

Kofi Anyidoho

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Colonialism and the Rise of Modern African Literature

Thursday, 12:05 – 3:00 pm

Location: Academic Center, Room 1

No prerequisite

Description:

The use of European languages as the dominant medium of Modern African Literature is perhaps one of the most enduring legacies of the colonial experience in Africa. With colonialism as an underlying common factor, the course explores the works of a select number of African writers of the so-called Anglophone, Francophone, and Lusophone traditions. It conceptualizes their works as attempts to come to terms with and possibly subvert a largely hegemonic European tradition by examining their writings within the framework of the colonial encounter and its aftermath. We shall consider recurring critical issues found in several literary works written out of Africa's encounter with colonialism, issues such as reassertion/reassessments of ancestral African values and traditions, adaptations & transformations old ways of life to changing circumstances, the crisis of cultures in contact/conflict, ethnic and new national identities, the politics of language in African literature, literature as a tool for socio-political transformation, creative responses to slavery and the Diaspora, dilemmas and ambiguities of modernity in Africa, resistance traditions in African Literature, etc. Class discussions, oral presentations and written assignments shall flow from a close, critical reading of texts by each student.

Students will gain a deep appreciation for contributions of creative writers to critical portrayals of Africa's historical and contemporary reality in the context of world history.

Students will sharpen their analytical skills through close readings and vigorous discussions of the selected texts.

Improvement in students' ability to write good scholarly papers.

- Regular class attendance & full participation in discussions
- 2-page critical responses to any 8 texts, beginning from 2nd week, to be submitted to the instructor and circulated to all others in the class prior to discussions of the texts in class. Submission shall be no later than 12:00 noon on Tuesdays, ie a day before the class meets on Wednesday.
- a 4-page paper based on individual research, to be presented in class at mid-term.
- a 7-9 page Term Paper.
- Failure to submit or fulfill any required course component results in failure of the class.

Using other people's work (whether words, ideas, images or sound recordings) without giving them due credit is a serious academic crime, whether it is done intentionally or unintentionally. Any instances of plagiarism in your work will be reported to the Director.

READING LIST:

Colonialism and the Rise of Modern African Literature

- *Things Fall Apart*: Chinua Achebe
- *Death and the King's Horseman*: Wole Soyinka
- *Foriwa & "New Life at Kyerefaso"*: Efua T. Sutherland
- *The Girl Who Can & Other Stories*: Ama Ata Aidoo
- *Faceless*: Amma Darko
- *Ama: A Story of the Atlantic Slave Trade*: Manu Herbstein
- *Queen Pokou: concerto for a sacrifice*: Veronique Tadjo
- *God's Bits of Wood*: Sembene Ousmane
- *Selected Poetry & Prose*: Leopold S. Senghor
- Selections from Portuguese-Speaking Poets:
Agostinho Neto, Antonio Jacinto & Noemia de Sousa

- The Promise of Hope: Kofi Awoonor
- Liberation Poems & Songs: Kunene, Makeba, Kgositsile, Masekela
- *Dreams in a Time of War*: Ngugi wa Thiong'o
- *Who Is Afraid of Ngugi wa Thiong'o*: Manthia Diawara (Film Director)
- *Cape Coast Castle*: Kwadwo Opoku-Agyemang
- Spoken Word Poetry : A Dialogue: Chief Abdul Moomen & Nana Asaase
- *Heritage Africa* [Film]: Kwaw Ansah

Critical Texts:

- *Decolonising the Mind*: Ngugi wa Thiong'o
- *"The Balance of Stories"*: Chinua Achebe
- *Towards Colonial Freedom*: Kwame Nkrumah
- African Perspectives on Colonialism: Adu Boahen

[Session 1].

General Overview & Intro to African Literatures

- *Decolonising the Mind*: Ngugi wa Thiong'o

[Session 2]

"Where the rain began to beat Africa": Achebe and the Colonial Narrative

- *Things Fall Apart*: Chinua Achebe
- *"The Balance of Stories"*: Chinua Achebe

[Session 3]

Heroic Dance Across the Gulf of Transition: A Tragic Reversal

- *Death and the King's Horseman*: Wole Soyinka

[Session 4]

Literature and Socio-Economic Transformation

- *Foriwa & "New Life at Kyerefaso"*: Efua T. Sutherland

Session 5:

A Historical Novel on the Atlantic Slave Trade

- *Ama: A Story of the Atlantic Slave Trade*: Manu Herbstein

[2-page Response Paper due]

[Reading and class discussions to benefit from students' earlier visit to Elmina and Cape Coast Slave Castles]

Session 6

Literature and the African Liberation Struggle I

- *The Promise of Hope* Kofi Awoonor

Special arrangements will be made for this class session to be held in Nyidevu House, Kofi Awoonor's Residence in West Legon. A screening of a couple of video clips. Brief Dialogue with any member of Awoonor's family available. [Sika, Afetsi, Dr. Koku Awoonor]

- *Towards Colonial Freedom:* Kwame Nkrumah

Session 7

The Other Side of the Story: Ama Ata Aidoo and HerStory.

- *The Girl Who Can and Other Stories.* Ama Ata Aidoo

Week 8

SPRING BREAK/MID-TERM (No class)

[Mid-Term Short Paper due.]

Session 9

Dialogue with a GUEST WRITER: Amma Darko

- *Faceless* Amma Darko

[Read **Faceless** carefully and be ready with a few questions for dialogue with the Author]

Session 10

Literature and the African Liberation Struggle II

- Liberation Poems & Songs Kunene, Makeba, Kgositsile, Masekela

An interactive session focusing on the role of the arts—especially poetry, drama, music, fiction—in the fight against Apartheid. [Texts, Audio & Video Recordings]

Session 11

Negritude and French Colonialism:

- *Selected Poetry & Prose:* Leopold S. Senghor

[Response papers due]

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[Click and enter co-curricular activities, etc.]

Session 12

Literary Perspectives/Portraits of Portuguese Colonialism

- Selections from Portuguese-Speaking Poets:
Agostinho Neto, Antonio Jacinto & Noemia de Sousa

[Response papers due]

Session 13

- Ngugi wa Thiong'o: **Dreams in a Time of War**
- Manthia Diawara: **Who Is Afraid of Ngugi wa Thiong'o?** [Documentary Film]

[Response papers due]

[The Writers Project Monthly Reading at the Goethe Institute]

Session 14

- *God's Bits of Wood*: Sembene Ousmane

[Response paper due]

Session 15

A Tragic Portrait of an OBE (Obedient Boy of the Empire)

- *Heritage Africa* [Film]: Kwaw Ansah

Note that laptops are allowed in class for taking notes ONLY. Please refrain from using them for email or social networking during class. Mobile phones should be put on silence during class.

Your Instructor

Kofi Anyidoho, well-known internationally for his poetry, is a professor of Literature in the English Department at the University of Ghana, Legon. He has taught African Literature, Comparative Literature and Creative Writing for many years at UG and as a distinguished visiting professor in many US universities, including Columbia, Cornell, Northwestern, Swarthmore College and Colorado College. He has held several positions, including Chair of the Department of English, Director of the School of Performing Arts, 1st Occupant of the Kwame Nkrumah Chair in African Studies, all at the University of Ghana, Legon, and is a former President of the US based African Literature Association.