

PAS 344: LITERATURES OF THE CARIBBEAN AND AFRICAN EXPERIENCE

FALL 2009
Department of Pan-African Studies
California State University, Northridge
T/TH 12:30-1:45pm
Sierra Hall 287

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Hours: T/TH 2-3pm

Course Description:

PAS 344 involves critical analyses of specific cultural issues from an international perspective, cutting across boundaries of geography, historical period, genre, and/or discipline. In this course we will conduct comparative studies of African and Afro-Diasporic literatures from the African continent and the Caribbean, focusing on the relationship of those works to local, transnational, and postcolonial struggles for self-determination, equality, and human rights. The analysis and critique of literature from the “Black Atlantic” in the form of novels, essays, short stories, and poetry provide ideal locations to interrogate the historical and contemporary formations of African and Diasporic identities and cultures, while also illustrating the intersectionality of race, gender, class, sexuality, colonialism, nationalism, and migration and their effects on *contested* Black solidarity. Moreover, by employing an interdisciplinary approach to literary studies, including cultural, musical, filmic and historical methods of inquiry, we will gain a better understanding of the multifaceted issues facing people of African descent. Lastly, the course equips students with the reading, writing, and critical thinking skills necessary to forge a deeper appreciation of Black Atlantic literature, as well as new definitions of identity and representation that are not simply created and controlled by national elites, but rather those that are produced by diverse peoples of African descent from all sectors and regions of the globe.

Required Texts:

- (1) Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (Anchor Books, 1994 c. 1958)
- (2) Edwidge Danticat, *The Farming of Bones* (Penguin Books, 1998)
- (3) Paule Marshall, *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* (Vintage, 1969)
- (4) Flora Nwapa, *One is Enough* (African World Press, 1995)
- (5) Sembene Ousmane, *Xala* (Lawrence Hill Books, 1974)
- (6) Nelly Rosario, *Song of the Water Saints* (Pantheon Books, 2002)
- (7) Yvonne Vera, *Opening Spaces* (Heinemann, 1999)

The Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) and Objectives of PAS 344:

1. Develop an understanding of the cultural-historical and socio-political perspectives of African and Caribbean experiences, which includes comprehension of key concepts and fundamental literature in the canon of African and Caribbean letters.
2. Gain knowledge of the diverse cultural, political, and historical contexts of Africans and people from the Caribbean.
3. Learn appropriate techniques in interdisciplinary research design and methodology to examine various relevant aspects of Pan African Studies.

ASSESSMENT

Participation/Quizzes	50
Discussion Leaders	40
In-Class Writings/Blog	60
Mid-Term	50
Final Paper	<u>100</u>
Total Points	300

Points Grading Scale:

A = 93% or Higher	C+ = 77-79%
A- = 90-92%	C = 73-76%
B+ = 87-89%	C- = 70-72%
B = 83-86%	D = 60-69%
B- = 80-82%	F = 59% or lower

Course Participation/Attendance/Quizzes: Active participation is vital to your success in this course, thus regular attendance and thorough academic work are expected of each and every student enrolled. Your class participation and final grade will depend greatly on your contribution to the class discussion of each assigned text (**it is mandatory that you purchase them at the beginning of the semester**); and, on occasion, I may give quizzes covering the reading material. In addition, your grade will be negatively affected if you miss more than one class in the semester; for each absence after that it will be lowered by 1/2 a letter grade. *If for any reason you must miss class due to illness or personal problems, please contact me in advance.*

Assignments: In PAS 344, you will lead discussions of the readings and films *at least once* this semester; write journal entries/reading responses and post them to a course web log (blog); write one mid-term essay (6-12 pages); and one (12-15 page) final paper.

Discussion Leaders: Throughout the semester, students will lead class discussions. Discussant groups should meet in person or via email well before class time, and be prepared to offer a *critique* and *interpretation* of the week's readings and films (not just a summary). The group should also formulate at least three critical discussion questions on which the class can focus.

Weekly Journal/Blog Entry: At the beginning of each Thursday class meeting, I will present the class with writing prompts that explore topics related to the readings and films. These topics will engage you in critical thinking and analysis. Your journal entries/responses should also be posted to a course blog each week and I will evaluate them based upon their content and mechanics.

Mid-Term: On Thursday, November 5, 2009 you will receive mid-term take home essay questions that will engage a number of the topics/themes that we will have discussed up to this point. It is important that you go beyond our class discussions and identify specific examples in the readings and films that support your responses. In other words, you must quote directly from the books and films. The exam consists of five questions, and you will be asked to answer three. The essay is due the following Thursday, November 12 at 12:30pm.

Final Paper: Your final paper can be written in the form of a literary analysis, author's biography, or poetry explication that thoroughly addresses a number of the issues discussed in this course. For the literary analysis, you must pick two books we have discussed in class and analyze common themes in each. Similarly, for the poetry analysis, you must choose at least three poems and examine them in complete detail considering the content, form, and context in which the poetry was written. The biography must have at least five secondary sources and ample primary source material (we'll discuss this in class). *An abstract of your final topic is due to me by Tuesday, November 17, 2009 and the final is due on Thursday, December 10, 2009.*

Presentations: You will have 10 minutes to present your final paper topic to the class. Prepare your presentation by knowing what you will say and being able to say it within the time allowed. Each presentation will be followed by a question-and-answer period, giving you a chance to receive critical feedback from your classmates, as well as provide additional details as your audience requests.

Paper Format: Formal papers and their drafts should be typed and double-spaced (no larger than 12pt. font) with one-inch margins, according to MLA format. You are responsible for correct grammar, spelling, and typography. Pages must be numbered, and your name should appear on each page. You will submit all formal papers via “turnitin.com” on the assigned date. (I will only accept late papers at my discretion and they will automatically be reduced by at least one letter grade.)

Policy on Plagiarism: According to the CSUN Policy on Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty, “The maintenance of academic integrity and quality education is the responsibility of each student within this university and the California State University system. Cheating or plagiarism in connection with an academic program at a campus is listed in Section 41301, Title 5, California Code of Regulations, as an offense for which a student may be expelled, suspended, or given a less severe disciplinary sanction. Academic dishonesty is an especially serious offense and diminishes the quality of scholarship and defrauds those who depend upon the integrity of the campus programs. Such dishonesty includes:

A. CHEATING (see catalog for details)

B. FABRICATION (see catalog for details)

C. FACILITATING ACADEMIC DISHONESTY (see catalog for details)

D. PLAGIARISM: Intentionally or knowingly representing the words, ideas, or work of another as one’s own in any academic exercise” (pp. 553-554)

NOTES ON BUDGET CUTS, TUITION INCREASES, and WORK FURLOUGHS: For the past 10 years the CSU system has suffered chronic under-funding. This year, because of the state economic crisis, the budget cuts are draconian, \$584 million, the worst ever in decades. The CSU administration is attempting to manage these cuts by dramatically increasing student fees and by furloughing almost all University employees, including faculty, staff, and administrators. A furlough means mandatory un-paid days off for employees; there are 18 of these this year for the faculty, nine per semester.

For students this means that on some days the campus will be closed. The library will have shorter hours and many campus support services will be decreased or eliminated. It will, for example, be more difficult to get signatures to meet deadlines. Additionally, many classes you need have been cut from the class schedule or are full. These cuts have consequences, especially for you.

As a professor, the days when I’m forced to cancel class because of the furloughs are marked on your syllabus below. These days off are not holidays; they are a very concrete example of how budget cuts have consequences for education.

So let’s talk today about what is happening, after you leave class you can stop by the tent on the quad this week during lunch hour to tell your stories of how these cuts effect students and

when you ask yourself what can you do - get involved (Students for a Quality education is one way – they will be at the tent).

Please Note: This Syllabus Is Subject To Change At Professor's Discretion

COURSE SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

WEEK 1

Aug. 25 & 27

T: Syllabus Overview/Introductions

Purchase Texts at Matador Bookstore or via the Internet

TH: Writing Prompt One

Discuss the Concepts of Diaspora, Translation, Transnationality, Colonialism, Post-Coloniality, Orality and Literacy, and Cultural Studies

Read: "Overview of African Literature" and **Afolayan**, "The Question of a Post-Colonial Culture: Language, Ideology and Cultural Essentialism" (online)

Post: Blog #1

WEEK 2

Sept. 1 & 3

T: Discuss "Overview of African Literature" and articles

Read: Begin Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* part 1 (chapters 1-13)

TH: Writing Prompt Two

Close Reading – Selection from *Things Fall Apart*

Read: Continue Achebe part 2 (chapters 14-19)

Post: Blog #2

WEEK 3

Sept. 8 & 10

T: No Formal Class Meeting

Read: Finish Achebe part 3 (chapter 20-25)

TH: Writing Prompt Three

Discussion Leaders – *Things Fall Apart*

Read: **Okpewho**, "Home, Exile, and the Space In Between" (online)

Post: Blog #3

WEEK 4

Sept. 13 & 17

T: View: *Xala* (1975)

Discuss Post- and Neo-Colonial legacies in the works of contemporary African writers

Read: Begin Ousmane, *Xala* (pp. 1-47)

TH: Writing Prompt Four
View: Continue *Xala*
Read: Finish *Xala* (pp. 47-103)
Post: Blog #4

WEEK 5
Sept. 22 & 24

T: Discussion Leaders – *Xala*
Read: **Nnaemeka**, “Feminism, Rebellious Women, and Cultural Boundaries” (online)

TH: Writing Prompt Five
Discuss feminist critiques of colonialism and the marginalization of women in African literature
Read: Begin Nwapa, *One is Enough* (chapters 1-4)
Post: Blog #5

WEEK 6
Sept. 29 & Oct. 1

T: Close Reading – Selection from *One is Enough*
Read: Continue *One is Enough* (chapters 5-8)

TH: Writing Prompt Six
Read: Finish *One is Enough* (chapter 9-13)
Post: Blog #6

WEEK 7
Oct. 6 & 8

T: Discussion Leaders – *One is Enough*
Read: **Nnaemeka**, “From Orality to Writing: African Women Writers and the (Re)Inscription of Womanhood” (online)

TH: Writing Prompt Seven
View: *Faat Kine* (2000)
Read: Begin Vera, *Opening Spaces* (pp. 1-57)
Post: Blog #7

WEEK 8
Oct. 13 & 15

T: View: Continue *Faat Kine* (2000)
Read: Continue *Opening Spaces* (pp. 58- 90)

TH: Writing Prompt Eight
Discuss relationship of film to African women’s literature
Read: Continue *Opening Spaces* (pp. 91-147)
Post: Blog #8

WEEK 9
Oct. 20 & 22

T: Close Reading – Selection from *Opening Spaces*
Read: Finish *Opening Spaces* (pp. 148-180)

TH: Writing Prompt Nine
Discussion Leaders – *Opening Spaces*
Read: **Pizarro**, “Reflections on the Historiography of Caribbean Literature” (online)
Post: Blog #9

WEEK 10
Oct. 27 & 29

T: Discuss the History of Caribbean Literature
Read: Begin Marshall, *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* (Book 1, pp. 3-92)

TH: Writing Prompt Ten
View: *Burn* (1969)
Read: Continue *The Chosen Place* (Book 2, pp. 95-263)
Post: Blog #10

WEEK 11
Nov. 3 & 5

T: View: Continue *Burn*
Read: Continue *The Chosen Place* (Book 3, 267-339)

TH: Writing Prompt Eleven
Close Reading – Selection of *The Chosen Place*
Read: Continue *The Chosen Place* (Book 4, pp. 343-472)
Post: Blog #11
Begin Take Home Midterm

WEEK 12
Nov. 10 & 12

T: No Formal Class
Continue Working on Midterm
Read: Begin Danticat, *The Farming of Bones* (pp. 1-99)

Midterm Due at 12:30pm (November 12)
Writing Prompt Twelve
TH: Discussion Leaders – *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People*
Read: Continue *The Farming of Bones* (pp. 100-243)
Post: Blog #12

WEEK 13
Nov. 17 & 19

T: Close Reading – Selection from *The Farming of Bones*
Read: Finish *The Farming of Bones* (pp. 244-310)
FINAL PAPER ABSTRACT DUE

TH: Writing Prompt Thirteen
Discussion Leaders – *The Farming of Bones*
Read: Rosario, *Song of the Water Saints* (pp. 7-127)
Post: Blog #13

WEEK 14
Nov. 23-27

T: Read: Continue *Song of the Water Saints* (pp. 128-188)

TH: NO CLASS – Indigenous People’s Day

WEEK 15
Dec. 1 & 3

T: Presentations of Research Papers
Read: Finish, *Song of Water Saints* (pp. 189-242)

TH: Discussion Leader(s) – *Song of Water Saints*
Read: For Final Paper
Assignment: Work on Final Paper

WEEK 16
Dec. 8 & 10

T: Presentations of Research Papers
Course Wrap-Up
Assignment: Work on Final Paper

TH: Final Paper due by 2:45pm