OVERVIEW:

Literary representations of memory and trauma in African postcolonial and contemporary literature will be the main focus of this course. In order to understand how trauma impacts the relationship of individuals to their physical and spiritual world, and how in a very unique way, characters cope with their traumatic reality, we will be analyzing structural disorder and historical event narratives, including novels, testimony and memoir by Aminata Forna, Tsitsi Dangarembga, Boubacar Boris Diop, Zakes Mda, and Jennifer Makumbi. Our examination of these texts will be supplemented by theory in trauma studies, anthropology, comparative literary studies, religious studies, psychoanalysis, and the various subcategories that include the study of memory and forgiveness, retrospective narrative, testimony and bearing witness, PTSD, mourning, anthropology of war and violence, transgenerational trauma as well as healing and working through trauma.

Course Objectives


2. Students will examine literary representations of memory and trauma in African literature with a particular attention to the sociopolitical and historical contexts of several African countries from the 1960’s to today.

3. Students will analyze the novel genre and its contemporary form in African literature while reflecting on sub-genres and narrative modes which include autobiographical fiction, retrospective narrative, and historical fiction.

4. Students will study specific creative forms and styles from the lens of trauma theory, literary studies and literary anthropology, as well as the politics of memory.

5. Students will explore the intersection between trauma studies and postcolonial studies.
6. Students will examine the effects of intergenerational trauma and the strategies used to heal and work through trauma by the represented individuals.

Course Expectations

1. Participation and Attendance (15%): Students are expected to attend all classes and participate actively in the discussion of the class material.

2. ONE Reflection Paper (15%) – (2-3 pages) on the representation of memory in African literature based on the reading assigned for the second week of class.

3. ONE Presentation (30%). Students will be giving a presentation on one of the texts studied in class. Presentations must be accompanied by an outline of major points covered in the presentation and 2/3 questions for class discussion, which must be shared with the class prior to the presentation. In your presentation, you may discuss some or all of the features listed below:
   - The author’s use of particular stylistic devices, plot structure, or language in a strategic way, in order to create an effect on the reader
   - A theme relevant to the understanding of the text as a whole
   - The development of a specific character

Class discussions will rely on a timely preparation of the presentations.

4. ONE Final Essay (40%) – (10-15 pages for undergraduate and non-credit students; 15-20 pages for graduate students) on the representation of trauma in African literature. This assignment will focus on primary and secondary sources to explore core concepts in trauma theory and produce a literary analysis of trauma literature. The students may select their own primary sources from the course material and/or from external sources and use the theories discussed in class as well as external theoretical sources. The students must make an appointment with the instructor to discuss their topic three weeks prior to the final deadline. Late papers will not be accepted.

5. The Summer School is committed to providing an accessible academic community. The Accessibility Office offers a variety of accommodations and services to students with documented disabilities. Please visit http://www.summer.harvard.edu/resources-policies/accessibility-services for more information.

6. Students are responsible for understanding Harvard Summer School policies on Academic Integrity (http://www.summer.harvard.edu/policies/student-responsibilities) and how to use sources responsibly. Not knowing the rules, misunderstanding the rules, running out of time, submitting the wrong draft, or being overwhelmed with multiple demands are not acceptable excuses. Please visit the Resources to Support Academic Integrity (http://www.summer.harvard.edu/resources-policies/resources-support-academic-integrity) where you will find links to the Harvard Guide to Using Sources (https://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu) and two free online 15-minute tutorials to test your knowledge of academic citation policy. The tutorials are anonymous open-learning tools.
Required texts:
Dangarembga, Tsitsi. *This Mournable Body*. Minneapolis: Graywolf Press, 2018

Course Outline:

Week 1:

Tuesday, June 22:

Introduction:
The Site of Memory: How Do We Write/Read/Interpret the Literatures of Trauma?

Morrison, Toni. “The Site of Memory”
Lecture: Introduction to Trauma Studies
Forna, Aminata. *The Memory of Love* (Incipit/Chapter 1 analysis)

Thursday, June 24:

Trauma and Retrospective Narrative

Forna, Aminata. *The Memory of Love* (Read to Ch. 19 p. 158)
Lecture: “A History of Sierra Leone: From the Origins of the Sierra Leonean Civil War to its Aftermath” (30 mins)
Questions and Discussion (40 mins)
Break (10 mins)
Presentations/Breakout sessions (40 mins)
Discussion (60 mins)

Suggested Reading:
Beah, Ishmael. *A Long Way Gone*
Forna, Aminata. *The Devil that Danced on the Water: A Daughter’s Quest*
Shepler, Susan. “Introduction” *Childhood Deployed: Remaking Child Soldiers in Sierra Leone*

Week 2:

Tuesday, June 29:

Historical Trauma and PTSD
Forna, Aminata. *The Memory of Love* (Read Ch. 20 (p. 159) - Chapter 36 (p. 301)
Lecture: “Introduction to Trauma Studies” (30 mins)
Questions and Discussion (40 mins)
Break (10 mins)
Presentations/Breakout sessions (40 mins)
Discussion (60 mins)

Suggested Reading:
Amadiume, Ifi and An-Na’im. Introduction to *The Politics of Memory: Truth, Healing and Social Justice*
Felman, Shoshana. “Education and Crisis, or the Vicissitudes of Teaching”
Felman, Shoshana and Laub Dory. *Testimony: Crisis of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*
McCann, I. Lisa and Pearlman, Laurie Ann. *Psychological Trauma and the Adult Survivor: Theory, Therapy, and Transformation*
Remre, C. Mariane. “Introduction” *Out of War*
Ramadanovic, Petar. *Forgetting Futures: On Memory, Trauma and Identity.*
Tal, Kali. *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma*

Thursday, July 1

Grief and Healing: Working Through Trauma

Forna, Aminata. *The Memory of Love* (Read to the End)
Lecture: “The Effects of Historical Trauma on Postcolonial Society: From Trauma Studies to Postcolonial Trauma Studies” (30 mins)
Questions and Discussion (40 mins)
Break (10 mins)
Presentations/Breakout sessions (40 minutes)
Discussion (60 minutes)

Suggested Reading:
Andermahr, Sonya ed. *Decolonizing Trauma Studies: Trauma and Postcolonial*
Butler, Judith. “An Account of Oneself”
Craps, Stef. *Postcolonial Witnessing: Trauma Out of Bounds*
Jong, Joop de. “Collective Trauma Processing: Dissociation as a Way of Processing Postwar Traumatic Stress in Guinea Bissau”
Nwoye, Augustine. “Memory Healing Processes and Community Intervention in Grief Work in Africa”
Ojukutu-Macauley, Sylvia and Ismail, Rashid ed. *Paradoxes of History and Memory in Post-Colonial Sierra Leone.*
Week 3:

Tuesday, July 6

Memory and Cultural Belonging

Makumbi, Jennifer. *Kintu* (read Book I and II)

*Lecture*: “A History of Uganda and The Buganda Tradition” (30 mins)

*Questions and Discussion* (40 mins)

*Break* (10 mins)

*Presentations/Breakout sessions* (40 mins)

*Discussion* (60 mins)

*Suggested Reading:*

Kodesh, Neil. “Genre, Historical Imagination, and Early Ganda History”


Thursday, July 8

Transgenerational Trauma: The Unconscious Transmission and Unassimilable Effect

Makumbi, Jennifer. *Kintu* (read Book III and IV)

*Lecture*: “Intergenerational trauma and its Effects on the Continent” (30 mins)

*Questions and Discussion* (40 mins)

*Break* (10 mins)

*Presentations/Breakout sessions* (40 mins)

*Discussion* (60 mins)

*Suggested Reading:*

Lee, Rebekah. “Death and Dying in the History of Africa Since 1800”


Ricoeur, Paul. “Memory, Forgetfulness, and History”

Schwab, Gabriele. *Haunting Legacies: Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma* Introduction and Chapter 4)

Ukaegbu, Victor. “African Funeral Rites: Sites for Performing, participating and witnessing of trauma”
Week 4:

Tuesday, July 13

**Storytelling: Working and Healing Through Trauma**

Makumbi, Jennifer. *Kintu* (read to the End)

**Lecture:** “Storytelling, Kinship, and Community: Working Through Trauma” (30 mins)

**Questions and Discussion** (40 mins)

**Break** (10 mins)

**Presentations/Breakout sessions** (40 mins)

**Discussion** (60 mins)

Thursday, July 15

**Intellectual responsibility: Writing as a duty of memory**

Diop, Boubacar Boris. *Murambi: The Book of Bones* (Read to End of Part II)

**Lecture:** “Writing as an Intellectual Responsibility” (30 mins)

**Questions and Discussion** (40 mins)

**Break** (10 mins)

**Presentations/Breakout sessions** (40 mins)

**Discussion** (60 mins)

**Suggested Reading:**
Moses, Ted. “Duty of Memory and Need for Accountability”

Week 5:

Tuesday, July 20

**Working Through Trauma in an Era of Denial**

Diop, Boubacar Boris. *Murambi: The Book of Bones* (read to the End)

**Lecture:** “Trauma and the Danger of Denial” (30 mins)

**Questions and Discussion** (40 mins)

**Break** (10 mins)

**Presentations/Breakout sessions** (40 mins)

**Discussion** (60 mins)

**Suggested Reading:**
Karegeye, Jean-Pierre and Diop, B. Boris “The Oppressor Remains What He Is”
Thursday, July 22

Death, Trauma, and Forgiveness

Mda, Zakes. Ways of Dying (read to Chapter 5)

Lecture: Guest Lecturer (Dr. Rhonda Jones): The TRC, Archival Making and Keeping Records of Racial Violence (30 mins)

Questions and Discussion (40 mins)

Break (10 mins)

Presentations/Breakout sessions (40 mins)

Discussion (60 mins)

Suggested Reading:

Chidester, David. Patterns of Transcendence: Religion, Death and Dying

Derrida, Jacques: “On Forgiveness”

Gobodo-Madikizela, Pumla. “Working Through the Past: Some Thoughts on Forgiveness in Cultural Context”

Gobodo-Madikizela, Pumla. A Human Being Died Last Night

Durrant, Sam: “Undoing Sovereignty: Towards a Theory of Critical Mourning”


Week 6:

Tuesday, July 27

Mda, Zakes. Ways of Dying (read to the End)

Lecture: “The Politics of Mourning” (30 mins)

Questions and Discussion (40 mins)

Break (10 mins)

Presentations/Breakout sessions (40 mins)

Discussion (60 mins)

Suggested Reading:

Mcilwain, Charlton. Death in Black and White: Death, Ritual, and Family Ecology

Thursday, July 29

The Politics of Identity and Ecological Memory

Dangarembga, Tsitsi. Nervous Conditions (excerpts: course package)

Lecture: “Land Dispossession and Ecological Memory” (30 mins)

Questions and Discussion (40 mins)

Break (10 mins)
Presentations/Breakout sessions (40 mins)  
Discussion (60 mins)  

Suggested Reading:  
Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*  

Week 7:  
Tuesday, August 3  
Survival, Gender and the Vicissitudes of Existence  
Dangarembga, Tsitsi. *This Mournable Body* (read to chapter 10)  
Lecture: “Struggle for Survival in the Postcolony” (30 mins)  
Questions and Discussion (40 mins)  
Break (10 mins)  
Presentations/Breakout sessions (40 mins)  
Discussion (60 mins)  

Suggested Reading:  
Harris, Melanie L. “Ecowomanism: An Introduction”  

Thursday, August 5  
Bearing Witness, Ecological Memory, and Working Through Trauma  
Dangarembga, Tsitsi. *This Mournable Body* (read to the End)  
Excerpt analysis: close reading (30 mins)  
Discussion (40 mins)  
Break (10 mins)  
Presentations/Breakout sessions (40 mins)  
Discussion (60 mins)  
CONCLUDING REMARKS - COURSE REVIEW  

Final Paper Due 11:59 PM  

Bibliography  
Harris, Melanie L. “Ecowomanism: An Introduction” *Worldviews* 20 (2016) pp. 5-14
Igreja, Victor and Erin Baines. “Social Trauma and Recovery” in *A Companion to the Anthropology of Africa*. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2019 (pp. 251-270)
Karegeye, Jean-Pierre and Diop, B. Boris “The Oppressor Remains What He Is” *Chimurenga* Jan. 2021
Korang, Kwaku Larbi: “Where is Africa? When is the West’s Other? Literary Postcoloniality in a Comparative Anthropology” *Diacritics*, Summer 2004, Vol. 34 (2), (pp.38-61)
Meiu, George Paul. “Who are the New Natives? Ethnicity and Emerging Idioms of Belonging in Africa”


Mutambara, Julia and Tholene Sodi. “Exploring the Role of Spirituality in Coping with War Trauma Among War Veterans in Zimbabwe” Sage Open January-March 2018: 1-10


Poyatos, Fernando. “Literary Anthropology: Toward a New Interdisciplinary Area” in Literary Anthropology. John Benjamins B.V.: 1988 (pp. 3-49)


Shepler, Susan. Childhood Deployed: Remaking Child Soldiers in Sierra Leone. NYU Press, 2014


