

AFRICAN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Course Description

African Autobiography covers autobiographies written by Africans both while in Africa and in other countries, as a part of an overall diaspora. Beginning with slave narratives and ending with post-colonial accounts, the autobiographical writings explore themes of personal identity, selfhood in a colonial and post-colonial context, tensions between national and tribal identities, and the potential of human self-actualization.

About the Professor

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Unit 1. The African Autobiography: Its Beginnings in the Slave Narrative Tradition

Week 1

-The alleged submergence of the African subject in his/her community which perpetuates through primordial rites a compelling sense of the human herd that is inherently inimical to individuality is at the core of the myth that denies even the possibility of the African autobiography. (See, for example James Olney's claim that the traditional African subject strives to "merge individual identity with group identity so that the part represents the whole, the whole is embodied and personified in the part, and the linear immortality of either is assured in the birth, reincarnation, and perpetuation of the common spirit" (*Tell* 67)).

- The myth, of course, is a misconception. The African conception of "community existence" does not negate the sense of individuation. Traditional African societies had a keen sense of and developed expressions that denote individuation. However, autobiographies, as opposed to sustained and complex accounts of family genealogies and heroic accomplishments, are not known in oral forms in traditional African societies.

- Some notable slave narratives remain the original source of the African autobiography. They include, Ignatius Sancho's *Letters of the Late Ignatius Sancho, an African* (1782), published two years after the author's death in 1780; Ottobah Cuguano's *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil and Wicked Traffic of the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species* (1787) and Olaudah Equiano's *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, the African. Written by Himself* (1789)

- Ignatius Sancho, born 1729 on a slave ship; his mother died soon after and his father was said to have committed suicide a little later. Baptized at Cartagena, given the name "Ignatius" but he took on the additional identity of "Sancho".
- Slavery is one of the concerns of his *Letters*. He was said to be an acquaintance of Garrick and Sterne and addressed them in some of his letters. In a letter to Sterne, Sancho thanked him for condemning slavery in one of his preachments and noted that the "subject handled in your striking manner would ease the yoke (perhaps) of many." In another letter to a friend of his, he condemns the "most diabolical usage of my brother Negroes."
- Sancho wrote verse and music while some of his poems were published in 1803. In *Negroes in Britain* (1948) by K. Little, Sancho was said to have written two stage pieces for the theatre (199).
- a. Ottobah Cuguano's book is partly biographical and partly propagandist. The author claimed to have been a native of the Gold Coast (now Ghana). His is a story of how he was caught and sold into slavery. He was taken to England from the West Indies where, according to him, he worked hard "to learn reading and writing which soon became my recreation, pleasure and delight." Cuguano's narrative of his capture and the Middle Passage are doubtful since he said he was two years old when it occurred. Perhaps, he depended on the stories told by some others in order to arrive at a re-created story of self. It appears that Cuguano depended on contemporary opinions to formulate a new lineage for the blacks. The blacks, he contends, were the sons of Cush, one of the sons of Ham who had been under curse. The elder Cush settled in West Arabia from where his descendants moved southwards by way of the Red Sea, and finally settled in "Abyssinia and Ethiopia, and Africa, and as they lived mostly throughout all southern and interior parts of Africa, and as they lived mostly under the torrid zone, or near the tropics, they became black" (36).

b. Autobiography as self-reconstruction: Olaudah Equiano

Olaudah Equiano's book was published in the very controversy of the anti-slavery effort in Britain and the West. His work, *The Interesting Narrative*, was quite popular. Even though he had printed it himself, it was distributed by the main booksellers of London and was widely available. Equiano also travelled through Britain to sell the book while he chose such moments to address anti-slavery meetings. His account shows that he was Igbo (Eboe) in West Africa. He was about ten when in 1755/56 he was kidnapped with his younger sister by slave-raiders. His tale is all the more credible if he was about ten, as he was likely to remember some of the events that took place around him. Of the three anti-slavery writers, Equiano was the most accomplished as a literary figure.

- In this autobiography, Olaudah Equiano's concern was not only to trace his many adventures and the wisdom he earned out of them but also to do battle against the fundamental assumptions of African inferiority. He thus describes with great passion the simple beauty of his half-remembered African childhood in which he says, for instance, "we are almost a nation of dancers, musicians and poets." He showed in parts of the autobiography that his people were essentially decent and were guided by rules which they made for, and by themselves. "Adultery, however, was punished with slavery or death, a punishment which I believe is inflicted on it throughout most of the nations of Africa, so sacred among them is the honour of the marriage bed and so jealous are they of the fidelity of their wives..." (2).
- Chinua Achebe writes about Equiano: "Equiano then represents the African writer's response to Europe's first assault on the life and dignity of Africans during the period of the slave trade" (*Morning* 80).

- **References and further reading**

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- Olney, James. "'I was Born': Slave Narratives—Their Status as Autobiography and as Literature." *The Slave's Narrative*. Ed. Charles Davis Henry Louis Gates, Jr. New York: Oxford UP, 1985. 148-175.
- ----- . *Tell me Africa: An Approach to African Literature*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1973.
- ----- . "The Value of Autobiography for Comparative Studies: African vs. Western Autobiography." *African American Autobiography: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Ed. William L. Andrews. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1993. 211-23.

Questions

1. Why should the study of the African autobiography, particularly in English, begin with the African slave narrative?
2. What do you consider to be the central motifs of slave narratives?
3. Consider the backgrounds of the three ex-slave writers mentioned above, and account for why Olaudah's book sold more than the others.
4. Assess Equiano's *The Interesting Narrative* as a tale of innocence betrayed.
5. Discuss the portrait of Africa in the narratives of the ex-slaves discussed here and examine the authors' attitude to the continent.

Unit 2. Colonialism and the Independence Struggle: Kenneth Kaunda's *Zambia Shall Be Free* (1962) and Nnamdi Azikiwe's *My Odyssey* (1970)

Week 2

-The epochal contact between the West and Africa that had a culmination in the slave trade was also to lead in the 18th and 19th centuries to the colonization of the continent. Differences in the policies of the varying European powers notwithstanding, the expropriation of territory, the loss of sovereignty, the systematic destruction of African values and civilization, and even brutal subjugation of Africans, made decolonization the signal political challenge of the African intellectual.

- Kwame Nkrumah's *Ghana: The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah* (1957), Jomo Kenyatta's *Facing Mount Kenya* (1965), Oginga Odinga's *Not Yet Uhuru: The Autobiography of Oginga Odinga* (1967), Kenneth Kaunda's *Zambia Shall be Free* (1962), Nnamdi Azikiwe's *My Odyssey* (1970) and Nelson Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom* (1994) are representative works that document the lives of their authors and their roles in the epic struggles for political independence in their various African countries.

A. Kenneth Kaunda's *Zambia Shall Be Free* (1962)

- Born the son of an African missionary and growing up espousing the faith, Kaunda's Christian upbringing evidently influences his enunciation of humanist principles and obviously marks his autobiography.
- Kaunda's work epitomizes in a unique way the simultaneous narrative of the self and the nation, being at once the product of an idiosyncratic individual mind and foregrounding the indispensable self-reinventions that are inherent in attempts at self-writing. (Note Steward Gore-Browne's Foreword to the work, emphasizing both the individual and representative status of the account as well as the historical relevance of the considerable appendix added to the text).
- But Kaunda, the crusader for Zambian independence, is also consciously engaged in the narrative of the history of the nation, contesting official colonial accounts of events, re-interpreting them and in the process sheds light on the interface between history and imaginative processes such as fictionalization and myth-making.
- *Zambia Shall Be Free* then is a revealing example of the African autobiography as "counter history" articulating pioneer African elites' interrogations of colonial accounts about events in their national lives and chronicling their own versions of events; interpretation itself foregrounds individuation.
- Kaunda's style highlights the occasional conflation of the narratives of the self and the nation by his indication of a collective struggle marked by his liberal use of the plural pronouns, "we" and "us:" "Nothing can be achieved anywhere and in any field without good organization. The white man lords it over us in all works of life not because he happens to be white but because he is better organized than we are"

(152); "They can claim to have lived here since 1400. The fact still remains, this is African soil. It is here we are born, it is here we die" (158).

- Kaunda's decision for a non-violent form of protest is borne out of his recognition of the self-defeating purposes of violence.
- Closely linked to the general disinclination to violence is the conviction that colonial impositions are fleeting as they are necessarily dependent on recourse to violence: the "imperialists count on the strength of the British troops which they are ruthlessly using in crushing down the national aspirations of the colonial peoples. Nay, they have not solved the problem. They have only managed to shelve the inevitable racial strife in central Africa" (56-57).
- The depth of his conviction of the inevitability of Zambian political independence culminates in the optimistic prophecy of the text's close: "I know that Zambia will be free;" a prophecy that was fulfilled only two years after the publication of *Zambia Shall Be Free*.

References and further reading

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Questions

1. How does Kaunda's accounts of his anti-colonial campaign compare with historical chronicles?
2. Account for Kaunda's choice of an anti-violent anti-colonial struggle?

Week 3 B. *Nnamdi Azikiwe's My Odyssey* (London: C. Hurst & Co, 1970; and Ibadan, Nigeria: Spectrum Books (reprint) 2001).

The autobiography of the Nigerian Nnamdi Azikiwe strives to paint self as an aristocratic adventurer. The author's stowing away to England on his trip to America in the 1920s is compared to the journey made by Jason and the Argonauts in order to obtain the "golden fleece" said to possess healing powers. Azikiwe's father tells the departing adventurer:

In my school days, we read the story of how Jason and his heroic companions sailed on the Argo in quest of the golden fleece. Today, you are poised to sail to America in quest of the golden fleece of knowledge that is guarded by the dragon of ignorance, which you must destroy as Jason did. (72)

-He considers his American education as filling him with the power of Jason. Having grown up under the imperial influence of Britain, Azikiwe goes to America to learn about the other version of white civilization different from the British. That way, he hoped to use not only his head, but also his heart and hands in facilitating the process of de-colonization in Nigeria and Africa.

-Nnamdi Azikiwe easily makes himself a recruit of his much talked-about "African Revolution" which commences as the earning of independence. He acknowledges the influence of Dr Aggrey, an African, whose sermon "soft and melodious" touches his soul "with the force of a supernatural wand." Thereafter, "from that day I became a new man"

(37). He says he has been influenced by the Roman General known as Fabius Maximus Varrucocos (a.k.a Cunctator, meaning the Delayer). He repeats this claim in one of his books, *Ideology for Nigeria: Capitalism, Socialism or Welfarism* (Lagos: Macmillan Press, 1980 pp. 93-95). His poems in two volumes, *Meditations* (1977) and *Civil War Soliloquies* (1977), borrowed a lot from *My Odyssey*. One could say that most of his poems draw on many aspects of his autobiography.

References and further reading

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Questions

1. Both Kaunda and Azikiwe were to be the leaders of their respective countries. Examine each author's conception of colonialism and mode of combating it in their autobiographies.
2. How do the personal and the political merge in Azikiwe's *My Odyssey*?
3. Comment on *My Odyssey* as an espousal of Azikiwe's concept of 'African Revolution'.

Unit 3. Self-writing and the Genre of Protest in Apartheid South Africa: Peter Abrahams' *Tell Freedom* (1954), Ezekiel (also Es'kia) Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue* (1959) and Nelson Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom* (1995).

Week 4

A. Peter Abrahams' *Tell Freedom* (1954).

- With a colored mother, and Ethiopian father, Abraham was categorized "colored" in apartheid South Africa where the color "white" was supreme and "black" the ultimate curse; "coloreds" were conceded some scanty privileges denied the blacks. *Tell Freedom* nonetheless tells of the essential de-humanization of all non-whites.
- The author learns through traumatic personal experience to accept humiliation and racial abuse as a non-white. Uncle Sam's action in scourging the young author after the latter's fight with a group of insolent white boys is presented as symbolic of black connivance in his own systematic dehumanization and is institutionally replicated in the roles of black security men.
- The author reveals the psychology of fear and its compulsions that aggravate the cruelties of oppression, denying the oppressor of human compassion and the oppressed of human dignity. Restricted by the Native Land Act of 1914 to 7.3% of South African territory and barred from buying land outside of these areas, blacks also needed passes for movement. The author's account of this privileges the psychology of fear: "If you have many enemies and you are not sure you have conquered them, then always, you want to know where they are, what they do, where they go. If it is possible you want to know what they think" (142).
- His constant movements, culminating in his escape from South Africa, mark an existential flight from poverty, racial oppression and a sense of incarceration set in constant relief by the many restrictions suffered by non-whites (in movement, education, association, job opportunities) and emblemized in the pass system.

- *Tell Freedom* charts through the autobiographer's experience the history of the aggravating dimensions of white domination and racism in South Africa and highlights not just the resilience of the human mind but the mind's uncompromising zest for a space for self-expression, for freedom.
- Abrahams' choice is finally to emigrate in his craving for a "Life that had a meaning that transcended race and colour.... I could not find it in South Africa. Also there was the need to write, to tell freedom and for this I needed to be personally free" (224).
- That choice to fight against the apartheid establishment from outside in itself foregrounds the historical choice of those who chose to stay and fight it from within—Nelson Mandela, for example.

B. Ezekiel (also Es'kia) Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue* (1959).

- This is an early autobiography from South Africa at a time when segregation was an official government policy. The book was thus a brave effort to reveal the practical workings of the Apartheid system, ostensibly seen from the eyes of one growing up in innocence and youthful candor.

- It is the growth of a young man – from the provincial to the cosmopolitan; from innocence to experience; and from ignorance to consciousness.

Childhood is wonder and discovery; poverty flourishes everywhere, particularly in Maupaneng. Author's experience begins with motherlessness, and then a miserly grandmother.

- Growth meets the author in the blossoming of Apartheid. As his awareness grows, what his mother once told him assumes a baffling significance: "Beware of the white man, he's very, very strong." Thus in the effort to test the white man's strength, young Mphahlele loses his job and further perpetuates family poverty. He had to flee South Africa.

References and further reading

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Questions

1. Discuss the influence of Apartheid on location and boundary in Mphahlele's *Down Second Avenue*.
2. Examine the tones of the narrators in the "child" autobiographies by Peter Abrahams and Ezekiel Mphahlele.
3. Appraise the representations of the white man in Mphahlele's *Down Second Avenue* and Peter Abrahams' *Tell Freedom*.

Week 5

C. **Nelson Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom*** (1995) tells the story of the eventual triumph of the human spirit against systematic and institutionalized racism and colonial repression. Leading that epic struggle, bruised by its worst cruelties, reemerging after twenty seven years of its harshest imprisonment to lead South Africa to its first democratic elections which he won, and to reconciliation when the world feared a racial war, Mandela justifiably lays a claim to human imagination and consciousness as one of history's preeminent personalities. *Long Walk to Freedom* tells Nelson Mandela's extraordinary and compelling life-story.

- The conditions of Mandela's early life— traditional politics, the modesty of family circumstances enhanced by his father's death, an interest in African history and especially the history of the African resistance, exposure to a Pan-African concept of identity, and the dignified opposition of enlightened acquaintances to apartheid—make a demonstrable mark on the consciousness of the growing youth. His own resistance to an arranged marriage is emblematic of a latent resolute will to resist tyranny.

- Crucial among his experiences at the University of the Witwatersrand is the solidarity of people of all racial backgrounds against tyranny: colleagues of his generation of Jewish, Indian and even an exceptional few of Afrikaner stock, renouncing privilege and risking persecution and death in choosing a life of dissidence left a deep and enduring impression on Mandela that was to influence his conception of freedom and (much later) his attitude towards reconciliation.

- Especially after the election victory of the National party in 1948 under Dr. Daniel Malan, and its striving to consolidate power and perpetuate Afrikaner hegemony, it is Mandela's experience that the ruthless suppression of other ethnic groups in a plural society by the Apartheid establishment had the ironical impact of antagonizing more people, turning into activists even apathetic individuals, making the already politicized more defiant and strengthening the bonds of the oppressed against the common oppressor.

- Mandela's discovery that commitment to the cause of South African freedom beginning with his anguished acceptance of estrangement from his family, willingness to suffer imprisonment, culminates at his Rivonia defense speech in the sober acknowledgement of death as a possibility in the freedom fighter's vocation: "During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society, in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunity. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But, if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die" (506).

- A crucial aspect of Mandela's appeal as a moral and political leader is his embodiment of selflessness and modesty in spite of his universally acknowledged monumental accomplishments. On his release from prison his inclination is to invite all to participate in the remaking of the country: "I wanted first of all to tell the people that I was not a messiah, but an ordinary man who had become a leader because of extraordinary circumstances" (776); and a deep belief in the innate capability of humans for redemption: "Man's goodness is a flame that can be hidden but never extinguished" (856).

- Mandela's blueprint for reconciliation and the creation of a nonracial and harmonious society is the condemnation of evil not people: "The liberation movement was not a battle against any one group or color, but a fight against a system of repression" (852).

References and Further Reading

- Mandela, Nelson. *Long Walk to Freedom*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1995.
- Nkosi, Lewis. *Tasks and Masks: Themes and Styles of African Literature*. London: Longman, 1981.

Questions

1. Appraise Mandela's prognosis of the future in *Long Walk to Freedom* and the later unfolding of historical events in South Africa.
2. Evaluate Peter Abrahams' and Mandela's notion of "freedom" in their separate autobiographies.
3. Examine Mandela's belief that a "Third Force" was responsible for the black on black violence that impeded the negotiations of the transition to democracy in South Africa.
4. Assess Mandela's portrait of Mr. F.W. de Klerk.

Week 6: 1st Paper writing (length 1000 words).

1. Appraise the conflation of fact and fiction in any of the autobiographies already studied in the course.
Or
2. Examine the simultaneous narration of self and nation in the autobiography of any of African statesmen studied in this course.

Unit 4. Growing up in Africa

Week 7

A. Camara Laye's *The African Child* (1954)

-Laye's autobiography of his childhood narrates his anguished awareness of the evanescence of an idealized African culture as a consequence of a not clearly foregrounded onslaught of colonialism.

- He exalts the traditional Mande/African form of education steeped in ancient and spiritually ennobling customs and laments his estrangement through Western education from that African tradition.

- Laye offers many portraits of traditional institutions, vocations, and modes of education and initiation of the young into the spiritually profound pre-colonial African world (against which he sets the alienating contrasted colonial paradigms. Note how the French policy of Assimilation strove to alienate African recipients of Western education from their cultural background in its ambition to turn educated African elites of its colonies into Frenchmen/women). But the reception of Laye's autobiography has been sharply contrasted.

- Some readers find his account of his childhood and his portraits of the African tradition not only romanticized but even sentimental and complain especially about his apparent failure to engage critically with colonialism. (See Berger and Palmer for criticisms of a stereotypical Africa with unchanging values and his implicit acquiesce in the colonial project respectively).

- Some critics even claim that his mode of reconstructing his childhood is "novelistic" and that his references to pivotal personalities and events are rather mysteriously vague (See Blair and King respectively).

- However, other readers contend that Laye's account far from being idyllic, nostalgic and apolitical actually responds to colonialism and enhances the realization of postcolonial African societies. (See Alioune Sow)

B. Cole's *Kossoh Town Boy* (1960)

Robert Wellesley Cole's *Kossoh Town Boy* is an autobiography of a child growing up in an atmosphere of freedom and love in colonial Sierra Leone. Robert is a descendant of ex-

slaves whose immediate parents were educated, Christianized, urbanized and elitist. (Compare Cole's frolics in the company of fellow children and the nature of Equiano's childhood experiences before he was sold into slavery).

- R.W.Cole came from a middle class home living in an urban setting (in Freetown) in the early twentieth century. According to the autobiographer, "If my family were English, or what until recently used to be officially termed 'British subjects of pure European descent', they would have been upper middle class folk."

- Evidence of colonial impact on his life is easily observed in his name: "Robert Wellesley Ageh Cole." His schoolmates quickly nicknamed him, "Bob 'British West Africa' Cole."

- However, Cole's nursing and upbringing was African. His familial relationships are truly African and cut across many ethnic groups of largely freed slaves. His family is thoroughly Christian and would not admit fetish objects or references to them. Because of the motley of languages in which he grew up, his family is Creole (Krio): "A sample study of the voices heard in the streets of Freetown in 1849 showed no less than ninety languages and dialects." These languages and dialects were to coalesce into a Creole from where the people took their name, Krio. Writes Cole: "Thus we Krios have many roots."

- Cole's father is a water-works engineer; his uncles and aunts are people of worth in the community, and well-known within their environment. The grandmothers, uncles and aunts provide the social and spiritual environment as he grows up. At home and in school, his mates are equally crucial in his upbringing, serving as informal sources of knowledge and intellectual challenge.

- Cole lives an innocent, satisfying life without being involved in politics nor does he at any point observe others, including his parents, complain about colonialism; nor what to do to free Sierra Leone from colonial stranglehold. From his birth to the time he is admitted into a Grammar School no reference is made to his father's politics or politics as a concept, about political meetings or any political event. Instead Cole prefers to be identified as a member of "Reborn Africans" rather than "liberated Africans."

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Questions

1. How would you account for the contrasted critical reception of Laye's *The Dark Child*?
2. Examine Cole's *raison d'être* for telling us about his childhood? Does he succeed?
3. Comment in detail on Cole's childhood in the company of other children. What role does his parents' background and social standing play in this relationship, if any?
4. Do you consider the criticism that Laye's *The Dark Child* reads like a "novel" valid?

5. Examine Cole's mythical recall of his birth in *Kossoh Town Boy* and what it reveals about the fictive nature of autobiographies.
6. Laye has been accused of tacitly acquiescing in colonization by his seeming disinclination for explicit criticism of the system. Does your reading of *The Dark Child* validate this view?

Unit 5: Freedom and the Search for Female Space

Week 8:

- A. Buchi Emecheta's *Head Above Water* (1986) is one woman's search for a female space foreclosed by her patriarchal native country, her chauvinistic husband and the racism of Britain to which she ran as to a sanctuary. It is the story of becoming. (Incidentally, becoming is also her grouch in her fictive works).
 - Emecheta's reason for leaving Nigeria – site of female woes from which she would want to distance herself. She was an orphan, suffered neglect and was constantly beaten by her uncle-guardian.
 - She experiences a failed marriage in England due to an uncaring husband; she suffers poverty in a foreign land, and has to cater for five children without a supportive spouse.
 - England is a racist environment, different from what she had dreamt about her before she left her native Nigeria.
 - Develops inferiority complex as a result of her challenges in London. Describes herself as suffering from "chronic inferiority complex" (*Head* 95) because "there was nothing to like about me anyway" (*Head* 20).
 - Emecheta recovers herself when she lavishes her love on her children, makes a self-discovery and reconciles herself to her new circumstance: "Suddenly, I found that I was becoming a new person" (*Head* 228). Between initial failure and eventual success, there's a dialectical relationship.
 - Her recovery is due to her ability to first create space for herself, and secondly influence this space. She rejects negative societal values that seek to confine her. Rather than be bogged down by her social disadvantages, she passes her undergraduate and postgraduate examinations in flying colors.

- B. Meri Nana-Ama Danquah's *Willow Weep for Me* (1999) is the self-story of a single mother who emigrated from Ghana to the US at the age of six in 1973. Both Ghana and the US are male-dominated societies; she experienced both locations without developing a sense of nostalgia for either.
 - Her family experience is marked by tragedy, loss and abuse. This early experience of life molds her into a shy and withdrawn personality, lacking in self-confidence and a sense of self-worth.
 - Like Emecheta's *Head*, Danquah's *Willow* is equally the story of becoming in the face of compelling odds. Danquah is a product of a divorced home. Being close to the father but forced to leave Ghana in order to live with the mother in US is a great hurt that she hardly recovers from. Her love for her father later turns into hatred. She suffers depression from which she later strives to lift herself.
 - *Willow* is the story of personal triumph through self-discovery, endurance, perseverance and the psychological exertion of self-power.
 - Danquah deploys herself as a study in women's depressive experience, insisting that depression is not about being lazy, slothful and weak-minded. On the contrary, depression is a serious disease sustained by a combination of complex social, psychological and biochemical causations (*Willow* 31).
 - Danquah promotes feminist agenda, and in particular "Black feminism".

- Location and re-location are important in Danquah's autobiography. She quits Washington D.C for Los Angeles in order to ameliorate her death-wish. There is a difference between expectation and outcome because after a while in Los Angeles, she heads back to Washington D.C. After all, she had warned her mummy: "It's my life, Mummy. I am not happy here. And if I go to LA and I'm not happy there, I'll go somewhere else" (*Willow* 154).
- She is initially obsessed with "feelings of failure and worthlessness" (*Willow* 223), having considered herself ugly with her "round face and dark brown complexion, those thick lips and chunky legs" (*Willow* 106).
- Through willful use of self-power, through the assertion of inward, rather than the physical outward journey, she returns to self-acceptance by proclaiming, "I love who I am" (*Willow* 265).
- Danquah's passion for indoor plants is partly responsible for her self-recovery: "It probably sounds ridiculous, but I saw my plants as an extension on myself. If they thrived, I thrived, my daughter thrived" (*Willow* 254).

References and further reading

- Berger, Roger. "Decolonizing African Autobiography." *Research in African Literatures* 41.2 (2010): 32-54.
- Danquah, Meri Nana-Ama. *Willow Weep for Me: A Black Woman's Journey through Depression*. New York: Ballantine, 1999.
- Davies, Carole Boyce. "Private Selves and Public Spaces: Autobiography and African Woman Writer." *Neo-Helicon*. 17.2 (1990). 183-210.
- Emecheta, Buchi. 1986. *Head Above Water: An Autobiography*. London: Heinemann, 1994.
- Ezenwa-Ohaeto. *Subject, Context and the Contours of Nigerian Fiction*. Bayreuth: Bayreuth African Studies, 2007.
- Ogunyemi, Chikwenye Okonjo. "Buchi Emecheta: The Shaping of a Self." *Komparatistische Hefte* 8 (1983). 65-77.
- Watson, Julie. "The Shadowed Presence: Modern Women Writers' Autobiographies and the Other." James Olney. Ed. *Studies in Autobiography* New York: Oxford UP, 1988. 180-89.

Questions

1. What role do location and movement play in the fortunes and misfortunes of Emecheta and Danquah in their respective autobiographies.
2. Identify three instances of racism experienced by Emecheta in England and discuss them in detail.
3. Examine the process of becoming in both *Head Above Water* and *Willow Weep for Me*. How does the success achieved by each author at last come about?
4. Appraise Emecheta's *Head* and Danquah's *Willow* as feminist works, paying close attention to the circumstances of the autobiographers' marriages.
5. Beyond self-study, how is Danquah's autobiography helpful in our knowledge of the fate of the Black woman in America?
6. How does the reconstruction of self and others help Danquah to recover from her depressive ailment?
7. Appraise the significance of Emecheta's purchase of a home of her own in *Head Above Water*.
8. Examine closely how Emecheta hierarchizes race, gender and class oppression.

Unit 6: Statecraft and Military Memoir-writing in Africa

Week 9

A. The memoirs of Alexander Madiebo, Olusegun Obasanjo & Philip Effiong

The memoir, as a type of the autobiography, is distinguished by the fact that it makes focal the personalities and actions of others rather than those of the writer himself/herself. It is thus considered a communal narrative given the memoirist's foregrounding of the epochal event documented instead of the story of the self. Soldiers' central roles in government as in two of the commonest epochal events in some postcolonial nation states in Africa – coup d'état and civil wars – have spawned a considerable corpus of memoirs in the continent. The Nigerian civil war (1967-1970) fought between the eastern part of the country (that then assumed the name of the Republic of Biafra) and the other parts of the country is one such representative event about which many memoirs have been written. The three chosen for discussion here represent three virtually contrasted ways of interpreting the same events.

- A. Olusegun Obasanjo's *My Command* (1980) is written from the perspective of the victorious federal forces. The memoir documents Obasanjo's appraisal of his influential and decisive impact on the course of the war as a commander of an important federal army unit.
- His portrait of 3 Marine Commando Division of the Nigerian Army (and indeed the entire Nigerian Army) before his appointment as General Commanding Officer in May 1969 is pivotal in the impact he wishes to make as the work aims to demonstrate how "within a space of six months I turned a situation of low morale, desertion and distrust within my division and within the Army into one of high morale, confidence, co-operation and success for my division and for the Army" (xii-xiii).
 - Obasanjo's account of the background to the war expectedly makes the Biafran leader, Odimegwu Ojukwu, the ultimate culprit. He describes him as "arrogant and conceited" (xiii) and as "adamant, obstinate and obdurate" (10). (See also page 35).
 - The initial successes of the federal army and Biafra's setbacks and mistakes notwithstanding, the war still goes into a "stalemate" necessitating a change of commanders and approach.
 - On assumption of duties, Obasanjo emphasizes leadership by example. His self-portrait sets in relief the virtues he extols. He presents himself as ascetic, punctual, courageous, self-denying, even self-sacrificial and absolutely patriotic.
 - His attempts at reorganization are aimed at building a motivated and disciplined force (occasionally necessitating setting ruthless examples to serve as deterrent to offending soldiers).
 - "Operation Tail Wind" chronicles the final onslaught by the federal forces on Biafra and Obasanjo's claims to the strategy and foresight that brought the war to a quick and successful conclusion for the federal side. His consideration of "initiative" even above technological advancement as the preeminent virtue needed in war significantly underscores this conviction (173).
 - Besides few sketchy character portraits, *My Command* concentrates on the movements and clashes of armies across the battlefield as well as the factors that influence the course of the war.
 - Note Obasanjo's reliance on other sources for developments in Biafra. The long citation of N. U. Akpan's memoir, *The Struggle for Secession 1966-1970* (113-117) just like Ojukwu's final radio broadcast to Biafrans before going on exile foregrounds the limitations of the first-person narrative and the striving to fill in gaps with information from elsewhere.
 - Obasanjo's final insights reveal war as a human tragedy unleashing pain, suffering and monumental loss but equally eliciting human resilience and compassion and

requiring self-transcendence for the achievement of an ideal greater than the human individual.

References and further reading

- Diala, Isidore. "History, Memoir and a Soldier's Conscience: Philip Efiog's *Nigeria and Biafra: My Story*." *African Literature Today* 26 (2008): 112-127.
- Obasanjo, Olusegun. *My Command*. Heinemann, 1980.
- Sample, Maxine. "In Another Life: The Refugee Phenomenon in Two Novels of The Nigerian Civil War." *Modern Fiction Studies* 37.3 (1991): 445-454.
- McLuckie, Craig W. "A Preliminary Checklist of Primary and Secondary Sources on Nigerian Civil War/Biafran War Literature." *Research in African Literatures* 18 (1987): 510-527.
- Nwahunanya, Chinyere. "The Aesthetics of Nigerian War Fiction." *Modern Fiction Studies* 37.3 (1991): 427-443).

Questions

1. Many readers of *My Command* have considered Obasanjo's self-portrait arrogant. Does your reading of the text validate that critical opinion?
2. How does Obasanjo account for the course of the War and its eventual outcome?
3. How do Obasanjo's claims of human compassion in the War contrast with his depictions of the necessary cruelties and devastations of wars?

Week 10

- B. Alexander Madiebo's *The Nigerian Revolution and the Biafran War* is an account of the war by the General Officer that commanded the Biafran Army throughout the war.
- Madiebo's commitment is to a "dispassionate" (xii) chronicle of the events, an "authentic eye-witness" account, and a presentation of the "facts" (xii) to foreground the lessons of history.
 - He traces the war ultimately to colonialism and insidious imperial British interests and machinations, and immediately to Yakubu Gowon. The military coup d'état of 15 January 1966 is presented as a truly nationalist event in planning and intension and in the initial joyous reception it elicited from all parts of the country.
 - On the contrary "the counter coup" was strictly a response of the North that later interpreted the first coup as masterminded essentially by Igbo officers and targeted against the North. By paying attention to Gowon's and the North's vacillations about secession and forming a unitary government, by presenting in great details the killings of Igbos in the North and by the narration of his own ordeals and breath-taking narrow escape, Madiebo carefully indicates the genuine causes of the civil war and where blame ought to be laid.
 - Madiebo's portrait of Ojukwu just prior to the declaration of Biafran sovereignty stresses Ojukwu's anxieties about senior military officers and a disinclination to accept the unpreparedness of Biafra for war. In the war, he presents Ojukwu as high-handed and autocratic.
 - His appraisal of Biafra's limitation in the war stresses the lack of trained troops and necessary equipment and enormous administrative challenges. He also notes the damages caused by the use of "special units" and officers accorded preferential treatment. His depiction of the careers of Banjo, Achuzia and Steiner, and the units they led apparently illustrates the writer's misgivings (in some respects).
 - He hints at the possible role of sabotage in Biafran misfortunes but emphasizes the far more devastating impact of witch-hunting, international political and military

support for Nigeria, civilian interference in Army matters and the refusal by the Biafran leadership to acknowledge to the Biafran public the by far overwhelming superiority of the federal fire power as the true cause of Biafra's major misfortunes.

- Madiebo cites the French deputy, Ambassador Raymond Offroy, who after visiting Biafra said: "Before I came to Biafra, I was told that Biafrans fought like heroes. But now I know that heroes fight like Biafrans" (387). *The Nigerian Revolution and the Biafran War* tells with considerable humor the grim story of the heroic necessity of the Biafran struggle and the overwhelming circumstances in which that daring, resourcefulness and resilience came to grief.

References and further reading

- Diala, Isidore. "History, Memoir and a Soldier's Conscience: Philip Efiong's *Nigeria and Biafra: My Story*." *African Literature Today* 26 (2008): 112-127.
- Madiebo, Alexander. *The Nigerian Revolution and the Biafra War*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1980.
- McLuckie, Craig W. "A Preliminary Checklist of Primary and Secondary Sources on Nigerian Civil War/Biafran War Literature." *Research in African Literatures* 18 (1987): 510-527.
- Nwahunanya, Chinyere. "The Aesthetics of Nigerian War Fiction." *Modern Fiction Studies* 37.3 (1991): 427-443.
- Sample, Maxine. "In Another Life: The Refugee Phenomenon in Two Novels of The Nigerian Civil War." *Modern Fiction Studies* 37.3 (1991): 445-454.

Questions

1. What portrait of Madiebo emerges in his memoir?
2. How does Madiebo's account for the causes of the War and its eventual outcome?
3. How does Madiebo characterize Ojukwu in his memoir?
4. Assess Madiebo's use of humor in his memoir and its impact on his style as a story teller.

Week 11

- C. Philip Efiong's *Nigeria and Biafra: My Story*
- An Ibibio, Efiong was from the Eastern minorities some of who had fought for the dominantly Igbo Biafra. In the Biafran hierarchy Efiong rose to the position of Chief of General Staff, that is, second only to General Odumegwu Ojukwu, the Biafran leader; at the end of the war, when Ojukwu left Biafra, Efiong led Biafra briefly and then surrendered to the federal side.
- *Nigeria and Biafra: My Story* was published in 2004 and responds to both Madiebo's and Obasanjo's earlier memoirs and many others. He aims to approach his narrative as a dispassionate "historian," rigorously bent on a reconstruction of what actually happened: "My commitment therefore is to TRUTH, which I think will best serve our national cause and interest" (3).
- The memoir is basically Efiong's account of the peculiar circumstances that led to the roles he played in the Nigerian crisis and in Biafra: "That I fought in the War on the side of Biafra had nothing to do with my belief" (330). The narrative is often poised delicately between recantation and self-justification. His association with General Ironsi (who emerged as Head of State after the January coup led by Major Nzeogwu) whom he served but hardly loved estranged him apparently irredeemably from the federal side and left him no option but to serve Biafra whose cause he had advised Ojukwu against.
- Efiong thinks the 15 January coup d'tat a pivotal cause of the civil war. He thinks initially it had no ethnic motivation but later characterizes it as essentially "Igbo."

Neither the Igbos who lost their lives in The Pogrom in the North nor their Northern assassins really stand beyond the pale of Efiang's compassion. The portrait of Ironsi also seems inconsistent. Efiang's endeavor to accommodate the two parties in the conflict often seems to create considerable ambivalence in the narrative.

- Efiang dwells on the various factors that led to Biafra's loss of the war: the new twelve-state structure that separated the Eastern minorities from the core Igbo East Central State; Nigeria's recourse to starvation as a weapon of war; the dire lack of arms and ammunition. He represents Ojukwu as a dictator and the antagonist of the cause that he led and himself as the true leader.
- Efiang writes back at both Madiebo and Obasanjo. Madiebo claims that Efiang's surrender to the federal forces was prearranged (before Ojukwu's departure); Efiang says it was his initiative in consonance with the convictions of the Biafran leadership and people. Obasanjo's portrait of Efiang at their meeting at the end of the War is as a beggarly suppliant; Efiang sternly refutes that and emphasizes instead his courage and heroism.

References and further reading

- Diala, Isidore. "History, Memoir and a Soldier's Conscience: Philip Efiang's *Nigeria and Biafra: My Story*." *African Literature Today* 26 (2008): 112-127.
- Efiang, Philip. *Nigeria and Biafra: My Story*. Princeton, NJ: Sungai, 2004.
- Madiebo, Alexander. *The Nigerian Revolution and the Biafra War*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1980.
- McLuckie, Craig W. "A Preliminary Checklist of Primary and Secondary Sources on Nigerian Civil War/Biafran War Literature." *Research in African Literatures* 18 (1987): 510-527.
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- Sample, Maxine. "In Another Life: The Refugee Phenomenon in Two Novels of The Nigerian Civil War." *Modern Fiction Studies* 37.3 (1991): 445-454.

Questions

1. What role does Efiang assign to Providence in the course of history?
2. Critically examine Efiang's portrait of Ojukwu.
3. Would you consider Efiang's *Nigeria and Biafra: My Story* a recantation of his roles in Biafra?
4. Appraise the impact of Efiang's knowledge of preceding memoirs on the War on his own account.
5. Each memoirist is constrained to rely on other sources of information to present events that could not be witnessed first-hand. Comment on these sources, their strengths and weaknesses and the uses they are made of by the three memoirists.
6. Identify three events or important personalities in the war described by the three memoirists and pay close attention to the similarities or differences in their presentation, and account for those similarities or correspondences.
7. Which of the three writers do you find his style most captivating as a story teller?

Week 12: 2nd Paper writing (length 1000 words).

1. Write comparatively on "childhood" in Laye's *The Dark Child* and Cole's *Kossoh Town Boy*. Or:

2. A distinguishing feature of Mandela's writing is the recurrent use of axiomatic expressions. To what extent does his reputation as a preeminent moral leader rest on this style?

Unit 7. The Neocolonial State, Dictatorship and Prison Notes

Week 13

The neocolonial state in Africa is marked by misgovernance, imposition of one-party political system on the people, rulership by decree or similar dictatorial tendencies, imprisonment of opponents and of intellectually-minded citizens and the fomentation of wars.

A. Wole Soyinka's *The Man Died* (1972) is an account of the author's detention during the Yakubu Gowon military administration in Nigeria in the late 1960s.

- Written under the bitterness of the disgrace meted out to him by the Gowon regime, Soyinka composes the narrative of his nearly two years in solitary confinement with sufficient gall and polemics. His initial response to his incarceration is that of "humiliation". For him, the "reality of the emotion" of humiliation is "the only feeling for all who are not prenatally injected with hormones of subservience and servility" (*The Man* 14).
- He castigates his oppressors and tormentors and casts them in the image of beasts: "These men are the mindlessness of evil made flesh. They are pus, bile original putrescence of Death in living shapes" (*The Man* 225).
- Soyinka is uncomfortable with those he calls "power profiteers" whose stock-in-trade is propping up "the marble palaces of today's tyrants."
- Power opportunists are shown not only to be incapable of speaking coherent English, they are worthy to be described in the following vein: "The Gorilla", "Caliban", "Pig", "Horgroth", "King Kong", "unctuous toad", "Coward", "Polyphemus" etc
- Soyinka cannot stomach the antics of false intellectuals and intellectual morons in positions of power and authority. He describes as "live burial" his intellectual starvation while he was in prison. Denied access to books or writing materials, all Soyinka could do was "count the bars one by one leaving out the equation marks" (186). Not even the medical doctors who regularly attended to him knew what it was to deny one avenues for ventilating one's mind such as reading and writing. When Soyinka asks a doctor, "Do you think this is good for my health?" the medic laughs idiotically, "Ho, ho. You look healthy to me" (192).
- Out of his prison experience, Soyinka closely observes dictatorship and the manner it tramples upon freedom, justice, peace and personal integrity. Yet for the autobiographer, "justice is the first condition of humanity."

References and further reading

- Jones, E.D. 1973. *The Writing of Wole Soyinka*. London: Heinemann, 1983.
- Maduakor, Obi. 1986. *Wole Soyinka: An Introduction to His Writing*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books, 1991.
- Nwachukwu-Agbada, J.O.J. "Protest and Faith in Wole Soyinka's
- Autobiographies." *The Literary Half-Yearly* XXVIII.2 (July) 1987. 119-130.
- ---. "Environment and the 'I' of the Beholder in African Literary
o Autobiographies." *Working Papers: Journal of English Studies* 2nd Issue (2003). 94-105.

- Ogwude, Sophie O. "Politics and Human Rights in Non-Fiction Literature." *Calel* (Calabar) 2.1(2004): 186 -204.
- Soyinka, Wole. 1972. *The Man Died: Prison Notes*. Harmondsworth:

- Penguin, 1975.

Questions

1. Examine language use in Soyinka's *The Man Died*. How and why is it a factor in the author's narrative technique?
2. What is the relevance of Soyinka's title to his basic preoccupations in *The Man Died*?
3. Compare Soyinka's account of the circumstances of his imprisonment in *The Man Died* with official Nigerian government's claims.

Week 14

B. Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary* (1981)

Ngugi's grouse with the Jomo Kenyatta government of Kenya started years before he was thrown into Kamiti Maximum Security Prison in December, 1977. His earlier essays, especially those collected in *Homecoming* (1972), bear some of his later venom.

- In *Homecoming*, Ngugi contends that there has sprouted a foreign imperialistic bourgeoisie working in alliance with the local Kenyan compradorial class meant to turn Kenyans into slaves on their own soil. Secondly, he uses the essays to underscore the historical struggles of the Kenyan people against economic, political and cultural slavery.
- Ngugi was to be "detained" by Kenyatta for organizing plays with the local inhabitants of Kamiriithu (between June and November 1977), especially *Ngaahika Ndeenda* (I'll Marry When I Want): "My main sin, it would seem...lay in helping in the writing of a play for peasants and workers in a language spoken and understood by them, and in having the play performed by workers and peasants to applauding thousands" (189).
- Ngugi believes that "no country can consider itself politically independent for as long as its economy and culture are dominated by foreign interests" (xv). Somewhat ironic is the fact that Kenyatta who imprisoned Ngugi for views like this, and later died while the latter was still behind bars, had published a book the year Ngugi was born in which he wrote glowingly about culture as the foundation of man which gives him "human dignity as well as his material prosperity" while teaching him to "feel it worthwhile to work and fight for liberty" (*Facing Mount Kenya* 317).
- Where Soyinka would have advocated a not-too clear "Third Force" as a solution to the political highhandedness in Nigeria, Ngugi goes for the socialist option, condemning first the comprador bourgeoisie of his country and Africa who in essence is no more than, "...a handsomely paid supervisor for the smooth operation of foreign economic interests" (*Detained* 56).
- Where Soyinka's bitterness would have been personalized with a harsh language added, Ngugi does not consider his detention "as a personal affair between me and a few individuals but as a social, political and historical phenomenon" (xi). After all, "...I am not socially or personally known to these individuals, my differences with them are neither private nor personal. They are ideological" (xi).
- The autobiographer underlines the fact that it is the inherited laws of governance that are responsible for the continuous struggle between the local patriotic forces and the ruling conservative powers in Kenya, and Africa as a whole.
- For Ngugi, the prison is a school. While inside the prison yard he explores the question of reality. He has found out that the forces of light and darkness are polar

in nature. Only by the Kenyan person's true education, learning "his language anew" through his discovery of "the creative nature and power of collective work," will he end his "alienation to which he had been condemned by years of colonial education" (*Detained* 98).

- He believes in the power of education and the educated to initiate positive change, but it would have to be a new education.

References and further reading

- Kenyatta, Jomo. *Facing Mount Kenya*. London: Secker and Warburg, 1938.
- Ngugi wa Thiong'o. *Homecoming: Essays*. London: Heinemann, 1972.
- ---. *Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary*. London: Heinemann, 1981.
- Ogwude, Sophie O. "Politics and Human Rights in Non-Fiction Literature." *Calel (Calabar)* 2.1(2004): 186 -204.
- Sharma, Govind N. "Ngugi's *Detained* as a Modern Consolatio." *Research in African Literatures* 19.4 (1988): 520 – 28.

Questions

1. Discuss comparatively Soyinka's and Ngugi's experiences in prison and indicate how their responses to those experiences influence the style of their writing.
2. In what ways do Soyinka and Ngugi sublimate their prison experiences to make them assume public relevance?
3. Where Soyinka suggests a Third Force in *The Man Died*, Ngugi in *Detained* advocates full blown socialism. Discuss the two prison autobiographers as social ideologues.
4. Discuss in full Soyinka's and Ngugi's conception of the role of education in solving the socioeconomic problems of their respective countries.

Week 15: End of semester Paper writing (length 3000 words).

1. How would you account for the notion that autobiography is essentially Western in light of the African examples studied in this course? Or
2. Appraise the role of tribulations in stimulating the creative imagination of any three writers studied in this course and comment on the compact between the private and public realms in the African autobiography. Or
3. Write comparatively on the three Nigerian civil war memoirists' presentations of the causes of the War and account for their biases. Or
4. Childhood or womanhood: which is depicted as a more daunting experience in any three autobiographies studied in this course? Or
5. Which three life-stories studied in this course do you find most inspiring?

Syllabus

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course, students should be able to do the following:

1. Discuss the meanings and manifestations of autobiography and life writing found in

- the subject of the course.
2. Identify unique theoretical underpinnings and influential thinkers in the course topic.
 3. Analyze the relationship between the various aspects of cultural texts and the particular social, cultural, and biographical contexts of their production.
 4. Research and critically evaluate cultural productions.
 5. Use secondary sources and close reading skills to produce a substantive critical essay relating one or more specific cultural productions to the economic, social, cultural, or biographical contexts of its production.
 6. Demonstrate a balanced perspective and a deepened understanding of the cultures, times, people, and situations that produce these works.
 7. Write coherent historical arguments that explore the relationships of various concepts and texts, and which provide a clear synthesis.

Course Goals:

1. To provide students with a broad perspective of approaches to life writing and an understanding of the various ways in which they manifest themselves and to assess students' ability to express their perspectives through exams and essays.
2. To provide students with a deeper understanding of diverse cultural and interdisciplinary traditions the course focus and to express this deepened understanding in written tests and a critical essay.
3. To provide an overview of cultural analysis and interpretation methods and help students apply these skills in writing essay examinations and a critical essay.
4. To read widely and critically in a variety of cultural texts in order to explore potential meanings and to demonstrate the depth and breadth of this reading in essay examinations and a critical essay.
5. To do library research on a particular trend, event, concept, an individual theorist, or an issue in the area of comparative culture and to write a critical essay which incorporates this research.

Course Content:

1. Cultural developments and texts that have been designated as being produced within the category of the course topic.
2. Discussion of the theoretical, social, philosophical and biographical contexts in which those works were produced.
3. Historical movements in various periods.
4. Discussion of the cultural issues and questions related to theoretical, social, philosophical, and biographical approaches to the study of the course topic.
5. Key ideas about how to evaluate and interpret cultural events, texts, and approaches.
6. Criticism and reflection upon political and economic systems as reflected in culture.
7. Discussion of the relevance of course readings to the understanding of contemporary cultural issues.
8. Critical analysis and interpretation of life writing.

9. Conducting scholarly research on and off-line.

Course Outline:

For the detailed course outline, please see the study guide.

Course Readings:

The course readings for this course will be available through the Online Library, which will provide students access to selected journal articles, book chapters, and reference materials. Please review your study guide for this course.

Course Preparedness:

This course is a history course which requires analysis, research, and writing. It assumes the mastery of prerequisite college-level skills in spelling, grammar, punctuation, paragraphing, and essay writing. It also assumes the ability to read and analyze literary texts. This course provides instruction in history and does not address remedial writing issues at the sentence, paragraph, or essay level. The California Department of Education "English-Language Arts Content Standards for California Public Schools" offers context for understanding the standard for writing at the college level. Students who do not meet the standards outlined in the "English-Language Arts Content Standards" will not pass this course.

In short, this course assumes that students already "write with a command of standard English conventions, write coherent and focused texts that convey a well-defined perspective and tightly reasoned argument, and use clear research questions and creative and critical research strategies" (California Standards, Grades Nine and Ten). This course focuses on texts and analysis and requires college-level writing skills that exceed those required at the secondary level.

Course Workload:

In accordance with accreditation standards, requires approximately two hours of outside work for every contact hour. For a 3-hour course, there are 48 contact hours, plus a minimum of 96 hours outside work. For a sixteen-week course, students can expect to devote a minimum of 6 hours of independent study per week in order to complete the coursework.

Grading Factors:

For grading and required work, please refer to the Study Guide.

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is the presentation of someone else's ideas or work as one's own. Students must give credit for any information that is not either the result of original research or common knowledge. If a student borrows ideas or information from another author, he/she must acknowledge the author in the body of the text and on the reference page. Students found plagiarizing are subject to the penalties outlined in the Policies and Procedures section of the Catalog, which may include a failing grade for the work in question or for the entire course. The following is one of many websites that provide helpful information concerning plagiarism for both students and faculty:

<http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml>

Ethics:

Ethical behavior in the classroom is required of every student. The course will identify ethical policies and practices relevant to course topics.

Technology:

Students are expected to be competent in using current technology appropriate for this discipline. Such technology may include word processing, spreadsheet, and presentation software. Use of the internet and e-mail may also be required.

Diversity:

Learning to work with and value diversity is essential in every class. Students are expected to exhibit an appreciation for multinational and gender diversity in the classroom.

Civility:

As a diverse community of learners, students must strive to work together in a setting of civility, tolerance, and respect for each other and for the instructor. Rules of classroom behavior (which apply to online as well as onsite courses) include but are not limited to the following:

- Conflicting opinions among members of a class are to be respected and responded to in a professional manner.
- Side conversations or other distracting behaviors are not to be engaged in during lectures, class discussions or presentations
- There are to be no offensive comments, language, or gestures

Students with Disabilities:

Students seeking special accommodations due to a disability must submit an application with supporting documentation, as explained under this subject heading in the General Catalog. Instructors are required to provide such accommodations if they receive written notification from the University.

Writing Across the Curriculum:

Students are expected to demonstrate writing skills in describing, analyzing and evaluating ideas and experiences. Written reports and research papers must follow specific standards regarding citations of an author's work within the text and references at the end of the paper. Students are encouraged to use the services of the University's Writing Center when preparing materials.

The following website provides information on APA, MLA, and other writing and citation styles that may be required for term papers.

Online Library:

Our Online Library supports academic rigor and student academic success by providing access to scholarly books and journals electronically.