

**Course Title:** African Women Speak  
**Course Number:** V29.9666.001  
**Instructor:** SUTHERLAND, Esi  
**Activity Type:** Lecture  
**Credit Hours:** 4  
**Semester:** Fall & Spring

NOTE: this course is open to all students for elective credit. Comparative Literature majors in Track II (Literary and Cultural Studies) may count this course toward one of their non-core major requirements.

Course Description:

This course shall focus on the place of women in the literary tradition, an issue that is very current in the discourse on the literature of Africa and its Diaspora. Women writers have emerged at the forefront of the movement to restore African women to their proper place in the study of African history, society and culture.

In this process, the need to recognize the women as literary artists in the oral mode has also been highlighted. Furthermore, the work of women writers is gaining increasing significance and deserves to be examined within the context of canon formation. Authors and texts, focusing on such topics as the heritage of women's literature, images of women in the works of male writers; women in traditional and contemporary society; women and the African family in the literary tradition; literature as a tool for self-definition and self-liberation; African women writers; female expressions of cultural nationalism in the Caribbean; female novelists of the African continent; Black women dramatists; the poetry of African women.

**Requirements:**

Students will be required to have a thorough familiarity with assigned reading. They will also be expected to prepare a 10-15 page research paper which will be presented in class. There will be a final examination.

**Course Outline:**

**Week 1. Being African and Being Woman – distilling the experience**

- Alice Walker; *In Search of Our Mother's Garden*
- Ama Ata Aidoo; "The African Woman Today"
- Christine Oppong (Ed); *Female and Male in West Africa*

**Week 2. Feminism – The theoretical foundations.**

- Beverly Guy-Sheftall (Ed). *Words of Fire : An Anthology of African American Feminist Thought*
- Ifi Amadiume; *Male Daughters, Female Husbands, Sex and Gender in African Society.*

**Week 3. African Women's Literary Culture through the Ages.**

- Stephanie Newell; *The Literary Culture of Colonial Ghana*
- Charlotte H. Bruner; *Unwinding Threads*
- Margaret Busby; *Daughters of Africa*
- M. J. Daymond et al.(Eds.); *Women Writing Africa- The Southern Region.*

**Week 4. African Women's Literary Culture through the Ages, cont.**

- Selected oral texts
- Paule Marshall ; *Praise song for the Widow*

**Week 5. The encounter with Europe and the Literary world of the African Woman.**

- Women's Studies Quarterly Volume XXV. No. 3 & 4, Fall/Winter 1997
- M. J. Daymond et al (Eds) *Women Writing Africa- The Southern Region.*  
Sheila S. Walker (Ed) *African Roots/American Cultures*

**Week 6. Nationalism in the writing of African Women**

- Stephanie Newell; *The Literary Culture of Colonial Ghana*
- Esi Sutherland-Addy, Aminata Diaw; *Women Writing Africa, West Africa and the Sahel*
- Mabel Dove Danquah; *The Torn Veil and other stories.*

**Week 7. The Poetic Impulse**

- Karin Barber; *I Could Speak Until Tomorrow*
- Kwabena Nketia; *Funeral Dirges of the Akan People*
- Selected texts by Catherine Acholonu, Tanella Boni , Abena Busia

**Week 8. African Women and the Narrative Culture**

- Harold Scheub, *The Xhosa Ntsomi*
- Christiane Owusu Sarpong (ed), *A Trilingual Anthology of Akan Folktales Vols I andII*

**Week 9. Selection of Prose Works**

- Gordimer; Dangarembga, Bessie Head, Tsitsi Mariama, Zora Neal Huston, Alice Walker, Toni Morrison, Jamaica Kincaid
- Oladele Taiwa, *Female Novelists of Modern Africa*
- Charlotte H. Brunner (Ed) *Unwinding Threads. Writing By Women in Africa*

**Week 10. Women's Drama and Theatre.**

- Efua Sutherland, *Edufa and The Marriage of Anansewa*
- Ama Ata Aidoo, *Anowa*
- Zulu Sofola, *Wedlock of the Gods*

- Gay Wilentz; *Binding Cultures*
- *African Theatre (3) Women In African Theatre*

## **Weeks 11 and 12. Presentation of Research Papers**

## **Week 13 & 14. Revision & Final Exam**

### **Further Reading**

Aidoo, Ama Ata. 2002. *The Girl Who Can and Other Stories*. Johannesburg, South Africa:

Heinemann.

—————.1991. *Changes: A Love story* sub-Saharan Publishers Ltd. Accra, Ghana.

Amadiume, Ifi. 1987 *Male Daughters and Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society*; London, Zed Books ltd:

—————. 1997. *Reinventing Africa, Matriarchy, and Religion & Culture*. London & New York: Zed Books.

Arndt, Susan. *The Dynamics of African Feminism: Defining and Classifying African Feminist Literatures*. Asmara, Eritrea: Africa World Press Inc.

Awe, Bolanle (Ed). 1992. *Nigerian Women in Historical Perspective* Lagos: Sankore Publishers.

Bádèjò Deidre L. 1996. *Òsun Sèègèsí. The Elegant Deity of Wealth, Power and Femininity*. Asmara, Eritrea: Africa World Press.

—————. . 1989. “The Goddess Òsun as a Paradigm for African Feminist Criticism” in *Sage*, Vol. VI, No. 1

—————. .1996. “Osun Seegesi: The Deified Power of African Women and the Social Ideal” in *Dialogue & Alliance* Vol. 10, No. 1. Spring/Summer

Bame, Kwabena N. *Profiles in African Traditional Popular Culture: Consensus and Conflict*. New York: Clear Type Press Inc.

Bobo, Jacqueline. 1995. *Black women As Cultural Readers*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Bruner, Charlotte H. 1994. *Unwinding Threads. Writing by Women in Africa*. Ibadan: Heinemann.

Busby, Margaret (Ed.). 1992. *Daughters of Africa: An International Anthology of Words and Writings by Women of African Descent from the Ancient Egyptian to the Present.*, Vintage

Coussy, Denise (ed), April-June 2000, *Notre Librairie: Revue des Littératures du sud Littératures du Nigeria et du Ghana*, No. 14, Paris, France: adpf.

Stella and Frank Chipasula (Eds.). 1995. *African Women’s Poetry*. Ibadan:

Heinemann.

Daymond M. J. et al. (Eds.). 2003. *Women Writing Africa. The Southern Region*. New York: Feminist Press.

Dolphyne, Florence Abena, 1991. *The Emancipation of Women: An African Perspective*, Accra, Ghana: University Press 1991.

Ferera, Lisette. 2000. *Women Build Africa: Musee de la Civilization*, Quebec, Canada.

Gates, Louis Henry Jr. 1984. *Black Literature and Literary Theory*. New York and London: Methuen.

Grosz-Ngate, Maria and Omari H. Kokole (Eds.). 1997. *Gendered Encounters: Challenging cultural Boundaries and social Hierarchies in Africa*". New York and London: Routledge.

Hale, Thomas A., "*Griots and Griottes: Mothers of Words and Music*", Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Hill-Lubin, Mildred A. "Putting Africa into the curriculum through African literature" in Anne V. Adams and Janis A. Mayes (Eds). *Mapping Intersections: African Literature and Africa's Development*. Asmara, Eritrea: Africa World Press.

Hurston, Zora Neale. 1990. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. New York: Harper & Row.

—————. 1990. *Mules and Men*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers.

Insaidoo, Margaret and Sam Bernice. 2003. "A Quick Guide to Violence against Women and Children and Property Rights of Spouses". Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative.

Jones, Eldred Durosimi, Palmer, Eustace and Jones Marjorie. 1987. *Women in African Literature Today*. London: James Currey; Trenton N.J. Africa World Press.

Kilson, Marion. "Women and African Literature" in *Journal of African Studies*.

Kolawole, Mary E. Modupe. 1999. *Zulu Sofola: Her works*. Nigeria: Caltop Publications.

Kumah, Carolyn. 2000. "African Women and Literature" in *West Africa Review*.  
[www.westafricareview.com/war/vol2.1/kumah.html](http://www.westafricareview.com/war/vol2.1/kumah.html)

Larrier, Renée. "Discourses on the Self: Gender and identity in Francophone African women's autobiographies" in Anne V. Adams and Janis A. Mayes (Eds). *Mapping Intersections: African Literature and Africa's Development*. Asmara, Eritrea: Africa World Press.

Marshall, Paule. 1983. *Praisesong for the Widow*. New York: Penguin Books.

Mugo, Micere Githae. "Women and Books" in Anne V. Adams and Janis A. Mayes (eds). *Mapping Intersections: African Literature and Africa's Development*. Asmara, Eritrea: Africa World Press.

Newell, Stephanie. 1997. *Writing African Women: Gender, Popular Culture and Literature in West Africa*. London and New Jersey: Zed Books.

*African Roots/American cultures: Africa in the Creation of the Americas*. Maryland:

Rowman Littlefield publishers, Inc

- N'diaye, A. Raphael. 1986. *Archives Culturelles du Senegal: La Place De la Femme Dans Les Rites Au Sénégal*. Dakar-Abidjan-Lome: Les Nouvelles Editions Africaines,
- Anne V. Adams and Janis A. Mayes (eds). *Mapping Intersections: African Literature and Africa's Development*. Asmara, Eritrea: Africa World Press.
- marital Loneliness and Intimacy” in *Sage*, Vol. VI, No. 1
- Okpewho, Isidore. 19883. *Myth in Africa: A study of its Aesthetic and Cultural relevance*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Oyewumi, Oyeronke. 1997. *The Invention of women: Making An African Sense of Western Gender Discourses*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press
- Opoku-Agyemang, Naana Jane. “Gender-Role Perceptions in the Akan Folktale” in *Research in African Literatures*.
- Rice, Philip and Patricia Waugh (Eds.). 1996. *Modern Literary Theory*. A Reader (Third Edition). London: Arnold.
- Taiwo, Oladele. 1984. *Female Novelists of Modern Africa*. London: Macmillan Publishers.
- Terborg-Penn, Rosalyn; Sharon Harley and Andrea Rusling Benton. 1987. “*Women In Africa and the African Diaspora*”. Washington D.C: Howard University Press.
- Vansina, Jan. 1985, *Oral Tradition as History*. Madison, Wisconsin, U.S.A: The University of Wisconsin Press,
- Wilentz, Gay. 1992. *Binding cultures: Black Women Writers in Africa and Diaspora*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Walker, Sheila S. 2001. “Are You Hip to the Jive? (Re)Writing/Righting the Pan-American Discourse” in Sheila S. Walker (ed). *African Roots/American cultures: Africa in the Creation of the Americas*. Maryland: Rowman Littlefield publishers, Inc.
- 2001. “Everyday Africa in New Jersey: Wondering and Wanderings in the African Diaspora” in Sheila S. Walker (ed). *African Roots/American cultures: Africa in the Creation of the Americas*. Maryland: Rowman Littlefield publishers, Inc.