ENG 4850-001: Studies in Third World Literature: Writing a Nation

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ENG 4850: Studies in Third World Literatures—Writing a Nation: From Apartheid to Democracy in South African Literature

Course Description: This course charts the role of literature in ending the white-minority rule of state terrorism called apartheid (segregation) and in establishing democracy in South Africa. We shall begin with some contexts in post-colonialism, the history of South Africa and the rise of resistance, reading selected essays by Steve Biko from I Write What I Like (1978), watching a film about the forced removals in Cape Town’s District Six, reading Zakes Mda’s evocation of The Immorality Act of 1949 and The Terrorism Act of 1967 to convey the consequences and implications of such state terrorism and Nadine Gordimer’s vision of potential revolution in July’s People (1981). We will continue by looking at national transformation in the aftermath of majority rule in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings through selections from Antjie Krog’s Country of My Skull: Guilt, Sorrow, and the Limits of Forgiveness in the New South Africa (1999), Achmat Dangor’s novel Bitter Fruit (2005) and Sindwe Magona’s Mother to Mother (1998). We shall conclude by considering the challenges of coming to terms with a legacy of repression and resistance with readings of J. M. Coetzee’s Disgrace (1999) and Kopano Matlwa’s Coconut (2007).

When possible, I shall supplement readings with video excerpts or selections to evoke the place and people of South Africa; much of the contextual work will continue through brief topics and ancillary readings throughout the term. We shall explore, too, parallels and differences between American and South African apartheid as may be useful.

Course Format and Requirements: The course format will be lecture and discussion, and course requirements will be participation (20%)—consisting of discussion, quizzes and written responses to reading assignments; two essays (4–6 pages, 20%; and 10–12 pages, 40%); and a midterm examination (20%); or grading by contract.

Course Texts:

Primary readings:

Steve Biko, I Write What I Like (1978)
J. M. Coetzee, Disgrace (1999)
Achmat Dangor, Bitter Fruit (2005)
Nadine Gordimer, July’s People (1981)
Sindwe Magona, Mother to Mother (1998)
Kopano Matlwa, Coconut (2007)

Secondary readings:

Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts
Roger Beck, The History of South Africa
Films:


Handouts: These will be at random and sporadic, depending on class discussions.

Office Hours: MW 10:00-12:00; TR 1:00-2:00/Phone: 581-2428 (Faculty members in English no longer have office phones. Please leave a message with the central office.)/Office: CH3361/email: mdloudon@eiu.edu

The Close Reading Cooperative (CRC): Every student enrolled in ENG 4850 may wish to subscribe to the Close Reading Cooperative, a podcast in literary studies produced here at Eastern in order to help you stay in practice with some of the skills you've acquired in prior courses before this semester. Practice makes perfect, and the CRC is intended to keep you in practice by pushing to your iPod, iPad, laptop, or other iTunes-equipped device a weekly lesson in literary analysis. You should watch these episodes, practice the skills they impart, and understand that these skills are important to the development of critical reading and thinking skills. Instructions for subscribing to the Close Reading Cooperative appear on the English Department's website: http://www.eiu.edu/~english/.

General Policies:
Grading Standards: I shall follow the EIU English Department Guidelines, distributed in class. I shall use the plus and minus to distinguish, say, a high B from a low one.

Attendance: I do take roll and I evaluate attendance only indirectly in the context of your participation in the course.

Conferences: These are at your request unless I ask to see you. Please ask for help as soon as you feel you need it; please don't wait until the last couple of weeks of class.

Submission of work: Essays should be typed, double-spaced, on one side of the paper only, titled and indicate the following: name, date, and course and section number. Exercises and quizzes must be legible.
Course Syllabus (tentative):

August
T 21: Course introduction
R 23: Nelson Mandela: The Life and Times (film)
Begin reading Beck’s The History of South Africa

T 28: (continued)
R 30: Discussion—Nelson Mandela: The Life and Times

September
T 4: Steve Biko, I Write What I Like: Selected Writings (1978):
   Chapters 1-12 (selected chapters)
   Steve Biko (1946-77) is regarded as the father of the Black
   Consciousness movement in South Africa and a key figure in
   bringing about the end of apartheid. He was murdered while in
   police detention in 1977.

R 6: (continued)

T 11: I Write What I Like: Chapters 13-19 (selected chapters),
   including the essay by A. Stubbs, “Martyr of Hope”

R 13: (continued)
   Complete your reading of Beck’s The History of South Africa

T 18: Nadine Gordimer, July’s People (1981)
R 20: (continued)

R 27: (continued)

October
T 2: (continued)
R 4: District Six: The Colour of Our Skin? (film)

T 9: Antjie Krog, Country of My Skull: Guilt, Sorrow, and the Limits
   of Forgiveness in the New South Africa (1999)
R 11: (continued)

T 16: Long Night’s Journey into Day (film)
R 18: Discussion—Long Night’s Journey into Day; handout: study guide

T 23: Antjie Krog, Country of My Skull
R 25: (continued)

T 30: Sindwe Magona, Mother to Mother (1998)

November
R 1: (continued)
R 8: (continued)

T 13: (continued)
R 15: Promised Land (film)

Thanksgiving Break

R 29: (continued)

December
T 4: Kopano Matlwa, Coconut (2007)
R 6: (continued)