

**ENGLISH 7462: CONTEMPORARY BRITISH OR COMMONWEALTH LITERATURE/
WRITING SOUTH AFRICA**

University of Memphis, Spring 2005
Tuesdays 5:30-8:30
Patterson 315
Dr. L. A. Duck
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<http://umpeople.memphis.edu/lduck>
Office hours: Tuesdays 1-2:30, 4:30-5:15

OBJECTIVES

- To consider how South African literature, through invocation of diverse traditions as well as formal innovation, has interacted with its political and cultural contexts
- To explore theories concerning colonial and postcolonial experience
- To produce a shared archive of research and commentary
- To expand skills in essay genres pertinent to literary criticism
- To practice vigorous and concentrated analytic discussion

TEXTS

Available in University Bookstore:

Alan Paton, *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1948)
Noni Jabavu, *The Ochre People: Scenes from a South African Life* (1963)
Alex La Guma, from *A Walk in the Night and Other Stories* (1967)
Nadine Gordimer, *July's People* (1981)
J. M. Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1982)
Athol Fugard, "*Master Harold*" . . . and *the Boys* (1982)
Percy Mtwa, Mbongeni Ngema, and Barney Simon, *Woza Albert!* (1983)
Antjie Krog, selections from *Country of My Skull: Guilt, Sorrow, and the Limits of Forgiveness in the New South Africa* (2000)
Achmat Bangor, *Bitter Fruit: A Novel* (2003)
Zoë Wicomb, *David's Story* (2002)
Zakes Mda, *The Heart of Redness: A Novel* (2003)

Available through electronic archive on UMDrive (<https://umdrive.memphis.edu/lduck/7462>):

All other readings, as well as initial lecture notes, annotated bibliographies, reviews, and research drafts. Persons logging on to this archive will be prompted for UUID and password; these are identical to those used to check email via ummail, or to access electronic archives through the library.

REQUIREMENTS

Please note that class requirements vary according to the course number under which individual students are enrolled, but all students are required to complete the requirements in group 1. Percentages indicate weight in course average. Students enrolled in 7462 who wish to write one long research paper and engage in the workshop should speak with me individually. This process allows students to hone important skills, but students should be aware that it is more difficult to successfully fulfill the criteria for 8462 than those for 7462.

Group 1, for all students:

- Regular attendance and vigorous participation in class meetings—25%
- One class presentation accompanied by annotated bibliography—15%
- Midterm exam, parts A and B—15%

Group 2, for students enrolled in 7462:

- Final exam, parts A and B—15%
- Two reviews—15% each

Group 3, for students enrolled in 8462:

- Final exam, part A—7.5%
- One research paper—32.5%
- Workshop process—5%

POLICIES

- Attendance and active participation are mandatory. If you miss more than three classes, you will fail the course. More than two unexcused absences will lower your grade. Because this is a graduate seminar, you are expected to come to class ready to discuss the text.
- Plagiarism of words or ideas, if detected, will result in a failing grade for the course. You can find further information regarding plagiarism and penalties at my web page.
- Your grade will be assessed according to a +/- scale. At the University of Memphis, an A- earns 3.84 out of 4 possible points; all other +/-s indicate a .33 distance from the nearest integer (i.e., a B+ = 3.33, and a B- = 2.67).
- You must complete all assigned work to pass this class.
- You are expected to be civil to others in the class. Discussion is an important element of this course, and our reading presents some unsettling images as well as controversial topics. You are encouraged to express your concerns and opinions, but please be aware that other members of the class share this right. We will be able to work through the more upsetting elements of this literature most effectively by communicating both candidly and in a manner that demonstrates respect for the classroom community. Civility includes other forms of professional behavior: for example, turn off your cell phone.
- Bring the relevant texts to every meeting of class!

PRESENTATION AND ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Each student is required to conduct one 10 minute presentation for the class.
- Students will sign up for topics at the beginning of the semester and will conduct their presentation on the corresponding date. Available topics include:

○ Bangor/ <i>Bitter Fruit</i>	○ Alex La Guma
○ Homi Bhabha	○ Mda/ <i>Heart</i>
○ Aimé Césaire*	○ Alan Paton/ <i>Cry</i> *
○ Coetzee/ <i>Waiting</i>	○ Postcolonial memory/history*
○ Franz Fanon	○ S.A. aesthetic debates*
○ Fugard/ <i>"Master Harold"</i>	○ T.R.C.
○ Gordimer/ <i>July's People</i>	○ Wicomb/ <i>David's Story</i>
○ Noni Jabavu	○ <i>Woza Albert!</i> *
○ Krog/ <i>Country</i>	

- The above asterisks indicate that, because of the topic's content or its position on the syllabus, students presenting on that topic are entitled to extra assistance and/or guidance from the professor. Please contact me well in advance of your presentation date.
- Presentations generally provide biographical, historical, and critical information: a typical presentation on Nadine Gordimer and *July's People*, for example, would very briefly summarize information about her life, spend more time describing her aesthetic project—particularly as it relates to this novel—and also prominent critical debates concerning that project/this novel. Presentations on theorists will follow a largely similar format, whereas those on historical or theoretical topics will describe various perspectives on those topics.
- Multi-media presentations are welcome: you may use handouts, Powerpoint, or video. In the latter cases, however, contact me in advance.
- Presentations will be assessed according to content and delivery: they should provide information useful to fellow students, and they should also be well organized and clearly articulated. Students are strongly encouraged to prepare thoroughly and time their presentations in advance. If you are unsure how to prioritize information, please contact me for advice/assistance.
- Research is required for these presentations. Sources must be listed and briefly summarized in an annotated bibliography, which must be submitted to UMDrive by the day following presentations (except for students presenting in week 2, who have until the following Friday). To upload your bibliography, simply click the “Launch” link at the top of our course page (<https://umdrive.memphis.edu/lduck/7462>) and you will find the application that allows you to manage files. Be sure to upload your paper to the “AnnotatedBibliographies” directory.
- Annotations should focus on summarizing important aspects of the bibliographic item and, where relevant, positioning it in relation to other items with which it agrees/disagrees. The goal here is to provide helpful information to others who may wish to consult sources in preparing their reviews or research papers. A thorough but concisely phrased single annotation would probably comprise approximately ½ page of double-spaced prose. If an item proves unhelpful for the purposes of your presentation, or seems largely irrelevant to our class discussions, your entry may be shorter, but it should state why you found the source unhelpful.
- Bibliographic entries should use MLA style or Chicago citation styles. Please note that because websites are making it so easy to learn correct citation methods, I will lower the grade of the bibliography if it is poorly formatted.
- Annotated bibliographies must contain at least five entries originally published in print venues, in addition to any other items you may have consulted. You are not required to mention all of these entries in your presentation. Your objective here is to demonstrate both reasonably substantial research and your ability to foreground your most significant finds. Please note that for very contemporary works, especially, you may find interesting reviews through Lexis-Nexis.

7462 REVIEWS (5.5 page minimum)

- You are required to write one review for a literary text read in this class before February 28; these reviews are due before February 28, but may be submitted considerably earlier. You are also required to write one review for a literary text read in this class after February 28; these reviews are due by April 28, but may be submitted considerably earlier.

- You will develop your own topics for these papers. I am calling them “reviews” rather than “essays” because they need not aspire to an objective or academic tone; they may be tendentious and should be written in a way that would be interesting to persons beyond the scholarly community. They should, however, provide cogent, compelling, and well-supported arguments. Though you may, as in a book review, make some diverse observations, you should nonetheless pursue one main theme—a thesis—such that your essay reads not as a collection of disparate points concerning a separate text, but as a coherent discussion, satisfying in itself.
- Each paper should focus on one text, but you may certainly situate that text in relation to a literary tradition or movement, as exemplified by other works.
- Each paper should cite at least two sources in addition to the main text being analyzed. You should use MLA or Chicago citation styles. Please note that because websites are making it so easy to learn correct citation methods, I will lower the grade of your final paper if its bibliography is poorly formatted.
- For reviews, I favor a pithy, focused style. You may find it useful to plan for a paper of 7 pages: you are permitted to exceed the page minimum, and it is always easier—and more impressive—to compress unduly long passages than it is to add “fluff.” But you should also, in planning your papers, allot yourself space to explain your ideas fully and thoroughly.
- All reviews should be submitted to UMDrive; to upload your paper, simply click the “Launch” link at the top of our course page (<https://umdrive.memphis.edu/lduck/7462>) and you will find the application that allows you to manage files. Be sure to upload your paper to the “Reviews” directory; please also email me to alert me that your paper is available.

8462 RESEARCH PAPER (18 page minimum)

- You will develop your own topics for this final paper.
 - You should focus on one text, or the relationship between two texts. If you define your topic carefully, you may compare two texts’ approach to a critical or historical problem.
 - These papers must demonstrate engagement with a critical, historical, or theoretical archive:
 - For a critical example, you could attempt to situate, or reposition, one of these texts in relation to aesthetic debates concerning South African or postcolonial literature.
 - For a historicist example, you could attempt to situate, or reposition, one of these texts in relation to a particular socio-cultural or political conflict during this period. How do these texts configure apartheid, for example, or the possibilities for “reconciliation” after violence and oppression?
 - Finally, if you have experience or avid interest in working with a theoretical archive, you might use such texts in your analysis of the novel. How might psychoanalytic or Marxist theories, for example, help us to understand these texts? On the other hand, how might one of these texts lead us to rethink some of the models posited by psychoanalytic or Marxist theories?
- Final papers should cite **at least 6** books or journal articles in addition to your primary sources. You can also cite educational websites, but these will not count toward your 6-source minimum. You should use MLA style or Chicago citation styles. Please note that

because websites are making it so easy to learn correct citation methods, I will lower the grade of your final paper if its bibliography is poorly formatted.

- Papers should be very carefully and clearly structured. You may find it useful to divide your paper into multi-page sections with subheadings—mini-chapters of a sort.
- In academic papers, I favor a focused, finely-honed style. You may find it useful to plan for a paper of 20 or more pages: you are permitted to exceed the page minimum, and it is always easier—and more impressive—to compress unduly long passages than it is to add “fluff.” But you should also, in planning your papers, allot yourself space to explain your ideas fully and thoroughly.
- **Prospectus, due April 4:**
 - The prospectus need not posit a thesis, but should articulate the line of investigation that you plan to pursue: you need to articulate your research question clearly, and explain how you will approach that question.
 - The section of your prospectus describing your research topic should be at least ½ page in length, and you are welcome to provide more discussion. The extent to which I can helpfully advise you in developing your paper will depend on the quality and quantity of information you provide me here.
 - Your prospectus should include a bibliography of sources you plan to cite.
 - The prospectus is due early in April because you are expected to begin work on this paper well before the final week of class. You may certainly submit and request feedback on a prospectus well before April 11.
- **Draft workshop and process:**
 - You are required to workshop a complete draft of your paper on Saturday, April 29, at 1:00. (Any potential schedule conflicts should be addressed during the first 2 weeks of class.)
 - To participate in these workshops, you must upload a complete draft of your paper to <https://umdrive.memphis.edu/lduck/7462> by Wednesday, April 26 at 7:00. In order to upload a file, click the “launch” link at the top of the index page. Be sure to upload your paper to the “ResearchDrafts” directory.
 - For the final workshops, you must write a brief commentary for each of your colleagues' papers. You should be able to access these papers through UMDrive after 7:00 on Wednesday, 4/26. Bring two copies of these commentaries to class-- one for the writers of the papers, and one for me.
 - Commentaries should address each of the following questions.
 - What is the thesis of this paper?
 - What did you consider its most significant point or methodological trait? Why?
 - What aspect of the paper (a certain claim, a certain facet of the interpretive method, a certain transition in the argument) did you find most confusing? Why?
 - In what way did this paper expand/clarify your understanding of its topic?
 - These commentaries need not be elegantly written: we will, after all, be able to clarify our statements in the workshop. But they need to be both precise and civil in order to be productive. Please note that the quality of their participation in this process provides important evidence for me in writing letters of recommendation for former students seeking teaching positions.

- Final papers are due Thursday, 5/4, by 5:00, and may be submitted to my office or via email.

EXAMS

- The exams are designed to ascertain that students have done the reading and can write interesting and coherent commentary concerning the course subject matter. Student responses should reflect awareness of class discussions but should not be restricted to mere “regurgitation” of points made in class.
- Part A of each exam will consist solely of short-answer identification questions: students will be provided a passage of text and will be required to name its source and very briefly describe its significance in relation to at least one of our course’s themes. (Please note that these passages will not be obscure selections; I will be seeking passages of sufficient import that anyone who has read the text and attended to class discussion should be able to recognize them easily.) This section of each exam will take place in class: there will be a time limit, and students will be allowed to consult their notes.
- Part B of each exam will consist solely of essay questions, similar in form to the questions on M.A. and Ph.D. comprehensive exams. The questions will be sufficiently broad that they will relate to many readings in the course; a successful answer will typically incorporate meaningful references to several course readings. Students should allot approximately one hour to each question; ideally, essays for these exams should be roughly outlined before students begin writing, in order to craft a persuasive and coherent answer. This section of the exam does differ from comprehensive exams in its take-home format: it will be completed outside of class on the honor system. Students are expected to type their answers and are allowed to consult notes and texts.

SCHEDULE

Texts/assignments listed to the right of the date are to be discussed/submitted on that date.

- 1/17** Introduction and history
Salman Rusdie, “Commonwealth Literature Does Not Exist” (1983)
- 1/24** Alan Paton, *Cry, the Beloved Country*
Aimé Césaire, “Discourse on Colonialism” (1955)
- 1/31** Alex La Guma, *A Walk in the Night* (1962)
Franz Fanon, from *The Wretched of the Earth* (1965)
- 2/7** Noni Jabavu, *The Ochre People*
- 2/14** Athol Fugard, “*Master Harold*” . . . and the Boys
Percy Mtwa, Mbongeni Ngema, and Barney Simon, *Woza Albert!*
- 2/21** Nadine Gordimer, *July’s People*
Homi Bhabha, “The Other Question” (1992)
- 2/28** Amilcar Cabral, “National Liberation and Culture” (1973)

Es'kia Mphahlele, "African Literature: What Tradition?" **OR** "African Writers and Commitment" (1967)

Njabulo Ndebele, "Actors and Interpreters: Popular Culture and Progressive Formalism" (1984)

Midterm exam, part A

7462 first reviews must be submitted on UMDrive before this date

3/7 SPRING BREAK

3/14 J. M. Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians*

Anne McClintock, "The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the term 'Post-Colonialism'" (1992)

Midterm exam, part B due

3/21 Antjie Krog, *Country of My Skull: Guilt, Sorrow, and the Limits of Forgiveness in the New South Africa*, 1-255

3/28 Krog, 256-end
Achmat Bangor, *Bitter Fruit: A Novel*, 1-175

4/4 Bangor, 176-end
Zoë Wicomb, *David's Story*, 1-137

4/11 Wicomb, 137-end
Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, "Beyond 'Culture': Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference" (1992)

8462 prospectus due

4/18 Zakes Mda, *The Heart of Redness: A Novel*

4/25 Paul Gilroy, from *Postcolonial Melancholia* (2004)
Final exam, part A

Wednesday, 4/26 8462 Drafts due on UMDrive by 7:00

Friday, 4/28 7462 Second review due on UMDrive by 5:00

Saturday, 4/29 8462 Writing Workshop, 1:00, Patterson 443

Tuesday, 5/2 7462 Exams due in my office or email by 5:00

Thursday, 5/4 8462 Final drafts due in my office or email by 5:00