

English 242, Reading Prose Fiction: Literature of Africa REVISED SYLLABUS.

This class explores prose fiction from the 20th and 21st centuries. Its primary literary texts include a historical range of short stories that will be uploaded as pdfs to the Canvas class website. All of the fiction is concerned with African life, and illustrates different colonial, postcolonial and transnational experiences. These texts use a wide variety of narrative approaches, that include realism, speculative fiction, satire, and myth.

Class activities include short lecture, facilitated discussion, group and paired work, and individual in-class writing. The course focuses especially on discussion and group work.

This class places a lot of emphasis on right brain writing strategies, as a way to engage students in a meaningful, emergent exploration that isn't quantifiable. This approach leads to more considered thought and writing, that can be assessed, but the process is in the right-brain strategies that have led to this product. Both left and right brain strategies are introduced in peer review groups; this is a key place for the process to unfold. So too is meta-cognitive reflection; this is a thread throughout the course, from the outset. Student growth as readers, thinkers, and writers, rather than being measured using traditional means here, by the instructor, is in this class measured by what students say in their growth statements.

The class conceives of growth not only as an individual matter but as a collective one. The class accordingly emphasizes cultivation of the class as a community of writers and thinkers (which includes me; I participate in the class by joining students when the class engages in writing prompts). The aim is to cultivate in students a sense of shared ownership, responsibility, and engagement in their own learning. This makes it possible for them to individually reflect on their own growth as writers and thinkers.

I've discovered that the grading contract approach works well with the new paradigm. See below for more info.

Because every class (in its student body composition, in the directions that discussion leads, etc) is different, I cannot offer an itemized schedule of how it will unfold.

Course Goals and Objectives.

1. You engage with a variety of writing practices in order to develop critical thinking and to foster skills in using writing as a tool for self awareness and social communication.
2. You are able to perform competent close readings of literary texts.
3. You use writing opportunities as a space to develop sound metacognitive practices and to critically reflect on your reading and learning practices.
4. You develop an awareness of literature's ability to mediate social, political and economic issues.
5. You practice assessing your own and your peers' work in relation to our specific writing criteria.

6. Through practicing revision of your writing, you develop insight into the significance of process-based learning.
7. You contribute to the development of a class community of learners and thinkers.

Course Policies

- All cell phones must be turned off and put away during class. Laptops, IPADs, tablets are permitted for class purposes. You are not permitted to use your cellphone as a substitute laptop or tablet.
- Please submit all your assignments to Canvas, in Word or pdf
- Please set your account to receive notifications from Canvas for this class, and check regularly
- This course info and materials are found in Canvas “Syllabus” (set as homepage), “Files”, and “Announcements” (NOT in Canvas “Modules”); please customize your reading habits accordingly
- Please acquire a notebook. You will use this for keeping notes on your readings, in-class writing activities, and as a journal log of your class experiences and responses to those experiences.

Course assignments and techniques will include many or all of the following: speculative starters; text-merges; 4-column (or ‘dialectical’) notebooks; metacognitive reflections; discussion posts; in-class writing; Naming/persona poems; “Bantu” dialogue poems; peer reviewing; small group discussion; individual and/or small group conferences with the instructor; TIPS letters. They may additionally include other activities such as class presentations, questionnaires, and reading logs. The final project consists of a portfolio of revised writing assignments and a growth statement.

Class Community Norms

Respect for Difference & Learning: For us to achieve the intellectual vibrancy diversity produces, we have to be open to learning how others see and move through the world, and we have to respect everyone's experiences. We should also recognize that some people's ways of seeing and experiencing the world have been privileged, while others have been marginalized, disparaged, and sometimes met with outright violence. We should attend to that in our written and oral commentary by engaging difference with openness to learning and awareness of power dynamics. I expect each of us to help build a class community where racist, homophobic, transphobic, sexist, and ableist language and action are not welcomed so that all members of our class can be welcomed.

Respect for Writing and Writers: This class is an inclusive learning community. Because of that—and because we learn from reading others’ writing—I may ask you to post your writing on our class discussion board. Please respect the parameters of our learning community and do not share your classmates’ writing with people outside the course. Some of our class time will be

spent reading and responding to one another's writing in progress. Treat everyone and everyone's drafts in this class with respect. When we discuss informal writing or drafts, identify emerging or potential strengths as well as weaknesses.

Expectations:

- 1) actively being present in class discussions, small group work and conferences with me;
- 2) providing timely, thoughtful, and engaged written feedback on peers' drafts;
- 3) completing writing assignments on time.

My Role: I will help you develop your writing, hone your critical reading skills, develop nascent ideas, analyze others' arguments and ideas, and pursue your own ideas/arguments in conversation with your classmates, primary documents, and professional/scholarly texts.

Your Role: to grapple with the ideas in lectures and readings and in your peers' writing and conversation. You should puzzle through the texts we read, not skim them; demonstrate engaged, critical and imaginative insight in your writing; and come to class and conferences fully prepared. You will need to reflect on your own writing and learning processes, and your peers' writing, critically, and engage in revision of your own thinking and writing.

Assessment: In this course you will be assessed by a system of evaluation called "contract grading." In a nutshell, that means I specify what you have to do to earn a particular course grade, and you decide what you're willing and able to do and then sign up for the contract that works best for you. There are no surprises: if you fulfill the obligations of your contract, you get the grade you signed up for. Why a grade contract approach? Here are some expert views:

I have found that conventional grading often leads my students to think more about grades than about writing; to worry more about pleasing me or psyching me out than about figuring out what you really want to say or how you want to say it; to be reluctant to take risks with your writing. Grading even makes some students feel they are working against me. Therefore I am using a contract system for grading in this course. –Writing Studies Scholar Peter Elbow

The advantage of contract grading is that you, the student, decide how much work you wish to do this semester; if you complete that work on time and satisfactorily, you will receive the grade for which you contracted. This means planning ahead, thinking about all of your obligations and responsibilities this semester and also determining what grade you want or need in this course. The advantage of contract grading to the professor is no whining, no special pleading, on the student's part. If you complete the work you contracted for, you get the grade. Done. I respect the student who only needs a C, who has other obligations that preclude doing all of the requirements to earn an A in the course, and who contracts for the C and carries out the contract perfectly. (This is another one of those major life skills: taking responsibility for your own workflow.) -- CUNY Professor Cathy Davidson

On Reading:

You will need to read a text once for general comprehension, and then to read it again to engage with it more fully and analytically. When reading, take notes. In your class notebook, jot down

page numbers, particular passages of interest, questions and reactions that you are having as you read. On the texts themselves, highlight, annotate, as you see fit.

Class AI Policy:

In this course, students may be permitted to use AI-based tools (such as ChatGPT) on some assignments. The instructions for those assignments will include information about how you may use AI-based tools to complete the assignment. All sources, including AI tools, must be properly cited. Use of AI in ways that are inconsistent with the parameters above will be considered academic misconduct and subject to investigation.

Please note that AI results can be biased and inaccurate. It is your responsibility to ensure that the information you use from AI is accurate. Additionally, pay attention to the privacy of your data. Many AI tools will incorporate and use any content you share, so be careful not to unintentionally share copyrighted materials, original work, or personal information.

Learning how to thoughtfully and strategically use AI-based tools may help you develop your skills, refine your work, and prepare you for your future career. If you have any questions about citation or about what constitutes academic integrity in this course or at the University of Washington, please feel free to contact me to discuss your concerns.

Useful scholarly and newspaper websites on African societies, politics, current affairs, culture:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/africa>Links to an external site.

<https://www.blackagenda.com/articlelist/africa>Links to an external site.

<https://africasacountry.com/>Links to an external site.

<https://academic.oup.com/afraf>Links to an external site.

<https://newafricanmagazine.com/>Links to an external site.

Class Assignments and Activities.

Generative Writing Prompts: *Speculative Starters*

These prompts to thinking in a speculative, generative way invite us to “think out loud” in our exploratory writing. They serve to spark thinking, and assist in “noticing sensations.” They can be used to catalyze thinking by oneself, or responding to someone else in Column 2 in the 4-Column Notebook

Speculative Starters:

1. I noticed. . .
2. I wonder. . .

3. I was reminded of. . .
4. I'm surprised that. . .
5. I'd like to know. . .
6. I realized. . .
7. If I were. . .
8. Once consequence of _____ could be _____
9. If _____, then. . . .
10. Although it seems
11. I'm struck by. . . .
12. I don't understand. . . .
13. I think. . . .
14. I'm not sure. . . .

4-Column (Dialectical) Notebook:

Column 1: Choose and write down here a quotation from the text you want to think on in “conversation” with another reader of the same text.

Column 2: Fill this column with generative writing rising out of your selected quotation in column 1. Use **Speculative Starters** to coax and encourage your emergent thinking about the language you've chosen.

Column 3: Trade Notebooks with another student. Read each other's Column 2, and record your response in Column 3 of their notebook. Again, use Speculative Starters to further your thoughts in relation to what they've written.

Column 4. In your own notebook, write on ‘What I am Thinking Now’, in response to the previous 3 columns.

Text merging:

This reveals what happens when one text is interrupted or disrupted by another text. It consists of combining language from two different texts into another creation, to produce a poem, prose, or nonsense piece. Always it seems to illuminate both texts in new and surprising ways. Try combining distinctly different selections, both in form and/or content.

For this course's text merge activities, choose a passage from one of the literary texts studied to date in the class, and choose a passage from a non-prescribed and non-fictional publication of your preference. It could be a news item; it could be a prayer; it could be a poem; it could be a sports commentary; it could be a scientific report (to give a few examples). Merge the language from both “word banks” into a new piece of writing. You don't need to use all the words from each selected text. NB: you cannot add new words or change the tenses of the original.

Please provide the original passages/phrases on your first page and on the second page present the merge. The word minimum for the merge? 100 words.

Write a Metacognitive Reflection (minimum 250 words) after completing your text merge in response to the following questions:

What were you aware of experiencing or noticing?

What was in your mind as you did this?

How did you make your choices?

What if anything happened to the first text extracts when disrupted by the second text? To the second text when interrupted by the extracts from the first text?

You are required to post both your text merge and your metacognitive reflections on Canvas, together: please upload them as a single document.

Grading criteria (graded as complete or incomplete): you will be assessed on the basis of your adherence to the exercise instructions.

See the 'Text-merging' file for further instructions and examples.

Class Discussion Posts:

These assignments are opportunities for you to track your reading process and work through thoughts, reactions, and questions in informal, low-stakes writing. Your posts should be coherent and proofread, but you don't need to have a fully formed thesis. In fact, you may find that you raise more questions than you answer. These papers may form the basis of your in-class contributions. Discussion posts should quote directly from the text at least once, giving page number for the quotation.

Grading criteria (complete/incomplete): this comes from your adherence to the instructions above.

TIPS letters. TIPS is an acronym for Thing, Idea, Person, Self. Your Thing, Idea, and Person. You choose which writer/text will receive the Thing letter, the Idea letter, the Person letter, the Self letter. You need to write, using the letter genre, in the first person and use the second person to address your selected Thing/Idea/Person/Self. You must quote from the literary text at least once in each letter.

The 'Thing' letter is written by you to a 'Thing', defined as any inanimate object that makes an appearance in the literary text. The 'Idea' letter is written to what you identify as an idea contained in the literary text (through a character, a scene, a dialogue, a descriptive passage, the text itself as a complete entity, etc). The 'Person' to whom you address the letter can be any sentient being that makes an appearance in the literary text (includes plants and animals). The Self letter needs to explore some aspect of yourself in relation to the literary text; you might converse with an emotion that you felt while reading the text, for instance, or a perception that underwent some change as you read or reread the text, and so on.

Writing guidelines and "completion" criteria for TIPS: see the rubric file for details.

“Completion” requires your adherence to the exercise instructions, which include honoring letter-writing conventions, and writing on different literary texts. If you turn the letter into an essay, you depart from the conventions of the letter form and your grade will suffer. This is an imaginative writing exercise, not an analytic academic writing exercise.

Accompanying TIPS is a Reflection: This is to be 250 words minimum, telling me how this writing project went for you. I'm interested in your discoveries and obstacles at every stage. Some questions to address in your reflection:

1. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being a piece of cake and 10 being mission impossible, how challenging was this assignment for you, and why?
2. Why did you choose the subject and approach that you chose?
3. What went well for you in the reading and composing activities, and what was more difficult? Did you have any epiphanies or smaller discoveries while reading/writing?
4. Which part or aspect of this composition was the most challenging for you, and why?
5. If you had additional time to revise this piece, what would be your first priority, and why?

Writing Guidelines (general).

On notetaking and journaling:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1wfxW-gh0HCM_b5a_Ru8615Vdra8OUWbR/edit?usp=sharing&oid=106260696260808481483&rtpof=true&sd=trueLinks to an external site.

General tips, cautions, and requests on writing:

I like the use of the first person to present your argument. If you are uncomfortable using the first person, however, don't do it: just be careful to write in a way that foregrounds your own argument and avoids the appearance of descriptiveness or derivativeness.

Please avoid any tendency to present sweeping generalizations about the history of the world, or the nature of human psychology, such as 'it is widely known that Western culture is essentially dominatory'. Instead, keep your comments precise, specific, and supported by scholarship and observation.

Keep paragraphs within a readable length: don't make them as long as a double-spaced page. If your paragraph is that long, it will contain more than one primary topic; look for the point where you can divide the paragraph into two.

Always use the present tense when analyzing a text, not the past tense. That is, instead of ‘This author wrote/this character said’ write ‘This author writes/this character says’.

Remember that a fictional text consists of much more than its characters. Other elements of a text include: narrative structure; imagery; language; ideology; intertextual relationship to other texts.

In short: keep your emphasis on exploring the text—its ideas, its structure, and its style.

Missing class. If you miss class, it’s a great idea to ask a fellow student for information on what you missed. NB: Do not ask me—I don’t repeat missed material!

Office Hours: This is a time where you and I can meet outside class to discuss assignments, questions about the reading, concerns about expectations, etc. If my scheduled hours are inaccessible to you, please email me to make appointments for another time.

Emailing: Do not e-mail me questions that are answered explicitly in the syllabus or elsewhere on the Canvas site. I will delete these without replying...

Academic Honesty: It is essential that you properly cite other people’s ideas and language in your writing. Academic integrity is a fundamental university value. Through the honest completion of academic work, students sustain the integrity of the university while facilitating the university’s imperative for the transmission of knowledge and culture based upon the generation of new and innovative ideas.

When an instance of suspected or alleged academic dishonesty by a student arises, it shall be resolved according to the procedures standard at the University of Washington. These procedures are listed here: <https://depts.washington.edu/grading/pdf/AcademicResponsibility.pdf>Links to an external site.[Links to an external site.](#)

English Department’s Statement of Values:

The UW English Department aims to help students become more incisive thinkers, effective communicators, and imaginative writers by acknowledging that language and its use is powerful and holds the potential to empower individuals and communities; to provide the means to engage in meaningful conversation and collaboration across differences and with those with whom we disagree; and to offer methods for exploring, understanding, problem solving, and responding to the many pressing collective issues we face in our world—skills that align with and support the University of Washington’s mission to educate “a diverse student body to become responsible global citizens and future leaders through a challenging learning environment informed by cutting-edge scholarship.”

As a department, we begin with the conviction that language and texts play crucial roles in the constitution of cultures and communities. Our disciplinary commitments to the study of language, literature, and culture require of us a willingness to engage openly and critically with questions of power and difference. As such, in our teaching, service, and scholarship we frequently initiate and encourage conversations about topics such as race, immigration, gender,

sexuality, and class. These topics are fundamental to the inquiry we pursue. We are proud of this fact, and we are committed to creating an environment in which our faculty and students can do so confidently and securely, knowing that they have the backing of the department.

Towards that aim, we value the inherent dignity and uniqueness of individuals and communities. We aspire to be a place where human rights are respected and where any of us can seek support. This includes people of all ethnicities, faiths, genders, national origins, political views, and citizenship status; LGBTQIA+; those with disabilities; veterans; and anyone who has been targeted, abused, or disenfranchised.

Statement on Religious Accommodation:

Washington state law requires that UW develop a policy for accommodation of student absences or significant hardship due to reasons of faith or conscience, or for organized religious activities. The UW's policy, including more information about how to request an accommodation, is available at [Religious Accommodations Policy](https://registrar.washington.edu/staffandfaculty/religious-accommodations-policy/) (<https://registrar.washington.edu/staffandfaculty/religious-accommodations-policy/>)[Links to an external site.](#)[Links to an external site.](#)[Links to an external site.](#)

Accommodations must be requested within the first two weeks of this course using the [Religious Accommodations Request form](https://registrar.washington.edu/students/religious-accommodations-request/) (<https://registrar.washington.edu/students/religious-accommodations-request/>)[Links to an external site.](#)[Links to an external site.](#)[Links to an external site.](#)

Disability:

If you have already established accommodations with Disability Resources for Students (DRS), please communicate your approved accommodations to me at your earliest convenience so we can discuss your needs in this course.

If you have not yet established services through DRS, but have a temporary health condition or permanent disability that requires accommodations (conditions include but not limited to; mental health, attention-related, learning, vision, hearing, physical or health impacts), you are welcome to contact DRS at 206-543-8924 or uwdrs@uw.edu or disability.uw.edu. DRS offers resources and coordinates reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities and/or temporary health conditions. Reasonable accommodations are established through an interactive process between you, your instructor(s) and DRS. It is the policy and practice of the University of Washington to create inclusive and accessible learning environments consistent with federal and state law.

Writing Centers

Wherever you fall on the spectrum of writing in this course— whether you are struggling with a writing assignment or seeking to “reach the next level”— take advantage of the UW's writing centers. You will receive feedback and guidance on your writing from me and from your

classmates, but it's also valuable to get the perspective of someone outside the course (especially someone with expertise in producing academic writing!). UW's writing centers are free for students and provide individual attention from trained readers and writing coaches. This quarter they will offer remote writing appointments.

The Odegaard Writing and Research Center (OWRC) offers free, one-on-one help with all aspects of writing at any stage in the writing process. You can consult with a writing tutor at any stage of the writing process, from the very beginning (when you are planning a paper) to near the end (when you are thinking about how to revise a draft to submit to your instructor). To make the best use of your time there, please bring a copy of your assignment with you and double-space any drafts you want to bring in. While OWRC writing consultants are eager to help you improve your writing, they will not proofread your paper. Available spots are limited, so book your appointments early! Reserve appointments online at <http://depts.washington.edu/owrc/Links to an external site.> .

You can also try out the CLUE Writing Center. CLUE is a first-come, first-served writing center located in the Gateway Center at the south end of the Mary Gates Hall Commons, but of course all virtual this quarter. To learn more, visit http://depts.washington.edu/clue/dropintutor_writing.phpLinks to an external site.