AFRICAN WOMEN WRITERS: SPRING 2012  
SSW 4713 Section 6937, LIT 3383 Section 09DB, WST 3930 Section 09C9

Instructor: Dr. Rose Sau Lugano  
Office Location: 361 Pugh Hall  
Phone: 846-2433

Time: T 1:55-3:50, R: 1:55-2:45  
Venue: T & R: MAT 151  

Course Description:
In this class we will explore African women writers and critics, looking at their theoretical priorities and cultural positions. This course is designed to provide students with both a specific and a general view of the status, achievements and experiences of African women in fiction. Using different genres (novels and plays) we will endeavor to understand how women’s literary expression has been shaped by history, culture, and their experiences, as well as see how they are addressing issues of gender in their respective societies.

Our discussions will focus on issues of identity, oppression, resistance, exile, language, translation and colonialism, using as points of entry a diverse set of texts. The framework for classroom discussion will revolve around two central issues

1) The way in which women authors represent gender as a crucial variable for social stratification.
2) The use of writing itself as a tool for social transformation and critique.

Course Objectives:
1. Introduce students to the different genres and literary themes presented by African women writers.
2. To understand the historical and social context in which African women’s literary expressions have developed.
3. To help students appreciate the richness and variety of African women’s literary production while endeavoring to understand more clearly the impact of colonialism, race, class, ethnicity and gender on women.

Teaching Method
Introductory lectures to relate the set texts to their context(s) and to place them within the perspective of their particular genres. Students’ reports on special topics.
A Textual study of the set texts.

Required Texts:

Movies:
Faat Kine and Moolaade (2007) by Sembene Ousmane
References on criticism and theory:


Requirements.

I. Regular attendance at all classes is very important. Reading of the assigned class texts before class is necessary for meaningful participation in class discussion. The instructor may expect students to present on certain topics as part of their class participation.

II. Completion of all assignments and homework on time is an important aspect of the course. Late exercises may be accepted but will attract a 5% deduction in points.

Academic Conduct.

Cheating of any kind is a serious university policy offence. You can work with others on assignments but be sure to always write your own answer(s). Be sure to express your concern about your performance (especially if you are having problems) early instead of late in the semester.

“Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation.”

Grading Policy:

The following grading policy will be used in awarding grades. A =93-100, A- =90-92, B+ = 87-89, B =83-86, B- =80-82, C+ =77-79, C =73-76, C- = 70-72, D+ =67-69, D=63-66, D- =60-62, E less than 60.

Course Evaluation.

There will be no final examination in this course. Evaluation will be based on six reaction papers of 2 pages each and a 10 page report based on independent study to be submitted by the last week of class. This paper will be presented to the class before collection.

1. Class attendance and participation: 15%
2. 5 Reaction papers of 5% each 25%
3. Mid-Term Exam 20%
4. Special Topic presentation 10%
5. Final Paper 30%
Total Points: 100%
Student Requirement.
1. A two-page reaction paper on each text must be handed in the first day of text discussion. Students must read the texts before the class discussion begins.
2. Each student will choose one special topic from an array of questions which deal with other topics that concern Africa, such as “the political atmosphere of South Africa during apartheid.”

1. **Attendance and Class participation** =15%
   The course format is a combination of lecture and discussion, therefore regular attendance is required. Students may miss only one class meeting without penalty. This one day allow for absence due to illness, time conflicts, university activities, etc. You do not need to present an excuse for this absence. Beyond the one day allowable for absence, 1 point will be deducted for any subsequent absence from class.

2. **5 Reaction Papers** =25%
   A two-page (typed) reaction paper due on the day we begin discussion will be expected for each text reading. Your paper should be an analysis and not a summary of the work. Students should focus on one aspect of the text: the narrator, the plot, gender roles, language, or any other relevant issues. Students must include at least one question on any aspect of the book they did not understand at the end of the reaction paper.

3. **Mid-term exam** = 20%
   This will be an in-class exam based on issues raised in the analysis of texts read so far as well as all the background information on African feminism, status of African women, their writing, and form of texts.

4. **Special Topic presentation** =10% (See special topic list)
   Students will work in groups to research on special topics on women in the countries represented by the texts, as well as supply background information on the writers.

5. **Final Paper** =30%
   This will be 10 pages long. Students must consult the instructor to discuss their topics before writing the paper. Students will be expected to focus on a theme developed during the course of the semester, and in addition to consulting relevant articles on their chosen topics, they must reference two or more texts read in class.

Note: Cheating of any kind is a serious university policy offence. You can work with others on assignments but be sure to always write your own answer(s). When you reference articles you must acknowledge the critics and not present the information as your own.
If you find you are having problems with any part of the course, please see the instructor early in the semester. Do not wait until the end of the semester! There will be no extra credit opportunities.
African Women Writers, Spring 2009

Course Schedule:

Week 1: Jan 5 & 7.
Tue: Introduction to course /syllabus
Stereotypes about African women
Thur:

Week 2: Jan 12 & 14
Tue: Survey of African literature: Women and literary production.
The male and female writing traditions in Africa. Lecture.
Thur: Student Presentation. Group 1: Feminist movement /African Feminism.

Week 3: Jan 19 & 21.
Tue: Student presentation, Group 2: The Swahili people of East Africa.
Discussing “The Poem of Mwanakupona” in Tendi. Pages 55-71 (Copies will be given in class). Structure, themes, and religious ideology.
Thur: Background on the Bildungsroman

Week 4: Jan 26 & 28
Tue: Student presentation. Group 3: Cultural and social contestation/ Women in Nigeria
Reaction paper # 1 on The Bride Price due January 28th
Discussion of The Bride Price by Buchi Emecheta
Thur: Characterization/ response to students’ questions..
Ref: Emerging Perspectives on Buchi Emecheta

Week 5: Feb 2 & 4.
Tue: Student presentation, Group 4: Slavery / traditions and Societal expectations/ Women in Ghana
Reaction paper # 2 on The Dilemma of a Ghost due on Tuesday, Feb 2nd
Thur: Discussion of The Dilemma of a Ghost
Ref: Emerging Perspectives on Ama Ata Aidoo

Week 6: Feb 9 & 11
Tue: Continue discussion of The Dilemma of a Ghost.
Characterization /response to students’ questions
Thur: Student presentation, Group 5: African women and excision, Feb 11th

Week 7: Feb 16 & 18.
Tue: viewing movie—Moolaade (2007) by Sembene Ousmane
Thur: Discussion of the movie

Week 8: Feb 23 & 25
Tue: Individual oral presentation of reaction # 3 on So Long a Letter , Feb 23rd.
Student presentation, Group 6: Women and Islam / Women in Senegal
Mariama Ba’s So Long a Letter

Week 9: Mar 2 & 4.
Tue. Continue discussion of So Long a Letter
Documentary: A Veiled Revolution
Thur: Mid-Term Exam—Thursday 4th

SPRING BREAK: March 6-13. No classes.

Week 10: Mar 16 & 18
Tue: Student presentation, Group 7: Women and Apartheid in South Africa.
Reaction paper # 4 on And they Didn’t Die due Tuesday March 16th.
Thur: Lauretta Ngcobo’s And they Didn’t Die

Week 11: Mar 23 & 25.
Tue. Continue discussion of And They Didn’t Die
Thur. Characterization/ students’ questions

Week 12: Mar 30 & April 1
Tue: Student presentation Group 8: Contesting marginalization and Neo-colonialism/
Women in Zimbabwe.
Reaction paper # 5 on Nervous Conditions due Tuesday, April 1st.
Discussion of Tsitsi Dangarembga’s Nervous Conditions
Thur: Themes and issues

Week 13: April 6 & 8.
Tues. Continue discussion of Nervous Conditions
Thur: Characterization and students’ questions
Ref. Emerging Perspectives on Tsitsi Dangarembga: Negotiating the Postcolonial

Week 14: April 13 & 15
Tue. The modern African woman. Movie Faat Kine by Sembene Ousmane
The future of African women writers / current themes.
Thur: Presentation: African women in politics

Week 15: April 20
Tues. Course conclusion.
Study Days: April 22-23. Final Paper due Wednesday April 23rd in my mail box.
SPECIAL TOPICS FOR CLASS GROUP PRESENTATION
Each student must choose one of the listed topics for presentation in class. These serve as background information for the understanding of the texts.

1. **The Feminist movement / African Feminism. Jan 14th**
   - Similarities and differences
   - Feminist literary criticism

2. **The Poem of Mwana Kupona. Jan 18th**
   - Writer’s biography and the introduction of Islam in East Africa
   - Islam and the status of Swahili woman then and today
   - Role of poetry among the Swahili

3. **The Bride Price. Jan 26th**
   - Writer’s biography and the colonial situation in Nigeria in the 1940s
   - The Igbo-speaking people of Nigeria & Traditional gender socialization.
   - The African perspective of bride price
   - Beliefs and superstitions—what are they? Their significance in society.

4. **The Dilemma of a Ghost. Feb 2nd**
   - Writer’s biography and the colonial History of Ghana
   - Domestic and international slave trade in Ghana
   - Continental African and African-American relationships
   - A Ghanian woman’s view of life in Ghana

5. **Moolaade. Feb 11th**
   - Female cutting: the controversy/ what is the basis?
   - What is the current situation in African countries?
   - External and internal intervention

6. **So Long a Letter. Feb 23rd**
   - Writer’s biography and divorce in Islamic tradition
   - Polygamy and Islam, Women in Senegal
   - Can one generalize about the situation of women in the Islamic world?
   - The role of the veil/ women and dress

7. **And They didn’t Die. Mar 16th**
   - Writer’s biography and the arrival of Europeans in South Africa
   - What was Apartheid? How did it affect Black South Africans?
   - Effects of urbanization and migration on S. African women
   - S. Africa today

8. **Nervous Conditions. Mar 30th**
   - Writer’s biography and the colonization of Zimbabwe
   - Conditions leading to Zimbabwe’s independence
   - Present political climate in Zimbabwe
CLASS GROUP PRESENTATION: African Women Writers. Spring 2010


2. The Swahili of East Africa: The Poem of Mwana Kupona. Jan 19th


4. Women in Ghana: The Dilemma of a Ghost. Feb 2nd

5. Women and excision: Moolaade. Feb 11th


7. Women in South Africa: And They didn’t Die. Mar 16th