

**Narrating Apartheid/Narrating Jim Crow:
South African and (Southern) U.S. Literatures**

M.A. course, Dept. of English, Germanic, and Romance Studies
University of Copenhagen, Autumn 2009
Wednesdays 10-13, 24.5.07
Leigh Anne Duck, lad@hum.ku.dk
<http://umpeople.memphis.edu/lduck>
Office 24.3.61, phone 35 32 84 52
Office hours: Tuesdays 15-16 and by appt.

DESCRIPTION:

This course examines novels from the southern U.S. and from South Africa, focusing on their representations of racial oppression and how characters conceptualize (or fail to comprehend) injustice. We will be particularly concerned with how narratives depict the ideologies that support and occlude apartheid, the events that foreground racial oppression, and the social actions and interactions that lead characters to view their society—and/or their role within it—in a new way. Alert to how these national literatures may have informed or influenced each other, we will also examine how these texts and their impacts are shaped by formal strategies (such as realism, narrative fragmentation, and hallucinatory and symbolist representation) and political paradigms (including Marxism, liberalism, and diverse forms of nationalism). Finally, we will consider issues raised by fiction from the post-Civil Rights and post-apartheid era, which explore the significance of past oppression for later political developments. Our goal will be to consider how examination of these two contexts—with their equally stark similarities and differences—can illuminate each other.

TEXTS:

Available at the university bookstore (though alternate editions are acceptable):

J. M. Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983)
Achmat Dangor, *Bitter Fruit* (2001)
William Faulkner, *Light in August* (1932)
Alex La Guma, *A Walk in the Night* (1962)
Alice Walker, *Meridian* (1976)
Zakes Mda, *Cion* (2007)

Other readings will be made available via Absalon, for which *all students must register!*

COMPETENCIES

At the end of this course, student should have developed competency in

- analyzing literary representations of individual consciousness and social structure,
- studying diverse sites of racial oppression and literary production comparatively,
- examining the relationship between politics and literary form,
- understanding aspects of literary theories concerning trauma and ideology, and
- preparing for and participating in seminar discussion of texts and issues (required).

ASSESSMENT:

This course uses exam form A, in which students write a 20-25 page take-home research paper on a course-related topic. International students taking the course at BA level will write a 15-20 page take-

home paper. You will develop your own topics for this final paper, but you must consult with me during that process. Though the parameters for this assignment are broad, each paper should feature close analysis of one or two texts while situating those texts in relation to broader aesthetic and/or historical contexts through consultation of secondary sources.

All students will present a synopsis of their paper during the final week of class, which will comprise 25% of the grade. Presentations should be brief (6-7 minutes) and must be accompanied by a hand-out that includes an abstract of the proposed paper and a preliminary annotated bibliography, which will provide citation information for sources you have already consulted, as well as brief notes explaining the relevance of each source to your argument. (Access will be provided for electronic distribution of hand-outs, for those who are interested.) The objective of these presentations is both to share your research and to augment the paper-writing process: ideally, exchanging plans for your projects will be mutually inspirational, and at the very least, it will force you to articulate a viable agenda in a manner that others can understand and discuss. Students are expected to provide questions and feedback for their classmates' presentations: attendance and participation are just as important during the last sessions of class as they are earlier in the semester.

RESOURCES:

To help you prepare for class discussion, and to allow more time for that discussion (by reducing lecture material), study guides and bibliographies of secondary material for each text will be posted on Absalon. Accordingly, be sure to register for this online resource, and check back often!

SCHEDULE:

Week 1/Calendar week 36/2 September: Introduction

Week 2/Calendar week 37/9 September:

William Faulkner, *Light in August* (1932), chaps. 1-11

Week 3/Calendar week 38/16 September:

Faulkner, *Light in August*, chaps. 12-end

Week 4/Calendar week 39/23 September:

Richard Wright, "Bright and Morning Star" (1940)

Alex La Guma, *A Walk in the Night* (1962)

Week 5/Calendar week 40/30 September

J. M. Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983), pp. 1-100

Excerpt from Alan Paton, *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1948)

Coetzee, from "South African Liberals: Alan Paton, Helen Suzman"

Week 6/Calendar week 41/7 October

Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, 101-end

Nadine Gordimer, from *Jump* (1991)

Calendar week 42: no class/university rule

Week 7/Calendar week 43/21 October

Alice Walker, *Meridian* (1976), pt. I

Eudora Welty, “Where Is the Voice Coming From?” (1963)

Week 8/Calendar week 44/28 October

Walker, *Meridian*, pt. II-end

Percival Everett, “The Appropriation of Cultures” (2004)

Calendar week 45: no class/semester break

Week 9/Calendar week 46/11 November

Achmat Dangor, *Bitter Fruit* (2001), chaps. 1-9

Antjie Krog, from *Country of My Skull: Guilt, Sorrow, and the Limits of Forgiveness in the New South Africa* (1998)

Week 10/Calendar week 47/18 November

Dangor, *Bitter Fruit*, chaps. 10-end

Sindiwe Magona, from *Mother to Mother* (1998)

Week 11/Calendar week 48/25 November

Zakes Mda, *Cion* (2007)

Week 12/Calendar week 49/2 December

Presentations