

-DRAFT- syllabus
AFRICAN LITERATURE AND THE POETICS OF MEMORY
Harvard Summer School
Summer 2021

Instructor: Dr. Bojana Coulibaly (bojana_coulibaly@fas.harvard.edu)

Subject: AAAS

Session: 7-week session / June 22 – August 5

Day and time: Tuesdays, Thursdays, 3:15 PM – 6:15 PM

Level: Noncredit, undergraduate, graduate

Course Credit: 4

Location: Online (Live) Web Conference

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

1. Students will discover **African postcolonial and contemporary literature, African writers and the context of production** of African literature.
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
Diop, Boubacar Boris. *Murambi: The Book of Bones*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006
Forna, Aminata. *The Memory of Love*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2010
Makumbi, Jennifer. *Kintu*. Oakland, CA: Transit Books, 2017
Mda, Zakes. *Ways of Dying*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995

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.*

Sánchez, Britta Hemshorn. “Violence, Trauma and Ways of Healing in the Context of Transformative South Africa: A Gender Perspective on the Dynamic and Integrative Potentials of “Healing” in African Religion”

Stevens, Maurice E. "Trauma is as Trauma Does: The Politics of Affect in Catastrophic Times"

Woods, Tim. *African Pasts: Memory and History in African Literatures*

Van der Merwe, Chris and Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela. *Narrating our Healing: Perspectives on Working Through Trauma*

Visser, Irene. "Trauma and Power in Postcolonial Literary Studies"

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"

Kodesh, Neil. "Clanship and the Pursuit of Collective Well-Being"

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"

Olupona, Jacob K. "Burial rites" in *African Religions: A Very Short Introduction*. (pp. 63-65)

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”

Amadiume, Ifi and An-Na'im. “The Politics of Memory: Biafra and Intellectual Responsibility”

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"

Kotzé, Elmarie et al. "'Women ... Mourn and Men Carry On': African Women Storying Mourning Practices: A South African Example"

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*

Ruether, Rosemary Radford ed. *Womean Healing Earth: Third World Women on Ecology, Feminism, and Religion*

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

Amadiume, Ifi and An-Na'im. “The Politics of Memory: Biafra and Intellectual Responsibility” in *The Politics of Memory: Truth, Healing and Social Justice*. New York: Zed Books, 2000 (38-55)

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- Butler, Judith. *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* London, New York: Verso: 2009
- Craps, Stef. *Postcolonial Witnessing: Trauma Out of Bounds*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2013
- Craps, Stef. "Beyond Eurocentrism: Trauma Theory in the Global Age" in *The Future of Trauma Theory: Contemporary Literary and Cultural Criticism*. London: Routledge, 2014 (pp. 45-61)
- Durrant, Sam. "Undoing Sovereignty: Towards a Theory of Critical Mourning" in *The Future of Trauma Theory: Contemporary Literary and Cultural Criticism*. London: Routledge, 2014 (pp. 91-109)
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- Hoffman, Danny. "Culture by Other Means: An Africanist Anthropology of Political Violence and War" *A Companion to the Anthropology of Africa*. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2019 (pp. 173-197)
- 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)
- Janzen, John M. "The Anthropology of Violence: Context, Consequences, conflict resolution, healing, and peace-building in Central and Southern Africa" *Journal of Public Health Policy* Vol. 37 (2016)
- Jong, Joop de. "Collective Trauma Processing: Dissociation as a Way of Processing Postwar Traumatic Stress in Guinea Bissau" *Transcultural Psychiatry* 2013, 50(5) pp. 644-661
- Karegeye, Jean-Pierre and Diop, B. Boris "The Oppressor Remains What He Is" *Chimurenga* Jan. 2021
- Kodesh, Neil. *Beyond the Royal Gaze: Clanship and Public Healing in Buganda*. University of Virginia Press, 2010
- Korang, Kwaku Larbi. "Africa in What Age: Post-Global or Post-Rwanda?" *The Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry*, 4(2), pp. 307-322, April 2017
- 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)
- Lionnet, Françoise. "Geographies of Pain: Captive Bodies and Violent Acts in Myriam Warner-Vieyra, Gayl Jones, and Bessie Head" in *Postcolonial Representations: Women, Literature, Identity*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995
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- Mazrui, A. Ali. *The Politics of War and the Culture of Violence*. Trenton, Africa World Press, 2008
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- Meiu, George Paul. "Who are the New Natives? Ethnicity and Emerging Idioms of Belonging in Africa"

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- Moses, Ted. "Duty of Memory and Need for Accountability" in Labelle, Micheline et al. ed. *Le devoir de memoire et les politiques du pardon*. Montreal: Presses de l'Universite du Quebec, 2005
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