

# Literatures of Africa Section 01

## ENGL 123B

Fall 2024 3 Unit(s) 08/21/2024 to 12/09/2024 Modified 10/23/2024

### Contact Information

---

Instructor(s):	Dr. Meghan Gorman-DaRif
Email:	meghan.gorman-darif@sjsu.edu
Office Hours:	Wednesday, 10-11 via Zoom, and by appointment
Class Days/Time:	TTH 12:00-1:15 BBC 130

### Course Information

---

This section, 123B: Literatures of Africa, examines literature in English produced during the postcolonial period from a variety of countries and cultures in Africa, with special attention to how authors engage in their texts with the contexts of colonialism, systems of education, and the English language itself as a medium for self-expression. This course is not meant to be a complete survey in African literature, but instead aims to introduce students to some of the themes that have emerged in postcolonial African fiction over the last fifty years, and the historical, political, and social contexts from which such writing emerges.

### Course Description and Requisites

---

Examines the literatures of Africa, including the historical, cultural, and political contexts from which they emerge.

Satisfies SJSU Studies Area V: Cultures and Global Understanding.

Prerequisite(s): Completion of Core General Education and upper division standing are prerequisites to all SJSU studies courses. Completion of, or co-registration in, 100W is strongly recommended.

Letter Graded

# Program Information

---

Welcome to this General Education course.

SJSU's General Education Program establishes a strong foundation of versatile skills, fosters curiosity about the world, promotes ethical judgment, and prepares students to engage and contribute responsibly and cooperatively in a multicultural, information-rich society. General education classes integrate areas of study and encourage progressively more complex and creative analysis, expression, and problem solving.

The General Education Program has three goals:

**Goal 1:** To develop students' core competencies for academic, personal, creative, and professional pursuits.

**Goal 2:** To enact the university's commitment to diversity, inclusion, and justice by ensuring that students have the knowledge and skills to serve and contribute to the well-being of local and global communities and the environment.

**Goal 3:** To offer students integrated, multidisciplinary, and innovative study in which they pose challenging questions, address complex issues, and develop cooperative and creative responses.

More information about the General Education Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) can be found on the [GE website](#).

## English Program Information

The following statement has been adopted by the Department of English for inclusion in all syllabi: In English Department Courses, instructors will comment on and grade the quality of student writing as well as the quality of ideas being conveyed. All student writing should be distinguished by correct grammar and punctuation, appropriate diction and syntax, and well-organized paragraphs. The Department of English reaffirms its commitment to the differential grading scale as defined in the SJSU Catalog ("The Grading System").

Grades issued must represent a full range of student performance:

- A = excellent;
- B = above average;
- C = average;
- D = below average;
- F = failure.

Within any of the letter grade ranges (e.g. B+/B/B-), the assignment of a +(plus) or -(minus) grade will reflect stronger (+) or weaker (-) completion of the goals of the assignment.

## Program Learning Outcomes (PLO)

Upon successful completion of an undergraduate degree program in the Department of English and Comparative Literature, students will be able to:

1. Read closely in a variety of forms, styles, structures, and modes, and articulate the value of close reading in the study of literature, creative writing, or rhetoric.
2. Show familiarity with major literary works, genres, periods, and critical approaches to British, American, and World Literature.
3. Write clearly, effectively, and creatively, and adjust writing style appropriately to the content, the context, and nature of the subject.
4. Develop and carry out research projects, and locate, evaluate, organize, and incorporate information effectively.
5. Articulate the relations among culture, history, and texts, including structures of power.

#### Department Information:

Department Name: English and Comparative Literature

Department Office: FO 102

Department Website: [www.sjsu.edu/english](http://www.sjsu.edu/english) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/english>)

Department email: [english@sjsu.edu](mailto:english@sjsu.edu) (<mailto:english@sjsu.edu>)

Department phone number: 408-924-4425

## Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

---

### GE Area V Learning Outcomes

1. The GE writing requirement will be met in this class by means of weekly blog posts and a series of written assignments with an aggregate word count of 5,000+ words, as follows:

Blog Posts: 300 words/week

Short Writing Assignments: 250-500 words/each

Paper 1: 1000-1500 words

Paper 2: 1000-1500 words

1. The General Education Learning Outcomes for this course and the coursework that link to those outcomes are described below:

GEALO 1: Analyze historical, social, and/or cultural significance of creative works of human expression (examples include, but are not limited to, written works, images, media, music, dance, technologies, designs), from at least one cultural tradition outside the United States.	Close reading, analysis, critique, and discussion of course texts and outside research as measured by weekly blog posts focused on comparisons between texts, and the final research paper which synthesizes both primary and secondary texts as well as outside research.
GEALO 2: Examine how creative works of human expression [as defined in #1] outside the United States have influenced the United States' cultures	Course lectures, particularly those focused on recommended secondary texts, as well as second major paper assignment on contextual analysis.
GEALO 3: Explain how a culture outside the U.S. has changed in response to internal and external influences	Course lectures, readings, blog posts, and discussions, as well as contextual analysis and research essays.
GEALO 4: Appraise how the study of creative works of human expression from outside the United States shapes one's own understanding of cultural experiences and practices.	Blog posts, class discussions.

## Course Materials

---

### Required Books

*Weep Not, Child* (1964) Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o ISBN: 978-0143106692

*Nervous Conditions* (1988) Tsitsi Dangarembga ISBN: 978-0954702335

*The Joys of Motherhood* (1979) Buchi Emecheta ISBN: 978-0807616239

*Oil on Water* (2010) Helon Habila ISBN: 978-0393339642

## Course Requirements and Assignments

---

### Blog Posts

You will be asked to contribute to the course blog at least once a week. Your contributions will include both an original post (300 words) and a response to a classmate's post (50-100 words). **Original posts are due Monday at midnight; responses are due Thursday by the time class meets.** Blogs should center on the course readings for that upcoming week, focusing on critical analysis through close reading skills and/or addressing texts' social, political, and historical contexts to produce analytical readings as discussed in class. Blog posts should make an argument about some element of the text, as well as providing support for the argument with textual evidence and your own interpretation and analysis of the evidence to support your point or idea. The audience for this will be your peers - educated readers familiar with the text - therefore, the goal is to produce a value-added piece of writing for the class that hinges on persuading your readers that your interpretation is valid (though debatable). Examples might include: a pattern or theme you have noticed developing in the text, and what you think the author is trying to reveal through it; a close reading of a particular scene in an attempt to get at its possible meaning or implications; the use of outside research to **contextualize** the text and make an argument about it; a consideration of how the text's conditions of production may relate to or influence its meaning, etc. These posts are designed for you to be able to practice your analytical skills, and receive substantive weekly feedback on your writing and critical thinking in preparation for our longer writing assignments, and to encourage attentive reading practices to facilitate class discussion.

### Close Reading Exercises and Research Summaries

Over the course of the semester you will be asked to complete structured close reading exercises to practice and fine-tune this skill leading up to essay assignments. In addition, you will also be asked to complete several research summaries in preparation for the research component of papers. These summaries will include an MLA citation of the summarized source, a brief review of the venue of the text, and a concise summary of the text's argument. These assignments are intended to provide support for developing ideas for essays, as well as to provide frequent opportunities for feedback on close reading and research skills necessary for successful completion of the larger writing assignments. **You will be required to complete at least one of the close reading assignments, and at least two of the research summaries. You can and are encouraged to do more – as they directly contribute to the development of major papers and give you more opportunities to get feedback on your ideas and writing along the way.**

### Quizzes

You will be quizzed on reading, viewing, and lecture materials covered in readings or during class time. If you are regularly attending class and keeping up with readings, these should be an easy way to keep your grade up – I see them as built-in accountability to encourage you to stay on top of materials.

### Participation

As you may have discovered, active participation is key to success the classroom. Active participation will help us develop a community to discuss ideas, collaborate, and discover new insights into the texts through the perspectives of others. Participation includes more than merely attending class, as I expect each of you to arrive prepared by having carefully read assigned readings, and to actively participate in full class discussions and smaller group discussions and in class projects and activities. Part of this active engagement in class and participation in the group dynamic of the classroom is to keep your cell phone away and your computer screen only open to Canvas or note-taking software.

### Contextual Analysis Papers

**Length:** 1000-1,500 words double-spaced, plus a separate Works Cited list. Use standard margins and 12-point Times New Roman font.

**Essay Guidelines:** The purpose of this essay is to analyze how a text responds to one specific historical issue at the time of writing. The goal is not to write a comprehensive explanation of the whole book, but to focus closely on a set of passages, verbal patterns, or recurring images that can help readers understand one specific aspect of the text's relationship to its particular time and place.

Your **introduction** should briefly introduce the context you're focusing on and state your **thesis**: your central argument about how you think the author represents or implicitly responds to a specific cultural/historical/political issue.

In your **body paragraphs**, provide background information to orient readers to your historical issue, and use textual analysis to explain how you think the author is representing or responding to this issue. You might choose to focus closely on one or two passages or gather a range of quotations from across the book. Your Contextual Analysis Paper will develop the same skills you've practiced in the close reading exercises: analyzing the significance of the author's formal choices, such as their word choice, tone, selection of detail, and use of metaphors. For this paper, you'll be focusing on **how those formal details reveal the author's response to a specific cultural/political/social conflict**.

**Research:** This assignment requires you to gather evidence from outside of your main literary text. You are required to incorporate **at least 2 (1<sup>st</sup> paper)-3 (2<sup>nd</sup> paper) credible scholarly sources**: these could include sources that provide background information on your historical topic, critical essays that make an argument related to your historical topic, or other sources as appropriate such as a relevant primary text. Cite all of your sources within the paper using parenthetical citations (Author #), and include a Works Cited page citing all 2/3 sources in MLA style.

To locate sources in the SJSU library system, visit the MLK Library's English and Comparative Literature research guide: <https://libguides.sjsu.edu/english>. The research guide includes contact information for the English and Comparative Literature librarian, who can help with research questions. For more guidance, please visit my office hours, the Writing Center, or the MLK Library's Research help desk.

For a C or above, your paper must be at least 1000 words long, incorporate 2/3 sources, and include a debatable thesis statement about your selected text's relation to one specific historical context. If your paper meets these basic requirements, I will assess your grade based on the following criteria, listed in order of importance:

- *Argument*: Does the paper develop a compelling argument about how the author represents and responds to a specific historical context, rather than just summarizing the book and listing contextual information? Does the evidence in your body paragraphs support your argument?
- *Historical specificity*: Do you ground claims about the author’s historical and cultural context in your research, rather than making assumptions? For example, do you describe specific ways in which people were constrained at particular moments or in particular circumstances under colonialism, rather than vaguely stating that people were oppressed?
- *Organization*: Does the essay develop logically? Do you use transitions and topic sentences to link your paragraphs?
- *Integrating research*: Do you effectively incorporate your three sources? Do you frame each quotation or paraphrase with an explanation of its significance? Do you attribute ideas and phrases to their sources using in-text citations?
- *Presentation*: Is your paper free of grammatical errors and edited for style?

## ✓ Grading Information

---

There will be two essays that make up the majority of the grade for this class. Should you choose to revise the first essay, the deadline for revisions is one week from the date you receive your paper back with comments (essays comprise 60% of the final grade). There will also be weekly blog posts and quizzes (25% of the final grade)

Short Writing Assignments	10%	CLO 1, 3
Essay 1:	30%	GELO 2, 3, CLO 1, 2
Essay 2	30%	GELO 1, 3, CLO 1, 2, 3
Weekly Blog Posts	15%	GELO 1, 4 CLO 1, 2, 3
Quizzes	10%	CLO 1, 2
Participation	5%	GELO 4

A (93%-100%)	B- (80%-82.9%)	D+ (67%-69.9%)
A- (90%-92.9%)	C+ (77%-79.9%)	D (63%-66.9%)
B+ (87%-89.9%)	C (73%-76.9%)	D- (60%-62.9%)
B (83%-86.9%)	C- (70%-72.9%)	F (0%-59.9%)

Per [University Policy S16-9 \(PDF\)](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on the [Syllabus Information](https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php>) web page. Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.