

**AFRICAN LITERATURE**  
**revised 1/21/15**

Instructor: Professor Belinda Edmondson  
Graduate Assistant: Mr. Bernie Lombardi  
Class time: MW 10 am – 11:20 pm  
Telephone: 1-973-353-1586  
Office: 320 Conklin Hall  
Office Hours: Wednesdays 1 pm – 2 pm or by appointment  
Emails: [edmondsn@andromeda.rutgers.edu](mailto:edmondsn@andromeda.rutgers.edu), [bernie.lombardi@gmail.com](mailto:bernie.lombardi@gmail.com)

Course Description:

This course is an introduction to the basic themes and genres of modern African literature. It assumes that, in the African context, "literature" must of necessity encompass both the written and the oral narrative. Through a variety of literary and expressive media—poetry, films, novels, music—we will gain an understanding of the basic ideas that have informed African literature over the past 50 years. Central themes include colonization and decolonization, as well as the conflict between, and the blending of, the traditional and modern cultures of African societies.

Course Requirements:

- 1) You shall be required to take four examinations. Midterm Exam 1 and Midterm Exam 2 together will comprise your midterm examination, and will cover Part One of the course. Final Exam 1 and Final Exam 2 together will comprise your final examination, and will cover Parts Two and Three of the course. The typical exam format will consist of roughly six questions requiring detailed and concise answers on a specific reading, poem or film. The questions will usually involve comparative analysis of two or more items. Final Exam Part 2 will feature both an in-class essay and questions. Your responses must be in full sentences and grammatically correct; points will be taken off for poor grammar. In the case of exceptionally poor grammar, you will receive no points at all.
- 2) You shall give a written three-minute presentation (roughly a page in length) to the class on some aspect of the course materials, some of which may require outside research. (A sign-up sheet will be available the first and second days of class.) *The presentation must be uploaded to SafeAssign before it has been presented.*
- 3) Students shall write, *and first upload to SafeAssign before handing in a hard copy*, an essay of roughly 1300 words (or 5 pages) on a topic of my choosing. The paper should be in MLA format, with a proper title and all the required formatting of citations, bibliography, etc.
- 4) Proper note-taking is a critical component in writing a good exam; therefore, we will periodically review our notes for the course and discuss ways in which to take better notes. Students will be asked at various points during the class to read out their notes on a preceding lecture. If you are absent for a class, you are still responsible for the notes on that class. Remember: The purpose of note-taking is not merely so that you can recall information, but,

more importantly, so that you can recall key points of analysis on that information. Therefore, your notes may record not only my ideas, but also the conflicting opinions within the class on that subject.

### Grading Rubric and Policy

I use an alternate grading system so that I have more latitude in issuing grades. Under this system, exams are marked on a scale of 100 points: under 40 is a Fail. 40-49 is a D. 50-59 is a C. 60 – 63 is a C+. 64 - 74 is a B. 75 to 79 is a B+. 80 and over is A. While on your exams and papers I will note whether a paper is an A+ (90 and above), or that your paper is in the B-/C+ territory, the grade that will be recorded is the one that corresponds to the actual percentage grade (a 64 may be a B-, but on your final grade score I will record it as a B, etc.)

For essays, a grade of A+ is scored at 95, an A at 85, a B+ at 75, a B at 70, a C+ at 60, a C at 55, a D at 45, an F at 30.

Midterm Exams (combined): 40 percent of total grade

Final Exam: 40 percent of total grade

Essay: 20 percent of total grade

Presentation: a superior rating adds 3 points to final score

OR

Participation: a superior rating adds 3 points to final score

Please note: you may receive extra points for a superior presentation or superior participation, but *not* for both.

### Electronics Policy

Electronic media is a welcome tool to aid learning in the modern classroom. However, used irresponsibly it can also be detrimental to learning when students lose the ability to focus on lectures or distract other students with it. Use of electronic media is therefore a student privilege, not a right, and may be revoked by the instructor under certain conditions. During class time certain electronic media—laptop computers and tablets, not cell phones—may be used only for the following purposes:

- 1) to read required course texts (E-books or texts posted on Blackboard)
- 2) to type notes on lectures and classroom discussions
- 3) for all in-class exams, provided the student has first downloaded Respondus

Electronic media may NOT be used to browse the internet, answer email, check social media, or for any use that is not directly related to the course. If any student is found to be in violation of the electronics policy—as witnessed by the instructor, the graduate assistant, or as reported by fellow classmates—that student will be banned from using any electronic media for the remainder of the course. If the student continues to use electronic media despite the ban, his or her final grade will be reduced a full letter grade at the conclusion. In extreme cases I reserve the right to ban the student

from the classroom altogether. The student will be notified in writing if s/he has lost the privilege of using electronic media. Cell phones must be turned off during class time or set to “vibrate”.

### Plagiarism Policy

Plagiarism is a serious academic offense, for which a student may receive a range of punishments, including failing the course, a permanent record on his or her final transcript, suspension or even expulsion from the University. Please familiarize yourself with the University’s definition of plagiarism by reviewing the Rutgers University Policy on Academic Integrity, here: <http://wp.rutgers.edu/courses/plagiarism>.

Some plagiarism is unintentional. Therefore, for the purposes of this class no secondary sources should be used, either through direct quotation or substantial paraphrase, in any student presentation, exam or essay without prior permission of the instructor. If you have been given permission to use secondary sources in your submitted work, please follow the appropriate methods of attribution.

If I suspect any student of plagiarism I will bring it to his/her attention and report it to the administration. We faculty have a professional obligation to report all instances of plagiarism in our classes. Failure to do so promotes inequity among the student body, given that honest students have not had the advantage of using external sources in preparing their work.

**Required Fiction:** *A Man of the People*, Chinua Achebe (Nigeria); *Beasts of No Nation*, Uzodinma Iweala (Nigeria); *The Joys of Motherhood*, Buchi Emecheta (Nigeria); *Juletane*, Myriam Warner-Vieyra (Senegal/Guadeloupe); “The Start of the Affair”, Nuruddin Farah (Somalia).

**Required Non-Fiction:** “How to Write About Africa”, Binyavanga Wainaina (Kenya); *Decolonising the Mind* (Introduction and Chapter 1), Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o (Kenya); “The Case for Contamination”, Anthony Appiah (Ghana); “We Should All Be Feminists”, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (Nigeria) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hg3umXU\\_q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hg3umXU_q); “African Feminisms” <http://encyclopedia.jrank.org/articles/pages/5940/African-Feminisms.html>.

**Poetry & Musical Lyrics:** “Civilian and Soldier”, Wole Soyinka (Nigeria); “To the American Negro Troops”, Leopold Senghor (Senegal); “I.T.T. (International Thief Thief)”, “Zombie”, Fela Kuti (Nigeria).

**Films:** *Camp de Thiaroye*, Ousmane Sembene (director) On reserve in Audiovisual Center, Dana Library.

**Required Field Trip:** “Royals and Regalia” Exhibit, curated by Dr. Christa Clarke, Newark Museum.

Wed. 1/21: Introduction

Mon. 1/26: “How to Write About Africa”

SECTION ONE: Decolonization, War, Conflict

Wed. 1/28: *A Man of the People* chs. 1-4

Mon. 2/2: *A Man of the People* chs. 5-10

Wed. 2/4: *A Man of the People* chs. 11-end

Mon. 2/9: “I.T.T.”

Wed. 2/11: review

**Mon. 2/16: MIDTERM EXAM PART 1**

Wed. 2/18: *Camp de Thiaroye* (watch on Library Reserve before class)

Mon. 2/23: “Civilian and Soldier”, “To the American Negro Troops” “Zombie”

Wed. 2/25: *Beasts of No Nation*, pp. 1-51

Mon. 3/2: *Beasts of No Nation* pp. 52-116

Wed. 3/4: *Beasts of No Nation* pp. 117- end

Mon. 3/9: review

**Wed. 3/11: MIDTERM EXAM PART 2**

Mon. 3/16: SPRING BREAK

Wed. 3/18: SPRING BREAK

SECTION TWO: Gender, Sexuality

Mon. 3/23: “The Start of the Affair”

Wed. 3/25: *The Joys of Motherhood* chs. 1-5

Mon. 3/30: *The Joys of Motherhood* chs. 6-8

Wed. 4/1: *The Joys of Motherhood* chs. 9-12

Mon. 4/6: *The Joys of Motherhood* chs. 13-end

Wed. 4/8: *Juletane* pp. 1-40

Mon. 4/13: *Juletane* pp. 41-end. “African Feminisms”, “We Should All Be Feminists”. **ESSAY TOPICS HANDED OUT**

SECTION 3: Tradition, Globalization

4/15: “Royals and Regalia” exhibit, Newark Museum

4/20: Discussion of “Royals and Regalia”

4/22: “The Case for Contamination” **ESSAYS DUE.**

4/27: Decolonising the Mind” Introduction and Chapter 1

4/29: catch-up

5/4: review.

**5/11: COMPREHENSIVE FINAL EXAM PART 2, 8:30 AM – 11:30 AM, IN REGULAR CLASSROOM.**