

University of Washington
Drama 494A / Winter 2018

African Theatre and Performance

T / Th 9AM-10:50AM	Prof. Catherine Cole
Hutchinson 130	Location of office hours: Suzzallo library, Room 559, 5th floor
Office Hours: Tuesdays 11:20AM-1:20 PM	colectat@uw.edu
Sign up here: http://www.supersaas.com/schedule/colectat/Catherine_Cole_Office_Hours	

An exploration of theater, dance, and other types of performance from Africa, this class focuses this term on West Africa and South Africa. We will consider plays by writers such as Wole Soyinka, Ama Ata Aidoo, and Athol Fugard, as well as contemporary dance works by choreographers such as Mamela Nyamza and Gregory Maqoma. The course covers topics such as slavery, colonialism and apartheid, all of which have had a profound impact on African history and cultures. Students can enroll in this class knowing nothing about Africa, and by course's end, they will have gained a foundational orientation to the performative cultures of a complex, dynamic, influential, and vibrant part of our world.

Readings for the course focus largely on plays because I believe the best way to learn about Africa is from Africans themselves, and especially African writers. My lectures provide historical and cultural context for each artistic work: from the 13th Century empire of Mali (*Sundiata Epic*) and the slave castles of the Gold Coast from the 19th century (Aidoo's play *Anowa*) to the anti-colonial Mau Mau uprising in Kenya (and the work of Ngugi wa Thiong'o) and the breathtaking history of apartheid and democratic South Africa (including the rich tradition of protest theatre and contemporary performing arts in the post-apartheid era). Our discussions will deepen students' critical thinking and literary analysis abilities, while the assignments will cultivate essay writing abilities—all of which will prove of crucial value in students' lives after college. Beyond this, the overarching purpose of this course is to cultivate cross-cultural literacy and intercultural understanding through the arts.

By the end of this course students will be able to:

1. Identify some major figures and topics in African performance.
2. Analyze dramatic texts and performances with precision and insight.
3. Formulate a well-organized argument supported by evidence.

Over the past 20 years, I have taught this class at UC Berkeley, UC Santa Barbara, and Florida State University. Students previously enrolled in this class have said: "I didn't know anything about Africa before this class, and I liked the unique approach the instructor took to it by studying Africa through plays." "What I gained from this class was a compassion for Africa and the colonialism that took place. I have more awareness of the politics involved in the formation of Africa." "The most important thing I learned this semester was the history of apartheid. I had NO idea what happened before this class." "I am very happy I took this class because I now want to continue learning about Africa and visit there one

day." "The most important thing I learned about Africa is that there is more to it than what the media portrays."

This course fulfills both the VLPA and Diversity General Education Requirements.

Required Books/Readings: Two required texts are available at the University Bookstore: D.T. Niane, *Sundiata Epic* and Banham and Plastow, *Contemporary African Plays*. Other readings are available via Canvas.

GRADING

Short assignments & quizzes (8 total)*	20%
Participation	10%
Midterm 1	25%
Midterm 2	25%
Final paper	20%

* There are actually 9 short assignments and quizzes listed in the syllabus. If you miss one of these or get a low grade, I will discard your lowest grade out of the 9 in the final calculation. So in effect, there are only 8 combined short assignments & quizzes.

ASSIGNMENTS

Short Assignments: I give short writing assignments and quizzes to help motivate and reward timely reading: well-prepared students help us have great class discussions! There will be a total of 8 quizzes and/or small assignments given during the semester, and the dates of these are marked in the syllabus. Quizzes can be on the reading that is due that day, or on any material covered since the previous quiz. Each quiz will be worth 5 points and have 5 questions. If you've done the reading and attended the lectures, answering these questions should be a breeze.

Participation. Active and thoughtful participation by students is crucial to the success of this course. Students must come fully prepared, having completed all assigned readings. The participation grade will be based upon the quality and regularity of your verbal input, as well as execution of in-class exercises. The quality of your verbal input is more important than quantity.

Midterm exam. There will be two of these. The first one is a take-home essay midterm, given out on 2/1 and due back on 2/6. The second exam is multiple choice and short answer, with questions drawn from material throughout the quarter. This exam will be in-class on 3/6.

Final Paper. Students will write one 8-page paper. This could be a literary analysis of one or two play texts. Alternatively, you may choose to do a research paper on some particular aspect of African performance. Suggested topics will be given out 2/6. **Proposals are due 2/20, and final papers are due 3/14.** Feel free to come see me during office hours to talk about your ideas.

Extra Credit. You can substitute up to one of your short assignment grades by doing an extra credit assignment. In order to get extra credit, you must attend some Africa-related performance, lecture, or museum exhibition and do a brief write-up about your experience. Submit a 2-page typed, single-spaced response to the event that describes key points and highlights your reaction. *You should submit your write-up via Canvas within 14 days of the event. The last day to submit extra credit assignments is March 1.* For ideas, see the extra credit assignment prompt on Canvas.

POLICIES

Attendance – Regular and prompt attendance is essential to your learning process in this course and is therefore an important part of the participation grade. An important part of the learning in this course comes from interaction among students and the instructor. Therefore, students are not experiencing the development of ideas in a course if they are not present for these interactions. Arriving late or leaving early will also negatively impact your grade, as this is very distracting to the whole class.

Submission of Assignments – Papers/exams are due in class on the day listed in the syllabus. Most assignments are due before class starts at 9AM. Assignment due dates serve to determine how well students can master the content in a specified amount of time. Anyone needing extra time (excepting students with disabilities who may need special accommodations) will be docked points as an indication that they did not show an acceptable level of mastery in the time allotted.

Exams – There are no alternate dates for the midterm exams.

Drop/Add Policy -- If enrolled students do not attend the first week of class and do not communicate with the instructor, they may be dropped. Waitlists will prioritize Drama majors according to class rank.

Academic Honesty -- It is the University's position that all forms of cheating are antithetical to the basic goals of education. Therefore, any instance of academic dishonesty that is detected will be reported. The most severe penalty that may be imposed for academic misconduct is dismissal from the University.

Disability Accommodations – Students with disabilities are welcome in this class. Please be aware that students seeking accommodation must register with Disability Resources for Students, <http://depts.washington.edu/uwdrs/>, and an accommodation letter will be sent to the instructor. Please register in a timely fashion. See: <http://depts.washington.edu/uwdrs/current-students/services-request-timeline/>

Digital Etiquette -- Our classes are occasions for us all to think together about a particular problem or text. We need to be able to engage with each other. And so it matters how you treat other people and how you focus. Digital devices should add to the classroom environment, not detract from it.

Phones &c.: This should go without saying, but let's say it anyway: you should turn off your cellphone and/or electronic other devices before you enter the classroom.

Laptops: You may use a laptop to take notes during this class. Indeed, there will be times when I will call on students with laptops to look up facts etc. during class. However, in-class laptops also present temptations that many students find irresistible. You should not use a laptop during class to follow a game, check your friends' statuses on Facebook, play Farmville, IM, respond to email, etc. Such activities not only distract you (meaning you will be less able to participate meaningfully in the class' conversations), they also distract anyone around or behind you. If you often seem distracted by what's on your screen, I will ask you to put your laptop away.

COURSE OUTLINE

Note: For all assignment due dates, unless otherwise note, submit by 9AM.

Date	Topic and Reading	Due
	UNIT A: West Africa	
Week 1	Introduction to the course and to each other	
Th 1/4	Griots, oral tradition, and improvised performance.	Assignment #1 given out: Interview exercise/praise poem
Week 2	Oral and Improvised Traditions, Mali and Ghana	
T 1/9	<u>Topic: Sundiata Epic</u> PREP: Read <i>Sundiata Epic</i> , pp 1-43 (Bookstore) and also “The Epic of Son-Jara” by Johnson (Canvas)	Assignment #1: bring hard copy draft to class.
Th 1/11	<u>Topic: Griots + Concert Party</u> PREP: Read the rest of <i>Sundiata Epic</i>	Assignment #1 DUE: Praise poem, due 1/11 by 9AM
Week 3	Ghanaian Drama	
T 1/16	<u>Topic: Connection of oral traditions to scripted drama</u> PREP: Read ben Abdallah, <i>Witch of Mopti</i> (Canvas) and Shipley, “Total African Theatre” (Canvas) Assignment #2 given out: close reading of Aidoo’s <i>Anowa</i>	Quiz #1 on course material to date.
Th 1/18	<u>Topic: West African Slave Trade</u> PREP: Read Aidoo, <i>Anowa</i> (in <i>African Plays</i>)	Assignment #2 due: <i>Anowa</i>
Week 4	Nigeria / Wole Soyinka / British Colonialism	
T 1/23	PREP: Read Wole Soyinka, <i>Death and the King’s Horseman</i> (in <i>African Plays</i>) Assignment #3 given out re: Soyinka reading	

Date	Topic and Reading	Due
Th 1/25	<i>Death and the King's Horseman (cont.)</i>	Assignment #3 due: Soyinka
Week 5	Post-Colonial Nigeria and the Language of African Theatre	
T 1/30	Read: Femi Osofisan's, <i>The Chattering and the Song</i> (in African Plays)	Quiz #2: on readings to date
Th 2/1	<u>Transition from Unit A to Unit B: the colonial legacies of language</u> Read: essay from Ngugi wa Thiong'o's <i>Decolonizing the Mind</i> (Canvas)	Mid-Term Exam —take home essay, topics given out this day

	Unit B: South Africa	
Week 6	<u>Introduction to South Africa and Apartheid</u>	
T 2/6	In-class viewing of <i>Amandla! A Revolution in Four Part Harmony</i>	Take home midterm due (on canvas); Final Paper topics given out
Th 2/8	<u>Topic: Forced Removals and Group Areas Act</u> PREP: read Junction Avenue Theater Company, <i>Sophiatown</i> (Canvas)	
Week 7	<u>Anti-Apartheid Protest Theatre</u>	
T 2/13	PREP: read Fugard, Kani and Ntshona, <i>Sizwe Bansi is Dead</i> (Canvas)	
Th 2/15	PREP: read Ngema, <i>Woza Albert!</i> (in African Plays)	Quiz #4: on <i>Sizwe Bansi is Dead</i> and <i>Woza Albert!</i>

Week 8	Transition to Democracy / Truth and Reconciliation	
T 2/20	PREP: Read Jane Taylor, et al, <i>Ubu and the Truth Commission</i>	Assignment #4: Proposal for final paper due
Th 2/22	PREP: Read John Kani, <i>Nothing but the Truth</i>	Quiz #5 on week 8 reading.
Week 9	Contemporary Dance from South Africa (+DRC)	
T 2/27	Choreographer Gregory Maqoma, <i>Exit/Exist</i> and <i>Beautiful Me</i> + Faustin Linyekula PREP: No reading due this day; focus on your final papers	
Th 3/1	South African choreographers Mamela Nyamza and Jay Pather PREP: No reading due this day--focus on your final papers	
Week 10	Wrap up	
T 3/6	<u>Wrap Up: Review session on whole class</u>	
Th 3/8	<u>Midterm #2 – In class</u>	

Final Papers due: March 14 by 5PM on Canvas