

English 345:
VOICES OF AFRICA

Cedar Crest College
Spring Semester 2009
Section 00; MW 2:30-3:45 PM; Room: ALH 214
Format: Lecture/Discussion

Henry Marchand
110 Hartzel Hall

Office Hours: & by appointment

Office Phone: x3325; off campus, dial 610/606-4666

E-mail: hmarchan@cedarcrest.edu

[All email correspondence between students and instructor must utilize cedarcrest.edu addresses. The email address in each student profile on eCompanion must be the student's college address.]

Required Books:

Things Fall Apart, Chinua Achebe

So Long a Letter, Mariama Ba

Dilemma of a Ghost and *Anowa*, Ama Ata Aidoo

A Grain of Wheat, Ngugi wa Thiong'o

The Anchor Book of Modern African Stories, Nadezda Obradovic (Ed.)

Waiting for the Barbarians, J.M. Coetzee

July's People, Nadine Gordimer

Half of a Purple Sun, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Additional Reading:

Course Web Site

National Geographic Magazine September 2005 edition, online (link via course web site)

Other materials as assigned

Recommended Reading:

Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature, Ngugi wa Thiong'o

Myth, Literature, and the African World, Wole Soyinka

Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction, Leela Gandhi

The Africans: A Triple Heritage, Ali A. Mazrui

Orientalism, Edward Said

Course Description: The purpose of this 3-credit course is to explore the written literature of Africa, sampling works created by writers from diverse regions of the continent. A central concern will be the impact of European colonization on African cultures, individuals and human relationships, as depicted and dramatized in literature created (predominantly) in the post-colonial period (understood to mean the period following political independence). Students will conduct individual research that deepens their understanding of developments in African literature and theory, examining, for example, the “Negritude” movement in Francophone Africa, the development of Islamo-African literature in the North or of Settler literature in South Africa, or the experience of African women writers in the postcolonial period.

Course Outcomes, Objectives, and Assessment:

English 345: Voices of Africa is designed to facilitate the following educational outcomes:

- Students will demonstrate their knowledge of literary works created by African writers of diverse times and regions/nations
- Students will demonstrate understanding of how individual works fit into larger literary, cultural, and historical contexts
- Students will demonstrate analytical/critical thinking skills
- Students will demonstrate competency in basic writing skills
- Students will demonstrate knowledge of basic literary terms

To attain these outcomes, English 345 pursues the following course objectives:

- At the completion of the course, students will have knowledge of the literary, cultural and historical influences acting upon writers of diverse African regions and nations
- Students will have knowledge of major works of African literature and their literary, cultural, and historical contexts
- Students will be able to make connections among literary works
- Students will be able to analyze a work of literature, considering both its formal qualities and its various contexts
- Students will be able to write effective literary essays

English 345 achieves its intended educational outcomes through the following forms of assessment:

- Students will demonstrate knowledge of course content through regular contribution to class discussion and by completing the exams

- Students will demonstrate competence in literary analysis through class discussions, completing the exams, writing a research paper, and orally presenting their research
- Students will demonstrate the ability to write clearly and effectively through completion of the research paper and exams

Final Course Grades will be calculated using these percentages:

Exam 1: 15%

Exam 2: 15%

Exam 3: 15%

Participation in Discussion: 20%

Research Paper: 25%

Research Presentation: 10%

Participation & Attendance: In order to derive the full benefit from this class, and to do your part in enhancing your classmates' experience through meaningful contributions to our discussions, you must attend on a regular basis. Two absences are permitted without penalty, but each subsequent absence will lower your final participation grade by one increment (A to A-, for example). Please be aware that attendance is not a synonym for participation; your final participation grade reflects the value (not just the frequency) of your contribution to class discussion, and any decrease due to absences beyond the limit of two represents the opportunity for such contribution that is lost when you do not attend class.

The Research Paper: You will research and write an 8-10 page paper, exploring a topic or an issue related to the development of Africa's written literature. Topics will be suggested in the first weeks of class, and a written statement of your selection must be posted to the Drop Box on the course web site by the date specified on the Schedule (below). You will have the opportunity to confer with me during my office hours or, if this proves impossible, at a mutually convenient time regarding your research project.

Your paper must be turned in via the Drop Box on the course web site according to the Schedule (the file must be in .doc or .rtf format). Papers submitted late will lose one whole letter grade (A to B) for each day beyond the due date.

Papers must adhere to the **Modern Language Association (MLA)** format. All source materials must be appropriate to upper-level course work (scholarly books and articles only).

The Research Presentation: You will share the knowledge you gained and the conclusions you reached in completing your research paper with the class, in an organized and coherent presentation of no more than 10 minutes (and not much less). You must proceed from the assumption that your audience is unfamiliar with the material you are to present, and take care to define terms and provide context where necessary. Discussion subsequent to your presentation will focus on connections to be made between its content and materials we have previously read and discussed.

Exams: There will be three exams (see Schedule for dates); each will include identification and brief essay questions. The first will cover only materials read and discussed by that date; the second and third, in their essay questions, will invite you to make connections linking works recently read to those read in the previous exam period(s).

Honor Philosophy: The Honor Philosophy of Cedar Crest College obliges all students to preserve a learning environment dedicated to personal and academic excellence. This means we all work together to create an atmosphere of trust and support. Respect for the learning environment and for the opinions of others is implicit in this philosophy.

Classroom Environment: You are required to talk in this class. This shouldn't be hard, as we will be discussing some very interesting books, stories, plays, and people. All talking, of course, should be limited to meaningful and informed contributions to these discussions; private conversations conducted at any volume create a disruption of the engaged, attentive, respectful discussion environment we need. Likewise, coming late to class and/or leaving early are not acceptable, and cell phone ring tones must be turned off before class begins. (If you forget and your phone rings in class, either turn it off immediately or leave to answer it and come back to class the next time we meet.) Text messaging during class is prohibited. Laptops are not to be used without the instructor's prior approval. Eating in class is not permitted, though drinking (that is, drinking coffee, tea, water, juice, or soft drinks) is fine. You are encouraged and expected to take notes during lectures and discussions. Children and/or adult guests should not be brought to class without the instructor's prior approval.

Academic Honesty: Plagiarism, whether inadvertent or intentional, is a violation of academic honesty and must be avoided. Everything that appears in your written work must be yours, unless otherwise noted. Phrases, sentences, paragraphs, concepts, ideas, arguments – any material from a source outside yourself must be attributed to its source according to the MLA format. If you fail to provide such attribution, the result is plagiarism. The penalty for this transgression or any other violation of academic honesty is an F for the work at hand and/or for the final course grade, as the instructor decides is appropriate.

E-mail Policy: All e-mail correspondence between students and the instructor must utilize Cedar Crest College e-mail accounts. I will not respond to any email message that originates from a non-Cedar Crest address. **If the email address that appears in your Profile on eCompanion is not your college email address, you are required to change it.**

Special Accommodations: Students with documented disabilities who may need academic accommodations should discuss these needs with their professors during the first two weeks of class. Students with disabilities who wish to request accommodations should contact the Advising Center.

Course Schedule
English 345, Section 00
Spring Semester 2009

Date **Readings for the Day (or Other Class Activity)**

Week 1: Africa: A Continent and its Peoples

M 1/19 Course Introduction. *Africa: The Triple Heritage*

W 1/21 *Defining "Post-Colonial": Who, what, when, where, why?*

Week 2: Things Fall Apart

M 1/26 Twilight and Dawn: Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*

W 1/28 Achebe's Influence: Writers & Scholars on *Things Fall Apart* at 50 [Video]

Weeks 3 & 4: The Voices of Women

M 2/2 Reading under "Course Home" at left: Carolyn Krumah's "**African Women and Literature**," from *West Africa Review*.

A bit of a rebel: Mariama Ba's *So Long a Letter*

W 2/4 To Cape Coast or Elmina?: Ama Ata Aidoo's *Dilemma of a Ghost*

M 2/9 Not every woman: Ama Ata Aidoo's *Anowa*

W 2/11 Exam 1

Weeks 5 and 6: Decolonization and African Identity

M 2/16 The Politics of Language: Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Decolonizing the Mind

W 2/18 Another Twilight, Another Dawn: Ngugi wa Thiongo's *A Grain of Wheat*, Chapters 1 through 10

M 2/23 *A Grain of Wheat*, Chapters 11-end

W 2/25 Power and Peril in Post-Colonial Africa: the examples of Lumumba, Amin and the genocides in Rwanda and Darfur

Research Paper choice must be posted to Drop Box by 9PM Friday, 2/27

Week 7: African Short Fiction

M 3/2 In *The Anchor Book of Modern African Stories*: Foreword by Chinua Achebe; Preface by Nadezda Obradovic.

North African Voices: Berrada, "A Life in Detail" (Morocco); Deb, "The Three Piece Suit" (Tunisia)

W 3/4 North African Voices, continued: Moulessehou, "The Wicked Tongue" (Algeria); Rifaat, "At the Time of the Jasmine" (Egypt); Bakr, "Thirty-One Beautiful Green Trees" (Egypt)

Week 8: Spring Break

M 3/9 No class meeting

W 3/11 No class meeting

Week 9: African Short Fiction Part 2

M 3/16 Central African Voices: Lopez, "The Advance" (Congo); Makuchi, "Poison" (Cameroon); Mokoso, "God of Meme" (Cameroon)

W 3/18 East African Voices: Aboulela, "The Museum" (Sudan); Tuma, "The Waldiba Story" (Ethiopia)

Week 10: African Short Fiction Part 3; Exam 2

M 3/23 Southern African Voices: Lipenga, "Waiting for a Turn" (Malawi, SE Africa); Honwana, "Papa, Snake & I" (Mozambique, SE Africa); Jafta, "The Homecoming" (Namibia, SW Africa)

W 3/25 Exam 2

Weeks 11 & 12: Voices of South Africa

M 3/30 Conscience and Empire: J.M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*

W 4/1 South Africa on Film: scenes from *Amandla!*; *Tsotsi*; *Catch a Fire*

M 4/6 Living and Dying with Apartheid: Nadine Gordimer's *July's People*

W 4/8 In *The Anchor Book of Modern African Stories*: Karodia's "The Woman in Green."

Research Paper must be in Drop Box by 9PM Friday, 4/10

Weeks 13 & 14: Research Presentations

M 4/13 No Class Meeting

W 4/15 Research Presentations

M 4/20 Research Presentations

W 4/22 Achebe's Heir and The Tragedy of Biafra

Week 15: Moving Forward, Looking Back: A New Voice Speaks of Africa

M 4/27 Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Parts 1 & 2

W 4/29 *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Parts 3 & 4

Week 16: Exam 3

M 5/4 Exam 3; Last class meeting.

Class Participation Grading

Grade

Criteria

- A** Regularly demonstrates excellent preparation: has clearly read the assigned material and thoughtfully considered any suggested questions, etc. Brings original thought and perspective to discussion, making significant contributions that expand and extend our collective understanding and appreciation of the literary work. Listens attentively to class members and instructor and responds constructively. Maintains active involvement throughout the semester.
- B** Regularly contributes to class discussions and has clearly read the assigned material, considering any suggested questions, etc. Brings original thought and perspective to discussion. Listens attentively to class members and instructor. Maintains consistent ongoing involvement throughout the semester.
- C** Contributions to discussion show that the assigned materials have been read. Listens attentively to class members and instructor. Level of involvement variable, but can contribute when called upon.
- D** Doesn't often contribute without being called upon. Completion of assigned reading sometimes in doubt. Level of involvement consistently unsatisfactory.
- F** Does not contribute to discussion unless called upon. Contributions when called upon indicate that assigned materials have not been read.