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ENGL 1760T: The Texts of Africa [CRN 15299] J. Walter Wilson 301

This seminar considers the various ways in which “Africa” has been depicted in fictional and non-fictional writing from the nineteenth-century on. We begin with classic travel writing by European missionaries and their African and black-diasporic counterparts. We then turn to twentieth-century literature and non-fiction, closely following the rhetorical devices used to evoke the continent as geographical or subjective reality. We will pay particular attention to questions of history, linguistic representation, and the challenges of intercultural encounter.

By the end of this course, you will acquire a rich sense of the cultural and linguistic diversity of the continent of Africa, as well as the multiple ways the continent has been portrayed, in and through language, in the modern era. No previous familiarity with African literatures or history will be assumed. But throughout the semester, you will be challenged to read closely and attentively.

Required Reading at Brown Bookstore:

- . Chinua Achebe, *Arrow of God*
- . Teju Cole, *Open City*
- . Tsitsi Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*
- . Tayib Salih, *Season of Migration to the North*
- . Wole Soyinka, *Aké: The Years of Childhood*

On Canvas:

- . Book excerpts or journal articles
- . Film: *Names Live Nowhere: Sotigui Kouyate, A Modern Griot*

Recommended:

- . *Africa* (Episodes 1-8), directed and narrated by Basil Davidson

Requirements:

1. This is a seminar, so you are expected to attend all class meetings. I shall take attendance at every class, and after one unexcused absence your grade for class participation will be adversely affected. Always come to class fully prepared to contribute to class discussion. We shall constantly read passages aloud, so you should always come to class with the required text (hardcopy or E-Book).
2. You are required to write three papers and make one class presentation. Please turn in papers by the deadline. Late submissions will be marked down one letter grade, from, say, A to B.
3. Final course grade will be based on the three papers (30% each) and class participation 10%.

Weekly Schedule

[Note: Items marked with asterisk are recommended]

Week 1 (September 1-5): No class

Week 2 (September 8)

- . Introductions
- . Raymond Williams, "Culture" (Class Handout)

Week 3 (September 15)

- . *Wild Africa*, pp. 28-77
- . Davidson, *Africa* Episode 1 *

Week 4 (September 22)

- . Excerpts from Samuel Crowther, James Sims, Joseph Wright
- . Isabel Hofmeyr, "Reading Debating/Debating Reading: The Case of the Lovedale Literary Society, or Why Mandela Quotes Shakespeare"
- . *Africa*, Episode 2 *

Week 5 (September 29)

- . Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (on Canvas)
- . Achebe, "An Image of Africa" (Class Handout)
- . *Africa*, Episode 3 *

Week 6 (October 6)

- . Sol T. Plaatje, *Mhudi: An Epic of South Africa*
- . J. M. Coetzee, "Idleness in South Africa" *
- . *Africa*, Episode 4 *
- . **Paper #1 (5 pages) due on Monday October 6**

Week 7 (October 13): Fall Weekend Holiday

Week 8 (October 20)

. Isak Dinesen, *Out of Africa* (Sections 1-3)

. *Africa*, Episode 5 *

Week 9 (October 27)

. Tayib Salih, *Season of Migration to the North*

. *Africa* Episode 6 *

Week 10 (November 3)

. Chinua Achebe, *Arrow of God*

. *Africa* Episode 7 *

. Paper #2 (5 pages) due on Friday November 7

Week 11 (November 10)

. Wole Soyinka, *Aké: The Years of Childhood*

. *Africa*, Episode 8 *

Week 12 (November 17)

. *Names Live Nowhere: Sotigui Kouyate, A Modern Griot* [Film]

. Manthia Diawara, *In Search of Africa*, pp. 59-119

. Isidore Okpewho, “African Mythology and Africa’s Political Impasse” *

Week 13 (November 24)

. Tsitsi Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*

. November 26-30 Thanksgiving recess

Week 14 (December 1)

. Teju Cole, *Open City*

. Wrap Up

. Paper #3 (5 pages) due on Friday, December 12