



CIEE Global Institute – Cape Town

Course name:	South African Literature and Film
Course number:	LITT 3101 CTSA
Programs offering course:	Cape Town Open Campus
Open Campus Track:	Language, Literature and Culture Track
Language of instruction:	English
U.S. semester credits:	3
Contact hours:	45
Term:	Fall 2019

Course Description

In this course, students will be introduced to South African literature and film, and to some of the critical debates that have linked themes of cultural production in both genres of art. The core question that sustains various debates during the course is, what makes this text or film, distinctly South African? This broad overarching question of course spirals outward into several other major conceptual questions: what does it mean to be South African? Are we speaking of the nation state here or a South African identity that draws from it? Is it the content, the story, the style, the language that makes a novel or a film South African? How is 'South Africa' understood in texts by both, the obscure *and* the internationally renowned South African authors, who are too many to name here, or in the course, but include Njabulo Ndebele, Sol Plaatje, Es'kia Mphahlele, Nadine Gordimer, Richard Rive, Mariam Tlali, Zakes Mda, Breyten Breytenbach, Athol Fugard, J M Coetzee and Zoe Wicomb. Students will come away from the course with an impression of South African traditions of cinema and literary art. At the same time students will develop critical analysis skills with which to explore this course's texts and films for a much deeper and more enriching understanding of what we mean when we say South Africa. The course experiments with reading films as texts, and 'viewing' texts like films. In doing so, it acknowledges the performative, and sometimes theatrical, as a core site of (African) subject formation, but due to the 6-week timeframe of the semester, the scope of genres that we can cover will be limited to novel, short story, poetry, academic publications, oral history (in-person/audio file), short film, documentary and feature film.



Learning Objectives

By completing this course, students will be able to:

- Speak knowledgeably about the literary and cinematic landscape of 20th – 21st century South Africa.
- Critically review the primary texts and films of the course, including a grasp of their central themes and aesthetic choices, and of their historical and cultural significance.
- Explain how different media and genres (including short story, poetry, novel, feature film, theatre, documentary film) communicate the many facets that make up South Africa as a nation, idea, identity, concept, symbol, and one of the youngest democracies in the world.
- Engage with some of the critical debates and practices surrounding South African literary and cinematic production, including questions of “the canon”, mainstream versus independent publishing, and the continuing influence of colonialism on local literary and cinematic culture.

Course Prerequisites

Students should have an appreciation for literature, film, and the analysis thereof.

Methods of Instruction

Instruction will involve a combination of readings and screenings. In class, participants will experience lectures, facilitated discussion around each week’s reading and viewing, small-group exercises, and presentations. All students are required to take advantage of at least one one-on-one writing consultation. The viewings of the films will take place outside of scheduled class time. Screenings have been arranged to minimize trouble with accessing the various films, but also to encourage communal viewing and post-film discussion. If not able to attend, students are responsible for acquiring and viewing the film on their own. While it is not required to attend all film-screenings, it is required and quite essential to class discussions to view all films listed as ‘required viewing’ in this course.

The co-curricular activities for this course include a theater performance or public film screening, and two guest speakers.

Assessment and Final Grade

1. Close Reading Essay: 20%



2.	Research Proposal:	20%
3.	Class Presentation:	20%
4.	Final Research paper:	20%
5.	Class Participation:	20%
	TOTAL:	100%

Course Requirements

Close Reading Essay, 1500 words

The main purpose of this essay is to engage conceptually with a specific paragraph from a novel *and* a scene from one of the films of the course.

It should consist of both, contemplation and close reading of a paragraph from one of the three novels that make up the first part of the course - Wicomb, Ngcobo or Coetzee. Since the specific playlist of films varies from semester to semester, the instructor will clarify which films to choose a scene from.

For the close reading essay and the research proposal, participants are encouraged to explore formats other than conventional essay-formats, for example, video, podcast, solo mime, photo essay, prezi, and many more. Students will be graded according to the following criteria: depth of close-reading; originality of analysis; level of personal engagement and self-awareness; clarity of prose.

Research Proposal, 1500 words

In this essay-proposal, each student articulates a question and an ensuing line of inquiry in response to a film or text excerpt. Write about what you don't comprehend fully and what you want/ need to know in order to gain a deeper appreciation for the text and film. The work you put into this essay very likely will form the foundation for your final research paper.

Class presentation, 15 minutes, due in week 3 or week 4

Each participant chooses a session from weeks 3 or 4, in which they will present an aspect from a required reading. This presentation should last about 15 minutes and it should end in a thought-provoking prompt that will sustain class discussion after the presentation. Participants can also pair up to prepare a group presentation; the total time of the group presentation should amount to



15 minutes per student. Students will be graded according to the following criteria: evidence of research and thoughtfulness; evidence of engagement with the source text or theme; efficient use of time, space and resources; awareness of the multiplicity of views and perspectives.

Research paper, 2500 words

Students begin the research for the final paper during the first week of the course by stating their research interests and overall intellectual pursuits in their research proposal. By week 3, participants will have chosen a theme from the syllabus, or propose their own, and conduct desktop and/or embodied and/or archival and/or site research into a well-defined research question regarding that theme. A selection of texts and films from the course (at least one text, and one film) will anchor the research paper as primary texts, but participants are encouraged to draw from any other relevant material, including texts from their home country (for the purpose of comparative analysis).

Stylistically, the paper should contain an academic approach, but personal reflection, anecdote and observation are welcome. Students will be graded according to the following criteria: depth of engagement with the selected body of texts; depth of engagement with selected research question; clarity, flow and elegance of argument.

Participation

Participation is valued as meaningful contribution in the digital and tangible classroom, utilizing the resources and materials presented to students as part of the course. Meaningful contribution requires students to be prepared in advance of each class session and to have regular attendance. Students must clearly demonstrate they have engaged with the materials as directed, for example, through classroom discussions, online discussion boards, peer-to-peer feedback (after presentations), interaction with guest speakers, and attentiveness on co-curricular and outside-of-classroom activities.

Participation will be assessed through in-class participation, contribution to class discussions and debates, and active listening. Students will be graded according to the following criteria: regularity of contribution; thoughtfulness and subtlety of contribution; respect of others' views; ability to listen and respond; ability to ask questions.

Attendance Policy



Regular class attendance is required throughout the program, and all unexcused absences will result in a lower participation grade for any affected CIEE course. Due to the intensive schedules for Open Campus and Short Term programs, unexcused absences that constitute more than 10% of the total course will result in a written warning.

Students who transfer from one CIEE class to another during the add/drop period will not be considered absent from the first session(s) of their new class, provided they were marked present for the first session(s) of their original class. Otherwise, the absence(s) from the original class carry over to the new class and count against the grade in that class.

For CIEE classes, excessively tardy (over 15 minutes late) students must be marked absent. Attendance policies also apply to any required co-curricular class excursion or event, as well as to Internship, Service Learning, or required field placement. Students who miss class for personal travel, including unforeseen delays that arise as a result of personal travel, will be marked as absent and unexcused. No make-up or re-sit opportunity will be provided.

Attendance policies also apply to any required class excursion, with the exception that some class excursions cannot accommodate any tardiness, and students risk being marked as absent if they fail to be present at the appointed time.

Unexcused absences will lead to the following penalties:

<i>Percentage of Total Course Hours Missed</i>	<i>Equivalent Number of Open Campus Semester classes</i>	<i>Minimum Penalty</i>
Up to 10%	1 content classes, or up to 2 language classes	Participation graded as per class requirements
10 – 20%	2 content classes, or 3-4 language classes	Participation graded as per class requirements; written warning
More than 20%	3 content classes, or 5 language classes	Automatic course failure , and possible expulsion



Weekly Schedule

Week 1 Orientation Week

Class 1:1 Introduction to class

In the introductory session, participants verbalize their own subject position in relation to the South African political landscape through a discussion on positionality and identity politics in South Africa's past and present. We will explore the way South Africa has been "packaged" for a global audience since 1994 (in blockbusters such as *Invictus*, *Tsotsi*, *Disgrace*), versus the painful realities on the ground, including gross economic inequality, institutional racism, xenophobia, and other social ills that reveal the limitations of the Rainbow Nation fantasy, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission model, even Nelson Mandela's legacy. The lecture will also introduce students to Zoe Wicomb and her novel *Playing in the Light*, which is the one novel that the class will read in its entirety throughout the course.

Required Reading

Gqola, Phumla. "Defining People: Analyzing Power, Language and Representation in Metaphors of the New South Africa," *Transformation* 47 (2001): 94 -106.

Wicomb, Zoe. *Playing in the Light*, New York: The New Press, 2008.

Week 2 Positionality and Identity Politics;

Class 2.1 The life and death of the rainbow nation; local and global audiences; rural versus urban experiences.

The lecture will sketch out the South African literary landscape by identifying some of the internationally best-known writers such as J M Coetzee, Nadine Gordimer, André Brink, Alan Paton, Zakes Mda, Breyten Breytenbach, and Athol Fugard. Against the backdrop of a masculinist and predominantly white canon, we closely read excerpts from *And They Didn't Die* to learn about how pass laws and labor practices interacted with patriarchy to



generate chronic and structural poverty in both, rural KwaZulu Natal, where the novel is set in the 1950s and 60s, and in South Africa today.

Required Reading

Ngcobo, Laretta. *And They Didn't Die*. New York: The Feminist Press at CUNY, 1990: 1-51.

Hunter, Eva. "‘We Have to Defend Ourselves’: Women, Tradition, and Change in Laretta Ngcobo's *And They Didn't Die*," *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 13, no. 1 (1994):113–126.

Class 2.2 Beyond the masculinist canon

During this class, we will further explore the context of mid-20th century black consciousness writing and Ngcobo's way of representing women's pivotal role in the resistance struggle against colonialism and apartheid. At the same time the novel shows how the women's leadership and ability to organize for land rights and against abusive labor laws risked, and arguably achieved, a total alienation from their own community, especially the community of men.

For the second half of this session we read excerpts from J M Coetzee's controversial novel *Disgrace* to consider the troubled state of white identity in post-apartheid South Africa. We 'think through' the novel's difficult representation of blackness, rape, and sexuality, as well as the novel's wild popularity and "classic" status abroad. The lecture will also extend to other South African writers who have dealt with various aspects of white identity and the performance of racialized identities.

Required Reading

J.M. Coetzee, *Disgrace*, London: Secker & Warburg, 2000: 18-29, 88-99.

Diala, Isidore. "Nadine Gordimer, J.M. Coetzee, and Andre Brink: Guilt, Expiation, and the Reconciliation Process in Post-Apartheid South Africa". *Journal of Modern Literature* 25, no. 2 (2001/2002): 50–68.



DUE: Close Reading Essay

Week 3 History and Memory

Class 3:1 Re-membering Slavery
Co-curricular Activity: Visit to Iziko Slave Lodge Museum

Required Reading

Jacobs, Rayda. *The Slave Book*. Cape Town: Kwela Books, 1998: 9-39, 61-87.

Class 3:2 Deconstructing apartheid language

By this time in the course, students might already have finished reading Zoe Wicomb's *Playing in the Light*. This session explores themes of (de/re)construction of identities in the novel, but also draws on students' knowledge of histories of "passing" in the US context, and in other places. A cluster of questions presents itself – questions about visibility being an advantage or disadvantage, a privilege or a curse; questions like "do we become what we perform?" and whether it is even possible to perform race in the same way we can perform class. For some, essentialist questions may arise, for others, existential ones. What is black? white? coloured? If the labels are so arbitrary and absurd, why is it so (im)possible to switch and move between what they describe?

Required Reading

Wicomb, Zoe. *Playing in the Light*, New York: The New Press, 2008.

Erasmus, Zimitri. "Contact Theory: Too timid for "race" and racism," *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 66, No.2, 2010:387-400.

Class 3:3 Decoding South African Films/ Films about South Africa

This session introduces students to major debates around South African film, popular culture, and some film theory. Students will practice applying theoretical frameworks to their study of film excerpts from a range of films that were produced in the last twenty years.

Required Reading

Sapire, Hilary. "Introduction – South Africa on Film," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol.39, No.3, (2013): 615-621.

+ t.b.a.

Week 4 **Contemporary masculinities**

Class 4:1 sexuality and heteronormativity; the criminalization of blackness

This week, we read excerpts from Thando Mgqolozana's controversial novel *A Man Who Is Not a Man*, about Xhosa circumcision practices, and K Sello Duiker's novel *The Quiet Violence of Dreams*, about gay black identity in post-apartheid Cape Town. The films *The Wound* (based on Mgqolozana's novel), *Tsotsi*, and the more recent *Noem my Skollie* all explore the dilemmas and contradictions of contemporary black and coloured masculinity, and hint at the way black and coloured masculinity has been criminalized and sensationalized since colonialism.

Required Reading

Thando Mgqolozana, *A Man Who Is Not a Man* [EXCERPT]

Malecowna, Jessica. "'Look at Yourself – It's Very Abnormal': Thando Mgqolozana Quits South Africa's 'White Literary System,'" *Sunday Times: Books Live*, 18 May 2015.

Available at:

<http://bookslive.co.za/blog/2015/05/18/look-at-yourself-its-very-abnormal-thando-mgqoloz-ana-quits-south-africas-white-literary-system/>

DUE: Research Proposal

Class 4:2 Decolonizing the formerly colonized body

Engaging the difficult topic of violence and contested aesthetic representations thereof, this session addresses the question of how literature and film function as intercultural spaces where decolonization, in the sense of de-criminalizing and de-sensationalizing the black and coloured male, for instance, takes place.

Required Reading



Duiker, K.S. *The Quiet Violence of Dreams*, Cape Town: Kwela Books, 2010. [Excerpts: Tshepo and Mmabatha chapters]

Head, Bessie. *A Question of Power*, London: Longman Publishing Group, 2009: 52-100.

Class 4:3 Guest Speaker Lauren Beukes

Required Reading

t.b.a.

Week 5 The Women's Perspective

Class 5:1 Short Stories about/ by Women

This week we immerse ourselves into South African short stories. The lecture will provide students with an overview of the popular genre and it will specifically show-case women writers. We explore the question of whether/why the gender of the writer matters, and how gender intersects with race in 'women's writing' especially when analyzing the way these narratives construct a sense of history.

Required Reading

Karodia, Farida. "The Red Velvet Dress," in *Opening Spaces: An Anthology of Contemporary African Women's Writing*, by Yvonne Vera (ed), Cape Town: Pearson, 2008.

Jafta, Milly. "The Home-Coming," *Opening Spaces: An Anthology of Contemporary African Women's Writing*, by Yvonne Vera (ed), Heinemann Publishers, 1999.

Head, Bessie. *Tales of Tenderness and Power*. Heinemann International, 1990.
[EXCERPTS]

Head, Bessie. *The Cardinals*. Heinemann Educational Books, 1995. [EXCERPTS]

Class 5:2 The Family



We continue our exploration of South African short stories and read Can Themba's classic *The Suit*. We connect it to the strands of conversation that the course has weaved so far – gender, memory, embodiment and narration of history, and the politics of representation.

After taking a thirty-minute break, we then depart for the Baxter Theater at 7:00pm in order to attend the production *23 Years A Month And Seven Days*, written and directed by Nwabisa Plaatje. Those who will already have seen the play will attend a film (t.b.a.) screening instead.

Required Reading

Themba, Can. *The Suit*. Johannesburg: Viva, 1996.

Week 6 Decolonizing Literary Spaces

Class 6:1 (R)evolutions and revisions of the canon

In the final week of the course, we explore the latest developments in the South African literary space, including debates about the “whiteness” of the literary industry and efforts to forge a new, decolonial literature.

Required Reading

Xaba, Makhosazana. “The Suit Continued: The Other Side”. *Running and Other Stories*. Cape Town: Modjaji Books, 2013.

McKaiser, Eusebius. “Healthy Anger at Literary Festival”. *The Star*. 18 May 2015.
<http://www.iol.co.za/news/opinion/healthy-anger-at-literary-festival-1859602> [Primary]
“Decolonising Literature with Thato Rossouw”. Blog.<http://www.decolonisingliterature.com>

Class 6:2 Poetry in Cape Town

We look at the way black queer feminist writers like Makhosazana Xaba rewrite the old masculine, heteronormative canon, and how genres like spoken word and slam



poetry is redefining the meaning of “text”. We explore the intersection between text and performance, South Africa’s enormous history of theater traditions and oral traditions that, on one hand, date back centuries, but that, on the other hand, play a new a critical role in 21st century discourse around what it means to be South African.

For the second part of our last session, two or three Cape Town-based poets will join us and share their work and perspectives on the literary scene in South Africa.

Required Reading

Msimang, Sisonke. “On the Myth of the New South Africa”. *Africa is a Country*. 21 March 2015.

Available at: <http://africasacountry.com/2015/03/out-with-the-old-exploring-the-myth-of-the-new-south-africa/>

Required Viewing

Putuma, Koleka. “Voices from within: Poems for Her”. TedX Cape Town Salon .
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e5LRPY_Immw

Wegerif, Maya. “Why You Talk So White?” Slam Master Jam.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jlssG718dDQ>

Jonas, Siphokazi. “Dear Daughter”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=khBcfytd-VQ>

DUE: Final Research Paper

Readings

J.M. Coetzee, *Disgrace*, London: Secker & Warburg, 2000: 18-29, 88-99.

Diala, Isidore. “Nadine Gordimer, J.M. Coetzee, and Andre Brink: Guilt, Expiation, and the Reconciliation Process in Post-Apartheid South Africa”. *Journal of Modern Literature* 25, no. 2 (2001/2002): 50–68.

Duiker, K.S. *The Quiet Violence of Dreams*, Cape Town: Kwela Books, 2010. [Excerpts: Tshepo and Mmabatha chapters]

Erasmus, Zimitri. "Contact Theory: Too timid for "race" and racism," *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 66, No.2, 2010:387-400.

Gqola, Phumla. "Defining People: Analyzing Power, Language and Representation in Metaphors of the New South Africa," *Transformation* 47 (2001): 94 -106.

Head, Bessie. *A Question of Power*, London: Longman Publishing Group, 2009: 52-100.
Head, Bessie. *Tales of Tenderness and Power*. Heinemann International, 1990.
[EXCERPTS]

Head, Bessie. *The Cardinals*. Heinemann Educational Books, 1995. [EXCERPTS]

Hunter, Eva. "'We Have to Defend Ourselves': Women, Tradition, and Change in

Jacobs, Rayda. *The Slave Book*. Cape Town: Kwela Books, 1998: 9-39, 61-87.

Jafta, Milly. "The Home-Coming," *Opening Spaces: An Anthology of Contemporary African Women's Writing*, by Yvonne Vera (ed), Heinemann Publishers, 1999.

Karodia, Farida. "The Red Velvet Dress," in *Opening Spaces: An Anthology of Contemporary African Women's Writing*, by Yvonne Vera (ed), Cape Town: Pearson, 2008.

Lauretta Ngcobo's "And They Didn't Die," *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 13, no. 1 (1994):113–126.

Malecowna, Jessica. "'Look at Yourself – It's Very Abnormal': Thando Mgqolozana Quits South Africa's 'White Literary System,'" *Sunday Times: Books Live*, 18 May 2015.
Available at:
<http://bookslive.co.za/blog/2015/05/18/look-at-yourself-its-very-abnormal-thando-mgqoloz-ana-quits-south-africas-white-literary-system/>

McKaiser, Eusebius. "Healthy Anger at Literary Festival". *The Star*. 18 May 2015.
<http://www.iol.co.za/news/opinion/healthy-anger-at-literary-festival-1859602> [Primary]
"Decolonising Literature with Thato Rossouw". Blog.<http://www.decolonisingliterature.com>

Msimang, Sisonke. "On the Myth of the New South Africa". *Africa is a Country*. 21 March 2015.
Available at: <http://africasacountry.com/2015/03/out-with-the-old-exploring-the-myth-of-the-new-south-africa/>

Ngcobo, Lauretta. *And They Didn't Die*. New York: The Feminist Press at CUNY, 1990: 1-51

Sapire, Hilary. "Introduction – South Africa on Film," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol.39, No.3, (2013): 615-621.

Thando Mgqolozana, *A Man Who Is Not a Man* [EXCERPT]



Themba, Can. *The Suit*. Johannesburg: Viva, 1996.

Wicomb, Zoe. *Playing in the Light*, New York: The New Press, 2008.

Xaba, Makhosazana. "The Suit Continued: The Other Side". *Running and Other Stories*. Cape Town: Modjaji Books, 2013.