

Spring 2010: English 245/70: Writing the World: The Literature of Africa and India

"Literature, whether handed down by word or mouth or in print, gives us a second handle on reality."
Chinua Achebe

Instructor: Paul Galante
E-mail: pagalant@cedarcrest.edu
Phone: (cell) 484-866-5814

Location: Alumnae Hall, 211
Time: Th. 7-9:30 PM
Office Hours: by appt.

Course Texts

Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*
Wole Soyinka, *Death and the King's Horseman*
Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *The Thing Around Your Neck*
Mirrorwork: 50 Years of Indian Writing, ed. Salman Rushdie and Elizabeth West
Salman Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*

"Books and all forms of writing are terror to those who wish to suppress the truth."--Wole Soyinka

Course Description

This course will explore a range of literature produced by writers from two major geographical areas: Africa (Nigeria) and the Indian subcontinent. The writers come from different backgrounds and areas of the world, but they struggle with similar issues, chief among them being the legacy of colonialism — the lasting artistic, psychological, and political impacts of European colonization and dominance, the challenges of post-independence nationhood and the global challenges of the 21st century. These writings resonate with a range of recurrent themes in their narratives such as—identity, displacement, migration, power, race, exile, gender, nation, cultural continuity, representation, diaspora, globalism, immigration and resistance. The writers we'll explore offer original narrative shapes and good, entertaining stories that represent dynamic cultural experiences, diverse traditions and historical perspectives, while also seriously attempting to represent the radical experiences of individuals, communities or nations impacted by the legacy of colonialism, independence, diaspora, and nationhood. In this course literature, politics, and history will be inextricable for the simple reason that the texts themselves are intensely concerned with social and political issues. As part of our study, we will also be reading a sampling of essays and short stories and viewing films (or film excerpts) by Indian filmmakers Deepa Mehta and Mira Nair that compliment these books in a number of ways.

Course outcomes and objectives Upon successful completion of ENG 245 /70 students will be able to:

- Demonstrate their knowledge of a range of African and Indian literary works and cultural productions.
- Demonstrate how individual works fit into broader literary, historical, and cultural contexts.
- Demonstrate the ability to understand, articulate, and respond to issues and discourses of local, national, global significance represented in African and Indian literature.
- Demonstrate analytical/critical thinking skills in reading, discussing and writing about works of literature.

"We are, as human beings, storytelling animals. We are the only creature on the earth that tells itself stories in order to understand what its life means. Therefore the story is of unusual importance to us, whether we are writers or not. Stories reveal who we are, what we are up to, and why" --Salman Rushdie

Grading: Your grade for the course is based on the number of points that you accumulate, with a total of 1000 points for all of your graded work for the semester.

Reading quizzes	20% or 200 pts.
2 (3-4 page) Response papers:	50% (500 pts. or 250 pts. each)
Class participation /Attendance	30% or 300 pts.

Attendance and Participation: The Cedar Crest Honor Philosophy states that students shall uphold community standards for academic and social behavior to preserve a learning environment dedicated to personal and academic excellence. With this in mind, I believe that conscientious response and sustained inquiry into the works we're exploring is an essential ingredient in this course. Therefore, I expect *regular on-time* attendance and *active* participation in this course. *You are expected to attend all regularly scheduled classes.* This is a *reading intensive*, time concentrated literature course that requires your careful reading and analysis of literary texts. I fully expect *not only* your physical presence, but also that your input, insights, and opinions will be expressed on a regular basis. Missing too many classes *can and will* lower your semester grade. I also expect that you will be attentive and respectful to your classmates and to me during class discussion or film viewing. This means-- ***silence all cell phones, no texting in class, keep non-class related talk between you to a minimum and barring emergencies, try to remain in your seat for the duration of the class period.*** And do not come late to class on a regular basis. Missing too many classes or chronic tardiness *can and will* lower your semester grade. This is strictly business—nothing personal. There may be valid reasons to miss class, such as family emergencies, illness, job related activities, or unavoidable commitments to officially sponsored college activities, and if you miss class for such reasons, you should inform me in advance.

Response Papers: You may write on *any* 2 of the books, stories or films that we'll be exploring in this course. The response papers (3-4 pages) are a space for you to think through your reading, develop ideas about a text and offer your personal opinions and reflections. You may write about *any* issue that engages you from a text. The idea is that you write an engaged, critical analysis or commentary, not just generalities. This is not a space for you to *simply* say that you liked or disliked a work. The goal is to form your responses as thoughtful, written, informed ideas, rather than *simple* reactions. Response papers will be principally evaluated on your engagement with the text and the facility with which you support your observation with specific references. The paper should have a clear central claim with textual support, and a well-organized, thoughtful, sustained argument in a mature and effective style of writing. *Always* save a copy of the paper you submit; either a paper or disc copy. Format your document for efficiency and readability in 12 point, standard font (Times New Roman), double-spaced with 1-inch margins on all sides. Document your papers using MLA-style parenthetical citations with a works cited page (if you use any outside sources). If you are unfamiliar with this method, please consult the Library website for MLA citation guidelines.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism: You are bound by the College's Honor Code and its policies on academic integrity, which bar you from presenting another person's work or ideas as your own, allowing someone to write an assignment or part of an assignment for you, or failing to properly acknowledge source materials. I recommend that you familiarize yourself with the principles of academic integrity, the definition of plagiarism, the particulars of the Honor Code, and the potential consequences of violating the Code. Be especially aware of the definition and consequences of plagiarism. If the definition, potential sanctions, or the means to avoid plagiarism remains unclear to you, please consult me.

Students with Disabilities or Special Needs: Students with documented disabilities or special needs, who require accommodations for this course, must first contact Academic Services. Please do this as soon as possible so that we may discuss your needs and the recommended accommodations.

Stay in Communication: If for any reason you need to contact me, or if you have any problems that may affect your course work, please get in touch with me **as soon as possible**. Keep in touch by e-mail, phone or make an appointment to meet before or after class. If inclement weather threatens to close the campus, refer to the Cedar Crest Inclement weather hotline (610-606-4629) for information on campus closing. Since many of us commute to Cedar Crest, I may need to cancel class for weather related reasons (snow/ice) even though the College may remain open. So, please check your e-mail regularly, especially when bad weather is forecast. I will also inform you in my e-mail (on the weather related cancellation day) if there are any changes in the syllabus (outside of class work, discussion board etc.) for the cancelled class. Bottom-line: check your e-mail regularly before class for messages about the course.

“It was Grace who, driving past Agueke . . . would become haunted by the image of a destroyed village and would go to London and to Paris and to Onicha, sifting through moldy files in archives, reimagining the lives and smells of her grandmother’s world, for the book she would write called *Pacifying with Bullets: A Reclaimed History of Southern Nigeria*” –Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Course Schedule (*All dates indicate when assigned material is due; syllabus is subject to change*)

Thurs. Jan.21 Introduction to the course and policies Short story by Bessie Head (handout)

Thurs Jan. 28 Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* 1-125

Thurs Feb. 4 *Things Fall Apart* 129-209

Thurs. Feb. 11 Wole Soyinka *Death and the King’s Horseman*

Thurs. Feb. 18 Gita Mehta “Snakes and ladders” (handout); *Mirrorwork*; Nehru, "Tryst with Destiny";
Nayantara Sahgal, "With Pride and Prejudice" Saadat Hasan Manto, "Toba Tek Singh"

Thurs Feb. 25 *Mirrorwork* selections: G.V. Desani, “All about H. Hatter” Nirad Chaudhuri, “My Birthplace” Shashi Tharoor, “A Raj Quaret” Bapsi Sidhwa, “Ranna’s Story” Satyajit Ray “Big Bill”
Film: *Earth* pt. 1

Thurs., March 4 *Mirrorwork* selections: Upamanyu Chatterjee, “The Assassination of Indira Gandhi”
Amit Chaudhuri, "Sandeep’s Visit" Amitav Ghosh, "Nashawy" Githa Hariharan “The remains of the feast”
Gita Mehta, “The Teacher’s Story” Film: *Earth* pt. 2

Thurs., March 11 No class Spring break

Thurs., March 18 Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children* 1-133

Thurs., March 25 *Midnight’s Children* 137-237

Thurs., April 1 *Midnight’s Children* 238-393

Thurs., April 8 *Midnight’s Children* 397-533

Thurs., April 15 Jhumpa Lahiri: “The Third and Final Continent”(handout) ; *In-class Film: The Namesake*

Thurs., April 22 Adichie, *The Thing Around Your Neck* (selections)

Thurs., April 29 *The Thing Around Your Neck* (selections)

All response papers final due date