**Master Syllabus**

**Course: POR 216 Lusophone African Literature in Translation**

**Cluster Requirement: 3A**

**Course Overview:**

This course offers an introductory critical overview of major works of the literatures and cultures of Lusophone African literature in English translation. It focuses on providing a basic level of cultural literacy about the five countries of Africa subjected to and shaped by Portuguese colonialism through representative readings drawn from various periods of African history and local cultures, and situated in their human and social contexts, especially as a way of approaching course themes such as indigenous histories, European colonialism, political shifts and upheavals, ethnic and racial inequality (institutional racism and apartheid), creolization, cultural and linguistic difference and questions of gender and sexuality. Course assignments provide students with concrete models and examples to develop skills in textual analysis and interpretation, critical thinking, group discussion, and academic writing, including scholarly norms of structure, formatting and citation. The course will serve as an introduction for the further study of literature, history, and culture, whether in the Portuguese language or any other language or area of literary studies.

**Learning Outcomes:**

Course-Specific Learning Outcomes:

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

1. demonstrate a general understanding of cultural, social, and historical realities of Lusophone Africa, in transcontinental, national and local terms;

2. identify and describe a range of artistic forms, styles, and recurrent themes specific to the Lusophone African literary and cultural traditions;

3. apply critical reading skills in analyzing and debating meanings conveyed in Lusophone African literary texts;

4. relate forms, themes, and meanings of Lusophone African literature to culturally and historically situated forms of human and social experience;

5. convey their understanding of course content in a clear and effective manner through both oral and written communication.

University Studies Learning Outcomes (Cluster 3A):

*After completing this course, students will be able to:*

1. articulate how literature (fiction, poetry, drama and literary nonfiction) both reflects and helps shape culture, society and history;

2. explain how a text’s literary form, style and content express its meanings using appropriate disciplinary terminology;

3. evaluate the rhetorical and contextual elements of ideas presented by literary texts and respond to them critically and analytically;

4. explain the ways in which literature expresses the values that humans attach to their experiences.

**POR 216 Rationale Statement**

This course offers an introductory critical overview of major works of Lusophone African literatures in English translation that aims to impart a degree of cultural literacy about the realities of contemporary African nation-states as well of the local cultures that shape them. The course content consists of representative literary readings, cinema and music drawn from the 20th and 21st centuries, which are examined critically in their respective social and cultural contexts. It thereby aligns with Outcome 1 of the University Studies cluster 3A, in that it seeks to “articulate how literature (fiction, poetry, drama and literary nonfiction) both reflects and helps shape culture, society and history.” For example, students reading a novel such as *Niketche* by the Mozambican author Paulina Chiziane, will examine the author’s criticism of Mozambican patriarchal cultural norms, while at the same time exploring the effects of conventional social limitations on Mozambican women from the colonial period to the present day. Viewing the text through the prism of such broadly contextual perspectives will be predicated, however, on in-depth textual exploration, thus enabling precise and focused understanding of “how the text’s literary form, style and content express its meanings” (Outcome 2). In order to promote such understanding, “appropriate disciplinary terminology” (Outcome 2) will be introduced; for example, students may discuss how female characters adapt differently to societal expectations and thus The above-described directions of contextualizing (Outcome 1) and formal (Outcome 2) analysis will be accompanied by an ethical/political reflection on “the ways in which literature expresses the values that humans attach to their experiences” (Outcome 4). Thus, for example, a recent short novel by Ondjaki, one of Angola’s most acclaimed contemporary novelists, may be read as a subtle philosophical inquiry into the effectively Eurocentric nature of human values implicitly held to be universal (and thus culturally neutral) by a White male-dominated Western cultural tradition.

Through targeted course assignments, students will learn to “evaluate the rhetorical and contextual elements of ideas presented by literary texts and respond to them critically and analytically” (Outcome 3). In order to achieve such actively constructive approach to literary readings, assignments are based on the principle of engaged learning, which requires students to make informed connections and hypothesize critically about the meanings embedded in literary texts instead of passively absorbing and reproducing the information conveyed by the instructor. For instance, the lists of questions addressing key points of the week’s readings (which the students answer individually in writing and which also provide the springboard for classroom discussion) offer varied opportunities for such critical engagement with course material. The longer written assignments (take-home exams and essays) incorporate all of Cluster 3A outcomes, in that they require incorporating formal (rhetorical) and contextualizing (sociocultural and historical) elements of analysis in an extended, multi-paragraph format that calls for formulating and sustaining a logically developed argument based on an autonomous understanding of the literary texts explored in the course.

**Examples of Texts and/or Assigned Readings**

**Literary readings:**

Germano Almeida, *The Last Will and Testament of Senhor da Silva Araújo.*

Mia Couto, *Sleepwalking Land.*

José Eduardo Agualusa, *Creole.*

Ondjaki, *Good Morning Comrades*.

Paulina Chiziane, *Niketche.*

**Films:**

Francisco Manso, *Napomuceno’s Will*.

Flora Gomes, *Udju Azul di Yonta*.

**Music:**

Contemporary music from Cape Verde and Angola.

**Example Assignments**

*Questions on Current Readings*: Each student will be required to respond in writing to a set number of weekly discussion questions based on current readings. These assignments will be posted on the course’s online learning platform (if the course is taught in a web-enhanced or blended format) or distributed in class and/or by email. They will be graded on a scale determined by the individual instructor; the sample grading rubric below assumes that each completed assignment can earn from 1 to 10 points. [Addresses Learning Outcomes #2 and #3 from Cluster 3A.]

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 0 points | 1-6 points | 7-8 points | 9-10 points |
| Assignment not turned in. | |  | | --- | | Assignment completed with minimal effort; some points not addressed at all, others addressed superficially. Does not demonstrate basic-level understanding of the text. Appropriate disciplinary terminology (if required) not used or applied haphazardly. Writing abounds in errors, lacks coherence, and is difficult to follow. | | Assignment addresses most or all points, but in little depth. Basic-level understanding of the text evidenced. Some use of appropriate terminology present. Writing mostly error-free in spelling and syntax, but expression poorly developed (some lack of clarity and/or coherence). Overall satisfactory but could be strengthened with greater effort. | Assignment addresses most or all points with well-developed and insightful analysis. Writing is nearly or completely error-free, fully comprehensible, and stylistically elaborate. Appropriate terminology is used. Ideas are presented clearly and their expression is logically developed and connected. |

*Critical Essays*. Students will write two or three (depending on instructor) short papers in the course of the semester. The papers will discuss one or more literary texts studied in the course from a focused perspective, which will incorporate a combination of rhetorical/formal and contextual approaches, although any given individual paper may be predominantly formal or predominantly contextual in its direction. [Addresses Learning Outcomes #1-4 from Cluster 3A.]

*Exams*. Students’ learning will be tested in this course, with the precise number, format and timing of the tests to be determined by individual instructors. Testing assessment instruments may include short (unannounced) quizzes, non-cumulative tests given during the semesters (e.g., a midterm), and a cumulative final exam. Tests will typically require short-paragraph answers, but may incorporate other assessment techniques, such as multiple-choice questions or essays. Regardless of their precise number and format, overall the tests given in the course will require students to demonstrate their ability to interpret literary texts from the multiple perspectives described above in the POR 215 Course Rationale Statement and summarized in the list of Cluster 3A Learning Outcomes. [Addresses Learning Outcomes #1-4 from Cluster 3A.]

*Course Artifacts for Assessment*:

1. Discussion Questions

2. Critical Essays

3. Exams

4. Presentation materials

**Sample Course Outline**

**Week 1:** Introduction: discussion of norms reg. academic integrity, classroom participation, etc. Basic information on Lusophone Africa: regions, facts and figures, history, geography, demography, etc. Early examples of oral tradition, myths and legends and the emergence of literary expression in what is now Lusophone Africa.

**Weeks 2-3: Cape Verde.** Germano Almeida, *The Last Will and Testament of Semhor da Silva Araújo.* Francisco Manso, *Napomuceno’s Will*. Cape Verdean music: mornas, funana and beyond.

**Weeks 4:** **Guinea-Bissau.** Discussion of liberation leader Amílcar Cabral. **Film:** Flora Gomes. *Udju Azul di Yonta.* **Thursday: First paper due on .**

Weeks 5-6. **Weeks 7-8:** **Angola I.** José Eduardo Agualusa, *Creole*. Examiniation of the nineteenth century colonial legacy in Angola and in cross-border context (e.g., Berlin Conference, genocidal colonial regimes in the Belgian King Leopold II’s Congo Free State, now DRC, and in German Southwest Africa, now Namibia).

**Weeks 7-8:** **Angola II.** Liberation Reconsidered: New Perspectives. Background of Angolan liberation movement and the subsequent government and civil war. Reading and discussion of Ondjaki’s *Good Morning Comrades,* complemented by new music and elements of popular culture from Angola.

**Week 9: Mozambique I.** Discussion of Mozambican liberation struggle and subsequent civil war. Mia Couto, *Sleepwalking Land.*

**Weeks 10- 11:** **Mozambique II.** Reading and discussion of Paulina Chiziane’s *Niketche,* focusing on represenations of women and social structures in independent Mozambique.

**Thursday: second paper due on Angolan and Mozambican literary works.**

**Week 12-13.** **Poetry and presentations.**  Readings of translated poetry from the Lusophone African literary tradition, combined with 15-minute group presentations (3 people per group) on themes covered in class: e.g., racial, gender or socioeconomic inequality in culture; transculturation between Lusophone Africa and other global regions (food, music, religion); periods of one-party Marxist-Leninist rule, opposition to apartheid in neighboring South Africa and Rhodesia, and transition to democracy and developing understandings of citizenship (*cidadania*); writings by women of color; Amilcar Cabral, Eduardo Mondlane, Agostinho Neto and other liberation leaders, and debates on their relevance for contemporary intellectuals; interpretations of contemporary Lusophone African short stories or poetry in translation (or in the original, if you read Portuguese); contemporary Lusophone African cinema; contemporary musical genres from Cape Verde, Angola and elsewhere; or another topic of your choice, as approved by the professor.

**Week 14:** Review for final exam. **Final exam** will consist of three sections: 1) identification of vocabulary and key terms discussed in class and highlighted on study sheets; 2) identification and interpretation of quotes from the works read, and 3) a short essay on a topic chosen from three possible options. Consult exam schedule for date and time.