

WORLD LITERATURE AND THE AFRICAN DIASPORA
ENGL 98r • Junior Tutorial • Fall 2017
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Course Description:

This tutorial provides a broad introduction to the study of the literature of the African diaspora and to a series of questions, methods, and discourses grouped broadly under the term “world literature.” We’ll cover works of fiction, nonfiction, and poetry from the United States, Canada, Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, and Europe—in English as well as in translation from various non-Anglophone languages, including French, Spanish, Arabic, and Russian. At the same time, we’ll track developments within literary criticism and literary theory that seek to study texts beyond and against the nation-state as a spatialized container for cultural production. These critical moves have fallen variously under the umbrellas of the postcolonial, the global Anglophone, the international, the world and the planetary and the global (which, to some, are not merely synonymous), and a slew of sub-fields in Americanist scholarship.

Over the course of the tutorial, we will ask and pursue a set of related questions: What (or when or how) is world literature—as a methodological orientation, intellectual development, sociological phenomenon, canon of texts, or something else? How do national literary traditions converge with or diverge from world literary traditions? How do texts and authors circulate across time and space? How do questions of language, especially translation, mediate these relationships? What are the political implications of literary-critical practice and the debates they spark? And why might African diasporic literature—if we can say that such a thing exists as a coherent unit of analysis—be a fruitful case study for these inquiries? While we orient ourselves to these broader conceptual problems, we will dedicate most of our time and energy to the craft and science of conducting original research in literary studies.

Tutorial Goals:

The basic purpose of the Junior Tutorial is twofold: first, to deepen your understanding African diasporic literature and of ongoing debates about “world literature”; and second, to acquire the research skills necessary to complete the final, article-length final paper (20-25 pages). Each week, we will read literary works along with critical or scholarly sources—the latter are not intended to be “applied” to the primary sources but rather to suggest the numerous perspectives with which we could examine any given topic, text, or problem. The final research paper will be a crucial stepping-stone for those wishing to undertake a Senior Thesis next year, so we will spend equal time discussing the main topic of the Tutorial as we will the processes of writing and research. (I may even share an anecdote about how writing a bad junior essay helped me write a good Senior Thesis. My example is not to be duplicated.)

Assignments & Expectations:

Throughout the semester, you will complete several assignments of various lengths. Your final grade will comprise the following: regular attendance and active participation (20%); short bi-weekly assignments and reading responses (5%); short close-reading paper (10%); in-class presentation on your research question (5%); prospectus and annotated bibliography (10%); final paper draft (10%); and final paper (40%). You must submit a final paper in order to receive credit for the course.

You will also be expected to take part in several meetings throughout the semester, including: scheduled meetings with your tutor (i.e. me); a group conference with the English Department librarian; and participation in mandatory Tutorial-wide workshops throughout the semester.

N.B. The schedule of readings is tentative and subject to change based on student interests. Readings marked “±” are optional but recommended. For weeks where there are multiple recommended readings, we may divide them among students.

Texts to Purchase:

George Elliot Clarke, *Whylah Falls* (Polestar, ISBN: 189609550X)

David Dabydeen, *Slave Song* (Peepal Tree, ISBN: 9781845230043)

Jamaica Kincaid, *A Small Place* (FSG, ISBN: 0374527075)

Alain Mabanckou, *Lettre à Jimmy/Letter to Jimmy* (Soft Skull, ISBN: 1593766017)

Claude McKay, *Banjo: A Story without a Plot* (Harvest, ISBN: 9780156106757)

Toni Morrison, *Tar Baby* (Vintage, ISBN: 1400033446)

Manuel Zapata Olivella, *Changó, el gran puta/Changó, the Biggest Badass* (Texas Tech, ISBN: 0896726738)

Gloria Naylor, *Linden Hills* (Penguin, ISBN: 0140088296)

Tayeb Salih, *Mawsim al-Hijra ila al-Shamal/Season of Migration to the North* (NYRB, ISBN: 1590173023)

Zadie Smith, *Swing Time* (Penguin, ISBN: 1594203989)

Derek Walcott, *The Poetry of Derek Walcott, 1948-2013* (FSG, ISBN: 0374125619)

COURSE SCHEDULE

1 | **But First, Toni Morrison**

Toni Morrison, *Tar Baby* (1981)

Bryan Wagner, *The Tar Baby: A Global History* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2017): 1-19.

± Lawrence Buell, “World Literature and US American Literature,” in *The Routledge Companion to World Literature*, edited by Theo D’haen, David Damrosch, and Djelal Kadir (London: Routledge, 2012): 444-53.

UNIT I: THE WORLD IN BLACK LITERATURE

2 | Language

Derek Walcott, *The Star-Apple Kingdom* (1979)
David Dabydeen, *Slave Song* (1984) and *Turner* (1994)

Wai Chee Dimock, "African, Caribbean, American: Black English as Creole Tongue," in *Through Other Continents: American Literature across Deep Time* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2007): 1-6, 142-65.

± Susan Gillman and Kirsten Silva Gruesz, "Worlding America: The Hemispheric Text-Network," in *A Companion to American Literary Studies*, edited by Caroline F. Levander and Robert S. Levine (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011): 228-47.

¡TUTORIAL WORKSHOP!

3 | Sojourn

Tayeb Salih, *Mawsim al-Hijra ila al-Shamal/Season of Migration to the North* (1967)

David Damrosch, "Goethe Coins a Phrase" and "World Enough and Time," in *What is World Literature?* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2003): 1-36, 281-304.

± Byron Caminero-Santangelo, "Legacies of Darkness: Neocolonialism, Joseph Conrad, and Tayeb Salih's 'Season of Migration to the North,'" *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature* 30.4 (1999): 7-33.

± Nirvana Tanoukhi, "African Roads," in *The Routledge Companion to World Literature*, edited by Theo D'haen, David Damrosch, and Djelal Kadir (London: Routledge, 2012): 454-63.

4 | Labor

Claude McKay, *Banjo: A Story without a Plot* (1929)

Paul Gilroy, "The Black Atlantic as a Counterculture of Modernity," in *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993): 1-40.

± Brent Hayes Edwards, "Prologue" and "Vagabond Internationalism: Claude McKay's *Banjo*," in *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2003): 1-16, 187-240.

¡TUTORIAL WORKSHOP!

¡SHORT PAPER DUE!

5 | Myth

Manuel Zapata Olivella, *Changó, el gran puta/Changó, the Biggest Badass* (1983), p. 1-250

Caroline F. Levander and Robert S. Levine, "Introduction," in *Hemispheric American Studies*, edited by Caroline F. Levander and Robert S. Levine (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2008): 1-17.

± Selections from *PMLA* ("Special Topic: Literature in the World"), coordinated by Simon Gikandi, 131.5 (October 2016): 1193-1556.

¡CONFERENCE WITH DEPARTMENT LIBRARIAN!

UNIT II: BLACK LITERATURE IN THE WORLD

6 | Intertext

Manuel Zapata Olivella, *Changó, el gran puta/Changó, the Biggest Badass* (1983), p. 250-500

Vera Kutzinski, *The Worlds of Langston Hughes: Modernism and Translation in the Americas* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2012): 15-55.

± Edward J. Mullen, ed., *Langston Hughes in the Hispanic World and Haiti* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1977).

¡TUTORIAL WORKSHOP!

7 | Apostrophe

Alain Mabanckou, *Lettre à Jimmy/Letter to Jimmy* (2007)

Alain Mabanckou, "The Song of a Migrating Bird: For a World Literature in French," *World Literature Today* (September 2016) [\[link\]](#)

Lydie Moudileno, "Who Me, Postcolonial? Alain Mabanckou's Transatlantic Exchange with James Baldwin," *World Literature Today* (September 2016) [\[link\]](#)

Dominic Thomas, "The World of Alain Mabanckou," *World Literature Today* (September 2016) [\[link\]](#)

± Pascale Casanova, "World Literary Space," in *The World Republic of Letters*, translated by Malcolm DeBevoise (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2004): 82-125.

± Françoise Lionnet, "World Literature, Francophonie, and Creole Cosmopolitics," in *The Routledge Companion to World Literature*, edited by Theo D'haen, David Damrosch, and Djelal Kadir (London: Routledge, 2012): 325-35.

¡FINAL PAPER PROPOSAL DUE!

8 | Genealogy

Alexander Pushkin, "My Genealogy" (1830) and *The Moor of Peter the Great* (1837)

John Greenleaf Whittier, "Alexander Pushkin" in *The National Era* (1847)

Claude McKay, "Pushkin" (1927)
Marina Tsvetaeva, "My Pushkin" (1937)
Andrei Siyavsky/Abram Tertz, "Strolls with Pushkin" (1975)

Catherine Theimer Nepomnyaschy and Ludmilla A. Trigos, "Introduction: Was Pushkin Black and Does it Matter?," in *Under the Sky of My Africa: Alexander Pushkin and Blackness*, edited by Catherine Theimer Nepomnyaschy, Nicole Svobodny and Ludmilla A. Trigos (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 2006): 3-45.

± Jennifer Wilson, "Teaching Race in Russia" Series, Parts I-IV [\[link\]](#)

¡ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE!

9 | Adaptation

Harriet Beecher Stowe, excerpts from *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852)
Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II, excerpts from *The King and I* (1951) [film]
Shiao-ling Yu, "Cry to Heaven: A Play to Celebrate One Hundred Years of Chinese Spoken Drama by Nick Rongjun Yu," *Asian Theatre Journal* 26.1 (2009): 1-53.

Susan Gillman, "Networking *Uncle Tom's Cabin*; or, Hyper-Stowe," in *Early African American Print Culture*, edited by Lara Langer Cohen and Jordan Stein (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012): 231-49.

± John Mackay, *True Songs of Freedom: Uncle Tom's Cabin in Russian Culture and Society* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013): 3-31.
± Kristin Moriah, "Other People's Cabins: German Inversions of Onkel Tom's Hütte," *Lateral: Journal of the Cultural Studies Association* (2015).

UNIT III: OTHER WORLDS

9 | Africa

George Elliot Clarke, *Whylah Falls* (1990)

Winfried Siemerling, *The Black Atlantic Reconsidered: Black Canadian Writing, Cultural History, and the Presence of the Past* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 2015): 3-32, 350-61.

10 | Britannia

Zadie Smith, *Swing Time* (2016)

Mark Stein, "Black British Literature, Post-colonial Studies, and the Bildungsroman," in *Black British Literature: Novels of Transformation* (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2004): 3-35.

- ± Bénédicte Ledent, “Black British Literature,” in *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*, edited by Dinah Birch (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009): 16-22

¡FINAL PAPER PARTIAL DRAFT DUE!

11 | Suburbia

Gloria Naylor, *Linden Hills* (1985)

Paul Giles, “Suburb, Network, Homeland: National Space and the Rhetoric of Broadcasting,” in *The Global Remapping of American Literature* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2011): 141-82.

- ± Barbara Christian, “Gloria Naylor’s Geography: Community, Class, and Patriarchy in *The Women of Brewster Place* and *Linden Hills*,” in *Reading Black, Reading Feminist: A Critical Anthology*, edited by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (New York: Meridian, 1990): 348-73.

12 | Antigua

Jamaica Kincaid, *A Small Place* (1988)

Ngugi wa Thiong’o, “On the Abolition of the English Department,” in *Homecoming: Essays on African and Caribbean Literature, Culture, and Politics* (New York: Lawrence Hill, 1972): 145-50.

Emily Apter, “Introduction,” in *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability* (New York: Verso, 2015): 1-27.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Crossing Borders” and “Planetarity,” in *Death of a Discipline* (New York: Columbia UP, 2003): 1-23; 71-102.

¡FINAL PAPER DUE DURING READING PERIOD!

COURSE POLICIES

Academic Honesty:

Plagiarism is the use of another person's ideas or writing without giving them proper credit. Consequences of plagiarism can range from failure on the paper to dismissal from the course to even more serious actions. You are responsible for familiarizing yourself with Harvard FAS's Honor Code: "Members of the Harvard College community commit themselves to producing academic work of integrity—that is, work that adheres to the scholarly and intellectual standards of accurate attribution of sources, appropriate collection and use of data, and transparent acknowledgement of the contribution of others to their ideas, discoveries, interpretations, and conclusions. Cheating on exams or problem sets, plagiarizing or misrepresenting the ideas or language of someone else as one's own, falsifying data, or any other instance of academic dishonesty violates the standards of our community, as well as the standards of the wider world of learning and affairs."

Collaboration:

You are absolutely encouraged to talk with other students about the course and its readings, and to read each other's work. In individual assignments, academic collaboration and external sources should be always cited.

Attendance:

Your attendance in tutorial is vital to your own success as well as to the success of the class as a whole; so is your attendance in Junior Tutorial General Meetings and at other required events. I will allow each student a "free" tutorial absence to be used in case of sickness, travel, etc: no explanation necessary. Missing more than one class will decrease your participation grade, and excessive absence could result in failing the course. If you have attenuating circumstances, you must communicate with me in a timely manner so that we can discuss how to deal with it.

Due Dates & Late Grades:

Unless otherwise specified, assignments are due by 11:59pm on the date listed in the schedule. Late assignments will be docked 1/3 letter grade per day late, except for the final paper, which must be turned in before the due date. Students failing to turn in a final paper, or turning it in late without an official excuse, will fail the tutorial. If, well in advance of an assignment, you expect you will need an extension, please talk with me.

Email:

I'll use email to distribute important info throughout the semester—from emailing you handouts to adjusting assignments and deadlines. You are responsible for checking your email on a daily basis. If you email me during the workweek between 9:00am and 5:00pm, you can expect a response by the end of the day. If you email me after 5:00pm, you can expect a response within 24 hours. If you email me over the weekend, you can expect a response by the following Monday.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:

“Students needing academic adjustments or accommodations because of a documented disability must present their Faculty Letter from the Accessible Education Office (AEO) and speak with the professor by the end of the second week of the term. Failure to do so may result in the Course Head’s inability to respond in a timely manner. All discussions will remain confidential, although Faculty are invited to contact AEO to discuss appropriate implementation.”