schedule

NOTE: Syllabus subject to change – modifications will be announced in class and reflected in Modules on Canvas.
Please refer to modules in Canvas for up-to-date list of activities/requirements/descriptions of tasks.

Week One	<p>Aug. 23rd Introductions, Syllabus, and Essential questions</p> <p>Aug. 25th Discussion of Fanon; independence struggles against colonialism</p>	<p>HW: Read Frantz Fanon “On violence” pp. 1-17; 50-52 from “The arrival of the colonist” to page break before “On Violence in the International Context</p> <p>HW: Read Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o’s Decolonizing the mind 1: The Language of African Literature (pp. 4-33), and 2: The Language of African Theater pp. 34-42</p>
Week Two	<p>Aug. 30th Discussion of <i>Decolonizing the Mind</i>; introduction to Mau Mau Uprising</p> <p>Sept. 1st Close reading practice with play</p>	<p>HW: Read <i>The Trial of Dedan Kimathi</i>, First Movement (1-22)</p> <p>HW: Play Second Movement (22-58)</p> <p>Recommended Readings/Viewing: Read, from Gikandi’s book on Ngugi: section from the Intro: “Ngugi and the Drama of (post) Colonialism” (pages 3-12)</p>
Week Three	<p>Labor Day</p> <p>Sept. 8th Close Reading assignment review; discussion of play</p>	<p>HW: Play Third Movement (58-end)</p> <p>Recommended Readings/Viewing: Entangled Temporalities of Postcolonial Violence in Kenyan Literature, “Anticolonial Kenyan Literature: Creating the Nation” (pg. 3-7). Gikandi’s book on Ngugi Chapter 6: Performance and power: the plays</p>
Week Four	<p>Sept. 13th Discussion of play; close reading practice and review</p> <p>Sept. 15th Introduction to Naxalite Movement</p>	<p>HW: Close reading #1 due by next class 9/15</p> <p>HW: <i>Mother of 1084</i>, Morning, (pp. 1-32)</p> <p>Recommended Readings/Viewing: “Language of Defiance: Female Emancipation in Mahasweta Devi’s Mother of 1084” by Kovilpillai and Deivasigamani</p>
Week Five	<p>Sept. 20th Discussion of</p>	<p>HW: <i>Mother of 1084</i>, Afternoon, pp. 33-70; Late Afternoon, pp.</p>

	<p>novel; review of structure/timeline</p> <p>Sept. 22nd close reading practice</p>	<p>71-90</p> <p>HW: 3/12: <i>Mother of 1084</i>, Evening, pp. 91-128; Close reading #2 due by next class 9/27</p> <p>Suggested reading: “The Naxal Novel” by Nina Martyris, and “Naxalbari at its Golden Jubilee” by Shah and Jain</p>
Week Six	<p>Sept. 27th Discussion of <i>Mother of 1084</i>, introduction to <i>The Lowland</i></p> <p>Sept. 29th Discussion of <i>The Lowland</i></p>	<p>HW: Read <i>The Lowland</i> Part One: 1-5 (pp. 3-40)</p> <p>HW: Read <i>The Lowland</i> Rest of Part One; Part Two (41-100)</p> <p>Recommended Readings/Viewing: Read, from Gikandi’s book on Ngugi: section from the Intro: “Ngugi and the Drama of (post) Colonialism” (pages 3-12)</p>
Week Seven	<p>Oct. 4th Review of Paper one assignment</p> <p>Oct. 6th Discussion of novel</p>	<p>HW: <i>The Lowland</i>: Part III (103-144)</p> <p>HW: <i>The Lowland</i>: Part IV (147-212)</p>
Week Eight	<p>Oct. 11th Paper one worksheet assignment review</p> <p>Oct. 13th Discussion of novel; prewriting steps practice (research question/close reading/thesis development)</p>	<p>HW: <i>The Lowland</i>: Part V: 1-2 (215-254)</p> <p>HW: <i>The Lowland</i>: Part V: 3-end; Part VI: 1-3 (255-316)</p> <p>Recommended Readings/Viewing: Gikandi’s book on Ngugi Chapter 6: Performance and power: the plays</p>
Week Nine	<p>Oct. 18th Discussion of novel; group work on worksheet</p> <p>Oct. 20th outlining and writing review; discussion of novel</p>	<p>HW: <i>The Lowland</i>: Part VI: 4 (317-331) Paper worksheet due next class</p> <p>HW: Part VII and VIII (335-end)</p>
Week Ten	<p>Oct. 25th Introduction to <i>Crossbones</i>; paper one review (due Friday, Oct. 29th by midnight)</p>	<p>HW: <i>Crossbones</i> 1-45 (Chapter ends “As he departs, he mouths, “Thank you””)</p> <p>HW: <i>Crossbones</i> 46-106 (Chapter ends “He tells himself that a</p>

	Oct. 27th Discussion and Introduction to Final Research Paper	liar seldom knows how to repeat his lies”) Recommended Readings/Viewing: Roots, History Channel, 2016 available on Hulu; Ta-Nehisi Coates, “The Case for Reparations”
Week Eleven	Nov. 1st The Debate over Reparations Nov. 3rd The Ethics of Representing Slavery	HW: <i>Crossbones</i> 107-150 (Chapter ends “You never know how things may pan out here”) HW: <i>Crossbones</i> 151-206 (Chapter ends “The last to be evicted receives a large cash prize at the end”) Research Summary #1 Recommended Readings/Viewing: Introduction and Chapter One of Scenes of Subjection by Saidiya Hartman
Week Twelve	Nov. 8th Michelle Alexander’s <i>The New Jim Crow</i> Nov. 10th Discussion of <i>The New Jim Crow</i> and <i>Homegoing</i> ; formulating a research question	HW: <i>Crossbones</i> 207-251 (Chapter ends “Then she, too, departs and joins them in the living room”) HW: <i>Crossbones</i> 252-316 (Chapter ends “He tells himself that a liar seldom knows how to repeat his lies”) Recommended Readings/Viewing: The 13 th (available on Netflix); Introduction and Chapter 1 of Michelle Alexander’s The New Jim Crow
Week Thirteen	Nov. 15th No class: begin work on final paper worksheet; extended office hours to discuss ideas for final papers Nov. 17th Final discussion of <i>Crossbones</i> ; introduction to context for <i>Oil on Water</i>	HW: <i>Crossbones</i> 317-end HW: Read <i>Oil on Water</i> Ch. 1-5 (pp. 1-64)
Week Fourteen	Nov. 22nd : Final Paper Review and Reminders Thanksgiving	HW: Read <i>Oil on Water</i> Ch. 6-10 (pp. 65-124) and Research Summary #2
Week Fifteen	Nov. 29th Discussion of novel Dec. 1st Discussion of the end of the novel	HW: <i>Oil on Water</i> chapters 11-15 (pp. 125-165) HW: <i>Oil on Water</i> 16-end (pp. 166-239)

Week Sixteen	Dec. 6th Last Day of Class: Discussion and Reflection on course, texts, and themes	HW: Final Paper due December 10th
--------------	--	--