

Syllabus: Comparative Black Literatures

Aast 250 #33341
Engl 260 #33409
TR 11:00 - 12:15
Taft 208

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R 2:00 - 5:00
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The Francophone African Novel in English

Course Description

Africa has more French speakers than any other continent, in the neighborhood of 120 million people in 24 countries. The sheer vastness and heterogeneity of “Francophone” Africa — thirty-six languages are spoken in Senegal alone — make a comprehensive survey impossible. Nonetheless this course, covering five countries and sixty years, will attempt to survey the field of the African novel in French. French arrived in Africa with France’s colonial project; appropriately, the first novels of the semester emerge from a context of colonial occupation and resistance. Despite the euphoria of the liberation from colonial status, the immediately postcolonial period is not free of tensions among ways of life, particularly in terms of gender norms, which are also inflected by class and race. One of the tragedies of contemporary history, the Rwandan genocide, takes place in a Francophone context and is amply thematized in recent novels. Finally, the current wave of Francophone African novels has seen an explicit engagement with the history of the African novel and with experimental form in North American and Europe. The language of the readings and of the course will be English, but students who wish to read the books in French are welcome to do so.

Required texts

Camara Laye, *The Dark Child*
Mongo Beti, *The Poor Christ of Bomba*
Ousmane Sembène, *God’s Bits of Wood*
Mariama Bâ, *So Long a Letter*
Emmanuel Dongala, *Jazz and Palm Wine*
Boubacar Boris Diop, *Murambi, The Book of Bones*
Alain Mabanckou, *African Psycho*
Abdourahman Waberi, *Harvest of Skulls*
Abdourahman Waberi, *In the Unites States of Africa*
Fiston Mwanza Muzila, *Tram 83*

Writing assignments

The major assignments will be two 5-7 page papers. One-page response papers will be required for each class.

Exams

There will be brief midterm and final exams covering reading assignments.

Grading

Grades will be based on 70% papers, 10% exams, 20% other assignments and class discussion.