World Literatures and Cultures:

African Women’s Literature

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Course Information

Semester: Spring 2021 Course: LLCU/WOMS 330

Professor: Dr. Christine Grogan Section: 710

Email: cgrogan@udel.edu Credits: 3

Zoom: <https://udel.zoom.us/j/91453271066>

###### Meetings: T 1:30-2:45 synchronous and R asynchronous

Website: <http://christinegrogan.weebly.com/womens-studies.html>

Library Resource: <https://library.udel.edu/associateinarts/>

Office Hours: TR 12:30-1:30 and W 2:30-3:30 <https://udel.zoom.us/j/91453271066>

Course Description

“I hope that I am telling stories that are more than stories. I also want to capture a history,” states Zimbabwean writer Yvonne Vera, who goes on to add that she uses “the isolated individual to explore how they are connected to everything else…. I am writing, in a way, the biographies of unknown women, but I’m also interested in [Zimbabwean’s] national history, so they are always against the backdrop of a particular time.”

In this course, we will explore the texts and contexts of four novels that represent each region of sub-Saharan Africa and that chart the “biographies of unknown women.” Emphasizing the historical development of novels written by African women, this discussion-based, 3-credit course fulfills one of the university breadth requirements for history and cultural change (and College of Arts and Sciences breadth Group B: history and cultural change and the College of Engineering breadth requirement). In documenting the African woman’s experiences during colonialism, imperialism, and nation-building, these tales, which have too often fallen outside of the perspective of sanctioned historical tellings, confront the provocative and sensitive topics of female circumcision, abortion, rape, incest, masturbation, prostitution, polygamy, infertility, infanticide, and suicide. We will study these novels in their historical and cultural contexts to see how the female characters have resisted colonial and patriarchal domination and how these novels collectively have developed an African feminist aesthetic. Issues surrounding sex and gender are examined to see how feminism in African literature is recast in different and complex ways from that of the US/Western feminism.

Required Texts

Nwapa, Flora. *Efuru*.

\*Beyala, Calixthe. *Your Name Shall Be Tanga*. (on Canvas)

Vera, Yvonne. *Butterfly Burning*.

\*Kyomuhendo, Goretti. *Whispers from Vera*. (on Canvas)

Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this course, you should be able to:

* Apply a set of critical reading skills to the world of language, literature, and culture
* Understand the historical development of African women’s literature and the historical context that has helped to shape it and that it in turn helps to shape
* Read and write critically about the cultural perspectives represented in the literature and how these artists responded to the political and social issues of their time
* Conduct critical inquiry and research to produce literary criticism

Graded Assignments

The following distribution will be used to determine final grades:

* Homework 20%
* Presentation 15%
* Annotated Bibliographies 20%
* Final Project 25%
* Attendance 20%

Homework

There will be 10 homework assignments. They are comprised of two writing assignments (first day and last day), four defining terms, and four reading responses.

Because we will be reading complex texts (some of which have been translated into English), we need to gain a firm grasp of the language and wording used. As one critic has said, “Our interest in and commitment to African literature, particularly for those not born in that environment or without formal training in the field of African literature, is a laudable one that can be sustained only by a serious engagement in/with the *language of culture*.” Before we read each novel, you will read the words and definitions on my website: <http://christinegrogan.weebly.com/womens-studies.html> (click on the picture of the novel, “About the Text,” scroll down until you see “Definitions”). You then need to come up with 5 more (not listed) that you research and define/explain. The tentative schedule includes the due dates. The replies should be typed, in MLA format, and uploaded to Canvas before class. These will be graded for completion. You may be asked to read part of your answers in class to launch our discussions.

Four homework assignments will consist of reading responses. The tentative schedule includes the due dates. The replies should be typed, in MLA format, and 1-2 pages in length. In these responses, let me know you’ve read the novels carefully. You can—and should—use first-person “I,” and you should explain what resonated with you, what you learned, what confused or troubled you, etc. Quote from the books. By the second reply, you can draw comparisons to and contrasts from the previous works we’ve studied. These will be graded for completion. You may be asked to read yours in class to launch our discussions. See the end of the syllabus for an example of a reading response.

Presentation

Once this semester, you will give a ~15 minute presentation on one of the assigned texts. Although the instructions for this presentation are rather open, the bottom line is that we want to learn more about the novel during the presentation. Possible approaches include focusing on one scene (1 to 1.5 pages) from the novel. You can read the scene aloud to the class, examine its significance, and ask thought-provoking questions (that you are prepared to answer). You can tell us more about the author, country, and time period (the novel is set and/or published). You can show clips from the Internet or short videos. I encourage you to use PowerPoint and to be creative and energetic and to get your classmates to engage with the text. These presentations are designed to get you to practice analyzing texts in an open-ended way, bringing observations and questions, probing the class to explore details of the work further. In addition to my comments and grade, your classmates will also provide feedback for the presentations. You will record these presentations.

Annotated Bibliographies

To practice conducting critical inquiry and research, you are required to find one scholarly secondary source for each novel and write an annotated bibliography that summarizes and evaluates the source. These will make up the 4 annotated bibliographies this semester. The tentative schedule includes the due dates. The replies should be typed, in MLA format, and uploaded to Canvas before class. Aim for 2 pages in length—one page of summary and the second page of analysis. You may be asked to read part of yours in class to launch our discussions. A model annotated bibliography is posted to my website: <http://christinegrogan.weebly.com/womens-studies.html>.

Final Project

You have a choice for the final project. The first option is to write a 4-page analytical essay that discusses how economics are depicted in one of the novels we studied. The second option is to create a web page for one of the novels we studied that can be added to my course website.

Attendance

Active participation is essential for your success; therefore, regular attendance is required. Along with being present, you should have all reading completed and in-hand, ideas to share in discussion, and any assignments completed and submitted by the start of class time.

However, I also realize that life can sometimes conspire against perfect attendance. Indeed, the [UD Faculty Handbook](http://facultyhandbook.udel.edu/handbook/3113-student-class-attendance-and-excused-absences) recognizes several categories of **excused** absences—including religious holidays, participation in athletic events or other activities representing the university, serious illnesses or deaths in the family, serious personal illnesses, and short-term military service. If you need to miss a class for one of these reasons, you must obtain the documentation described in the Handbook in order for your absence to be excused. Even then, you are still responsible for any work missed and due that day.

There is also a second category of absences, usually involving minor illnesses like colds or flus or mental health challenges, which require, in the words of the Faculty Handbook, “reasonable communication” between you and me. If at all possible, you should inform me **beforehand** if you cannot attend a class. Whether your absence is reasonable or not depends entirely on my judgment.

Finally, there is a third category—**unexcused** absences. Avoid these. I excuse your first two absences. For every **unexcused** absence after two, your Attendance score will be decreased by 10 points for each absence. If you have a reason for being absent that would normally be excused, it is your responsibility to inform me within one week of the absence. It is also your responsibility to notify me that you are present if you are late. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to get the assignments, class notes, and course announcements from a classmate. Students with extended absences are encouraged to contact Dr. Trembanis to coordinate communication with faculty and with Mr. Mendoza to work through program progress issues.

Regardless if your absences are excused or unexcused, you are still responsible for all work we do in class that day or any work due that day.

Grades

A = 94-100 A- = 90-93

B+ = 87-89 B = 84-86 B- = 80-83

C+ = 77-79 C = 74-76 C- = 70-73

D+ = 67-69 D = 64-66 D- = 60-63 F = below 60

Assignment Submissions

Papers should be typed (in 12-point, Times New Roman, black font), double-spaced, and one-inch margins. MLA formatting should be followed (your name, my name, course title, and date in the upper left-hand corner of the first page). All of the pages should be numbered (your last name and page number in the upper right-hand corner). A works cited page should be included if you are citing external sources. A title should be provided, which is centered. Please see the MLA document posted on Canvas.

For electronic copies, you should ensure the file is in PDF and should always check that your submitted file successfully uploaded to Canvas. I may have additional instructions, and requirements may change depending on the assignment medium. You should check with me well in advance of a deadline if you are unsure.

For every class day that an assignment is late, your final grade on that assignment will be lowered 5 points. For example, in a TR class, if a project is due on Tuesday and you turn it in on Thursday, you lose 5 points; if on the following Tuesday, you lose 10 points. An assignment is late if it is not turned in by the due date. Homework and presentations will not receive any credit if turned in or delivered late.

Class Rules

Professionalism is expected at all times. Others’ opinions should be respected, especially when they differ from your own.

One-on-One Conference

You are required to have a one-on-one conference with me this semester to discuss your work and your progress in the course. Missing a conference is counted as two absences. I encourage you to also come to my office hours throughout the semester.

Extra Writing Help

AAP writing specialists Professor Michael Aronovitz and Dr. Brandy Yates offer Zoom tutoring sessions through which all members of the UD AAP community can meet to talk and learn about writing. They can help you with each step in the writing process: selecting a topic, developing a thesis statement, organizing your ideas, and using APA and MLA format effectively. They also offer expert assistance with résumé writing, creative writing, job and scholarship applications, oral presentations and speeches. Use the links below to schedule a writing appointment:

Professor Aronovitz (MW 8-11 and F 9-1): <https://udel.campus.eab.com/pal/GhlAKmDQTJ>

Dr. Yates (MW 12-5): <https://udel.campus.eab.com/pal/hC7tCT7lUa>

If Prof. Aronovitz and Dr. Yates are booked for your preferred time slot, you can make an appointment with the [University of Delaware Writing Center](https://www.writingcenter.udel.edu/) at [https://udel.mywconline.net](https://udel.mywconline.net/).

I always took my papers to the Writing Center, even as a graduate student. As writing expert William Germano says, “Revision makes writing better. Always.”

Accessibility Statement

This course welcomes students with disabilities. I want all students to have the best possible chance to succeed in LLCU/WOMS 330. Any student who thinks s/he may need an accommodation based on a disability should contact one of the AAP liaisons and the [Office of Disability Support Services](https://sites.udel.edu/dss/) (DSS) as soon as possible. In Wilmington: Dan McDevit, [mcdevit@udel.edu](mailto:mcdevit@udel.edu). In Dover and Georgetown: Amy Shupard, ashupard@udel.edu. If you will be using accommodations in this course (or if you are in the process of registering for accommodations), please contact me as soon as possible so that we can work together to develop strategies for adapting assignments to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course.

Academic Integrity

The University of Delaware protects the rights of all students by insisting that individual students act with integrity. Accordingly, the University severely penalizes plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty. Plagiarism is the inclusion of someone else’s words, ideas, images, or data as one’s own. When a student submits academic work that includes another’s words, ideas, images, or data, whether published or unpublished, the source of that information must be acknowledged with complete and accurate references and, if verbatim statements are included, with quotation marks as well. By submitting work as his or her own, a student certifies the originality of all material not otherwise acknowledged.If I have evidence that you plagiarized, I am required to report you to the Office of Student Conduct. If you are uncertain about what constitutes plagiarism, please come see me.

Mental Health Services at UD

The UD Helpline is a free service available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year for any UD student feeling anxious, overwhelmed, or otherwise in need of someone to talk to. The number is 302.831.1001. Mental health counselors at the UD Center for Counseling and Student Development are also available at 302.831.2141 during business hours (M-F, 8-5). AAP students are eligible to receive one free triage session with a counselor, who can help you determine what further resources you need and where to find them. More information about their services can be found at <https://sites.udel.edu/counseling/>.

Harassment and Discrimination

The University of Delaware works to promote an academic and work environment that is free from all forms of discrimination, including harassment. As a member of the community, your rights, resources, and responsibilities are reflected in the non-discrimination and sexual misconduct policies. Please familiarize yourself with these policies at [www.udel.edu/oei](http://www.udel.edu/oei). You can report any concerns to the University’s Office of Equity & Inclusion at 305 Hullihen Hall, 302.831.8063 or you can report anonymously through UD Police 302.831.2222 or the EthicsPoint Compliance Hotline at [www1.udel.edu/compliance](http://www1.udel.edu/compliance). You can also report any violation of UD policy on harassment, discrimination, or abuse of any person at this site: [sites.udel.edu/sexualmisconduct/how-to-report/](http://sites.udel.edu/sexualmisconduct/how-to-report/).

Sexual Misconduct & Title IX

If, at any time during this course, I happen to be made aware that you may have been the victim of sexual misconduct (including sexual harassment, sexual violence, domestic/dating violence, or stalking), I am obligated to inform the university’s Title IX Coordinator. The university needs to know information about such incidents in order to offer resources to victims and to ensure a safe campus environment for everyone. The Title IX Coordinator will decide if the incident should be examined further. If such a situation is disclosed to me in class, in a paper assignment, or in office hours, I promise to protect your privacy—I will not disclose the incident to anyone but the Title IX Coordinator. For more information on Sexual Misconduct policies, where to get help, and how to report information, please refer to [www.udel.edu/sexualmisconduct](http://www.udel.edu/sexualmisconduct). At UD, we provide 24-hour crisis assistance and victim advocacy and counseling. To contact the UD Helpline 24/7/365, call 302.831.2226. Student Health Services will put you in touch with a sexual offense support advocate.

Non-Discrimination

The University of Delaware does not discriminate against any person on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, genetic information, marital status, disability, religion, age, veteran status or any other characteristic protected by applicable law in its employment, educational programs and activities, admissions policies, and scholarship and loan programs as required by Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and other applicable statutes and University policies. The University of Delaware also prohibits unlawful harassment including sexual harassment and sexual violence.

For inquiries or complaints related to non-discrimination policies, please contact:

Director, Institutional Equity & Title IX Coordinator, Susan L. Groff, Ed.D., [groff@udel.edu](mailto:groff@udel.edu), 305 Hullihen Hall Newark, DE 19716, 302.831.8063.

For complaints related to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and/or the Americans with Disabilities Act, please contact: Director, Office of Disability Support Services, Elizabeth Reed [ecreed@udel.edu](mailto:ecreed@udel.edu), Alison Hall, Suite 130, Newark, DE 19716, 302.831.4643 OR contact U.S. Department of Education - Office for Civil Rights (<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/index.html>).

Black Lives Matter in the Associate in Arts Program

The Associate in Arts Program (AAP) values and celebrates the humanity of each student, staff member, and educator in our community. There is a long tradition of calling for racial justice in American society. Black Lives Matter continues that tradition. We categorically maintain that we care about Black lives. We acknowledge the long history of racist policies and attitudes that persist in American culture, including at the University of Delaware. As part of the University, the AAP is committed to creating and maintaining an equitable and inclusive learning and working environment for each member of our community through both reflection and action.

Student Hardship Affecting Learning

Students who have difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lack a safe and stable place to live, and believe this may affect their performance in the course, are urged to reach out for support. Dr. Livingston is the student counselor for the AAP, and he can be reached via email at [lmliving@udel.edu](mailto:lmliving@udel.edu). Dr. Livingston holds regular zoom counseling hours on Mondays from 11:00-1:00 and Tuesdays & Thursdays from 12:30-3:30. Go to [udel.zoom.us](https://udel.zoom.us/), and join by entering meeting ID: 423 546 4057. You may also notify me and/or your other professors if you are comfortable doing so. This will enable us to provide any resources that we may possess.

Additional student and family resources include:

**Student Crisis Fund Application:**

### The University of Delaware’s Office of the Dean of Students provides money to eligible UD students who face a serious financial hardship due to unanticipated expenses, including those related to COVID-19. AAP students can apply to this fund, too. To find out if you are eligible, please fill out the [Student Crisis Fund Application form](https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?UnivofDelaware&layout_id=24), which you can find here: <https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?UnivofDelaware&layout_id=24>

The Office of the Dean of Students will then contact you to discuss further. Please note that it is ok to leave questions on this form blank if you do not know the answer; just fill it out to the best of your ability.

**Food Banks in Delaware:**

For an up-to-date list of food banks throughout DE, please see this doc: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1mS859FWgBcrGSi9kzNPfe-DQtdQRAQS7vbYoLDLhzN8/edit>

**WIFI:**

For an up-to-date list of free and affordable WIFI, please see this doc: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1PgfToqlK2fAZ_nKXqHhTzOCpsd1TSfgzm6i1O3DciMM/edit>

**Technology:**

UD IT in conjunction with the Office of the Dean of Students is distributing technology (e.g., laptops, internet hot spots) to students. Go to the [Tech at UD homepage](Tech%20at%20UD%20homepage) (<https://sites.udel.edu/techatud/>), then follow the directions on the “Apply for a loaner laptop” button.

Tentative Schedule

**Week 1**

February 16 T:Syllabus; Introductions; Map of Africa; First Day Writing

February 18 R: TED Talk (<https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story>) Discussion and African Stereotypes

**\*Class will meet on Zoom on Tuesdays from 1:30-2:45. On Thursdays “class” will be asynchronous.\***

**Week 2**

February 23 T: Brief History (“Her-story”) Lecture; *Efuru* “Language of Culture”

February 25 R: *Efuru* Language of Culture Homework Due; Read first half of *Efuru*

**Week 3**

March 2 T: Library Catalog and Database Review; Presentation Sign-Up; *Efuru* Class Discussion

March 4 R: MLA Review; *Efuru* Reading Response Due

**Week 4**

March 9 T: Writing an Annotated Bibliography

March 11 R: *Efuru* Presentation and Follow-Up

**Week 5**

March 16 T: *Efuru* Annotated Bibliography Due; *Your Name Shall Be Tanga* Language of Culture Homework assigned

March 18 R: *Your Name Shall Be Tanga* Language of Culture Homework Due; Video on Female Circumcision

**Week 6**

March 23 T: *Your Name Shall Be Tanga* Class Discussion

March 25 R: *Your Name Shall Be Tanga* Reading Response Due

**Week 7**

March 30 T: Class Canceled

April 1 R: *Your Name Shall be Tanga* Presentation and Follow-Up

**Week 8**

April 6 T: Mid-Semester Feedback (Stop/Start/Continue); *Your Name Shall Be Tanga* Annotated Bibliography Due; *Butterfly Burning* Language of Culture Homework assigned

April 8 R: *Butterfly Burning* Language of Culture Homework Due; Video on Rhodesia/Zimbabwe

**Week 9**

April 13 T: *Butterfly Burning* Class Discussion

April 15 R: *Butterfly Burning* Reading Response Due; *Butterfly Burning* Presentation and Follow-Up

**Week 10**

April 20 T: *Butterfly Burning* Annotated Bibliography Due; Conference Sign-Up; *Whispers from Vera* Language of Culture Homework assigned

April 22 R: Brainstorm for final project and prepare for conferences; *Whispers from Vera* Language of Culture Homework Due; Video on Uganda

**Week 11**

April 27 T: Conferences (Bring Draft)

April 29 R: Conferences (Bring Draft)

**Week 12**

May 4 T: *Whispers from Vera* Class Discussion

May 6 R: *Whispers from Vera* Reading Response Due; *Whispers from Vera* Presentation and Follow-Up

**Week 13**

May 11 T: *Whispers from Vera* Annotated Bibliography Due

May 13 R: Last Day Writing; Work on final project

**Week 14**

May 18 T: Jeopardy!

May 20 R: Final Project Due (by 11:59 pm)

Bobbie Ann Mason

Dr. Grogan

African Women’s Literature

February 16, 2021

Reading Response: Tim O’Brien’s “The Things They Carried”

Of all the stories I’ve read in the last decade, Tim O’Brien’s “The Things They Carried” hit me hardest. It knocked me down, just as if a hundred-pound rucksack had been thrown right at me. The weight of the things the American soldiers carried on their interminable journey through the jungle in Vietnam sets the tone for this story. But the power of it is not just the poundage they were humping on their backs. The story’s list of “things they carried” extends to the burden of memory and desire and confusion and grief. It’s the weight of America’s involvement in the war. You can hardly bear to contemplate all that this story evokes with its matter-of-fact yet electrifying details.

The way this story works makes me think of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington. The memorial is just a list of names, in a simple, dark—yet soaring—design. Its power is in the simplicity of presentation and in what lies behind each of those names.

In the story, there is a central incident, the company’s first casualty on its march through the jungle. But the immediate drama is the effort—by the main character, by the narrator, by the writer himself—to contain the emotion, to carry it. When faced with a subject almost too great to manage or confront, the mind wants to organize, to categorize, to simplify. Restraint and matter-of-factness are appropriate deflective techniques for dealing with pain, and they work on several levels in the story. Sometimes it is more affecting to see someone dealing with pain than it is to know about the pain itself. That’s what’s happening here.

By using the simplicity of a list and trying to categorize the simple items the soldiers carried, O’Brien reveals the real terror of the war itself. And the categories from the tangible—foot powder, photographs, chewing gun—to the intangible. They carried disease; memory. When it rained, they carried the sky. The weight of what they carried moves expansively, opens out, grown from the stuff in the rucksack to the whole weight of the American war chest, with its litter of ammo and packaging through the landscape of Vietnam. And then it moves back, away from the huge outer world, back into the interior of the self. The story details the way they carried themselves (dignity, laughter, words) as well as what they carried inside (fear, “emotional baggage”).

And within the solemn efforts to list and categorize, a story unfolds. PFC Ted Lavender, a grunt who carries tranquilizers, is on his way back from relieving himself in the jungle when he is shot by a sniper. The irony and horror of it are unbearable. Almost instantaneously, it seems, the central character, Lieutenant Cross, changes from a romantic youth to a man of action and duty. With his new, hard clarity, he is carried forward by his determination not to be caught unprepared again. And the way he prepares to lead his group is to list his resolves. He has to assert power over the event by detaching himself. It is a life-and-death matter.

So this effort to detach and control becomes both the drama and the technique of the story. For it is our impulse to deal with unspeakable horror and sadness by fashioning some kind of order, a story, to clarify and contain our emotions. As the writer, Tim O’Brien stands back far enough not to be seen but not so far that he isn’t in charge.

“They carried all they could bear, and then some, including a silent awe for the terrible power of the things they carried.”

\*Published in Ron Hansen and Jim Shepard’s collection *You’ve Got to Read This* (1994).