

Carleton University
Fall 2014
Department of English

ENGL 3603A: 20th-Century Fiction

The Emergence of the Other('s) Voice

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| Instructor: | Professor Pius Adesanmi |
| Office: | 1916 Dunton Tower |
| Office Hours: | Tuesday 3 pm – 5 pm (or by appointment) |
| Office Phone: | ext 1175 |
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Overview

Welcome!

The critical descriptor, 20th-Century Fiction, is almost always deployed in English Studies as a synonym of the great Western novelistic tradition represented by such accomplished artists as Fitzgerald, Salinger, Conrad, Kipling, Kafka, James, Lawrence, Joyce, Woolf, Faulkner, and Sartre. Even more than their 19th-century predecessors, the canonical novelists of the 20th century took the genre to new heights of artistic innovation, exploring such themes as decadence, excess, social upheaval, alienation, youth rebellion, the role of the artist in the modern period, the representation of psychological and sexual experience, the virtues and defects of the aggressively experimental character. However, beyond the Western canon and its recurring themes, what else happened in and to 20th-century fiction?

The “Other” happened to it. As empire collapsed and the dominant narratives of modernity/civilization were undermined by the horrors of two World Wars, voices emerged – from Africa to Latin America, Black America, the Caribbean, and Asia – and changed the face of the novel radically. So significant was the emergence of the other(‘s) voice in 20th-century fiction that the disciplinary landscape of English Departments was altered. World fiction, world literatures written in English, postcolonial literatures and so many other critical categories emerged to engage the new phenomenon. Salman Rushdie, Hanif Kureishi, Vikram Seth, Michael Ondaatje, Chinua Achebe, Ben Okri, Ngugi wa Thiong’o, Paule Marshall, Toni Morrison and Latin American boom generation of novelists such as Gabriel Marcia Marquez and Carlos Fuentes placed the thematic predilections of history, memory, identity, agency, and difference at the heart of 20th-century fiction. Using works by three major writers – Chinua Achebe, Toni Morrison, Joy Kogawa – this course will map the emergence and trajectories of the other(‘s) voice in fiction.

Expectations and Course Goals

This course has the following objectives: (1) to introduce the student to the trajectory of the novel in the 20th century, (2) to account for the emergence of a non-Western canon of 20th-century fiction, (3) to familiarize the student with various critical taxonomies of this body of work, i.e. postcolonial fiction, commonwealth fiction, fictions of the global south, etc, (4) to explore the relationship between these texts and the narrative/project of modernity. Students will be further expected to develop competence in (5) comparative literary analysis, (6) cultural analysis (7) and writing.

Course Requirements and Procedures

Requirement: read and reflect on each text well ahead of the date we begin to analyze it in class.

Attendance: as this course strongly requires students' active participation, regular attendance is imperative. The course shall be delivered in such a way that your continuous involvement shall be necessary at every stage. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class period. Reasonable circumstances sometimes force people to be late. By all means do come to class if you're late and be sure to explain things to me after class. Absence will be excused only for certifiable medical reasons and religious observances. **One point** will be subtracted for every unexcused absence.

Conduct: we will strive to create a convivial class atmosphere in which you will be at ease to express your opinions and participate fully in the learning process. Any disruptive conduct will, however, not be tolerated. You are required to avoid habitual lateness, reading newspapers during class, working hurriedly on an assignment due for submission in your next class, sleeping during class, leaving the classroom before the end of the class period, chatting with others on issues not related to the ongoing class discussion, or any other behaviour that interferes with the learning process and distracts everybody else.

Assignments: it is required that students do all assigned tests and examinations according to the instructor's specifications. Except in cases where necessary permission is granted or a student is able to present evidence of illness or any form of incapacitation, any student who fails to submit assignments on schedule will lose a determined percentage of his/her final grade point.

Note: If one of your assignments is lost, misplaced, or not received by the instructor, you are responsible for having a backup copy that can be submitted immediately upon request.

Academic integrity: academic dishonesty will be dealt with according to University Policies. See the statement on Instructional Offences in the Undergraduate Calendar.

Access statement: Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations in this course must contact a coordinator at the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities to complete the necessary Letters of Accommodation. After registering with the PMC, make an appointment to meet and discuss your needs with me in order to make the necessary arrangements as early in the term as possible.

Students requiring academic accommodation on the basis of a religious observance should make a formal, written request to the instructor for an alternate date and/or means of satisfying academic requirements. Such requests should be made during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist but no later than two weeks before the compulsory academic event. Accommodation is to be worked out directly and on an individual basis between the student and the instructor(s) involved. Instructors will make accommodations in a way that avoids academic disadvantage to the student.

Students or instructors who have questions or want to confirm accommodation eligibility of a religious event or practice may refer to the Equity Services website for a list of holy days and Carleton's Academic Accommodation policies, or may contact an Equity Services Advisor in the Equity Services Department for assistance.

Pregnant students requiring academic accommodations are encouraged to contact an Equity Advisor in Equity Services to complete a letter of accommodation. The student must then make an appointment to discuss her needs with the instructor at least two weeks prior to the first academic event in which it is anticipated the accommodation will be required.

Registration policy: during the drop/add period at the beginning of the semester, the Department of English encourages students to visit this and other courses in order to make informed judgments about which courses to take. After the last day for course changes, however, only students registered in the course may remain; no student may late-add (or restore a dropped registration) after the deadlines without petitioning the, instructor, the Department of English, and the Registrar's office.

Communication: we shall use several lines of communication to ensure a vibrant rapport throughout the course. They include: (1) email to the instructor – **please allow a window of 24 to 48 hours for me to reply**. Students are welcome to send me emails regarding any issue they like to discuss about the course; (2) students can see me at my office or give me a phone call during office hours, or leave a message on my answering machine.

Examination and Assignments

Participation: 30 points (500-word response to each novel, making three responses in all)

Extended review of one of the novels: 30 points (800 words)

Final Term Paper: 40 points

Submission dates to be discussed and agreed upon in class

* This course places a lot of emphasis on good writing and independent critical reasoning. Your tests and essay questions will be structured in a way that encourages sustained critical reasoning. Consequently, elements such as grammar, level of language, presentation/quality of ideas will form a key part of the grading process.

Grade Distribution

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| A+ | 90-100 |
| A | 85-89 |
| A- | 80-84 |
| B+ | 77-79 |
| B | 73-76 |
| B- | 70-72 |
| C+ | 67-69 |
| C | 63-66 |
| C- | 60-62 |
| D+ | 57-59 |
| D | 53-56 |
| D- | 50-52 |
| F | 0-49 |

Required Texts

(Our designated book store is Octopus Books 116 Third Avenue, Ottawa, ON K1S 2K1, 613-233-2589. Ask for ENGL 3603)

Chinua Achebe, *Arrow of God*

Toni Morrison, *Beloved*

Joy Kogawa, *Obasan*

Course Outline

Sept 9 Introduction: Modernity and the Other's Voice in 20th-Century Fiction

Readings:

First Period of Class

Enrique Dussel, "Eurocentrism and Modernity" *Boundary 2*, Vol. 20, No. 3, The Postmodernism Debate in Latin America (Autumn, 1993), pp. 65-76 (Available on JSTOR)

Second Period

Chantal Zabus, "The Empire Writes Back to and from the Centre" (Online: <http://www.limag.refer.org/Cours/Documents/PresAshcroftZabus.htm>)

Bill Ashcroft et al, Introduction to *The Empire Writes Back* (Library electronic resource, pages 1-13)

16 Chinua Achebe: Language, Tradition, Identity & Resistance

Readings:

First Period of Class

Chinua Achebe, "An Image of Africa"
(Online: <http://kirbyk.net/hod/image.of.africa.html>)

Chinua Achebe, "The Empire Fights Back", Chapter Two of *Home and Exile*
(Course reserve)

Second Period of Class

Simon Gikandi, "Chinua Achebe and the Invention of African Culture" *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 32, No. 3, Nationalism (Autumn, 2001), pp. 3-8.
(Available on JSTOR)

23 *Arrow of God*

*Background to the novel
*Cultural and ideological issues

30 *Arrow of God*

*Themes and textual strategies

Oct 7 *Arrow of God*

*Conclusion and overview of the novel's critical reception

Neil ten Kortenaar, "Beyond Authenticity and Creolization: Reading Achebe Writing Culture" *PMLA*, Vol. 110, No. 1, Special Topic: Colonialism and the Postcolonial Condition (Jan., 1995), pp. 30-42 (Available on JSTOR)

- 14 Toni Morrison: Race, Memory, & Resistance
- Readings:
- Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark*, Chapters 1 & 2 (Course reserve)
- 21 *Beloved*
- *Background to the novel
 - *Ideological contestations
- Nov 4 *Beloved*
- *Themes and textual strategies
- 11 *Beloved*
- *Overview of critical reception
- 18 Joy Kogawa: Ethnicity, Trauma, Nation.
- Readings:
- Yaying Zhang “Postcolonial Canada and its Postcolonial “Other”: Reconsidering “Canadianness” through Asian Canadian Writing. *Textual Studies in Canada* (Summer 2004), Issue 17, p97 (Library electronic resource)
- Naoko Hawkins, “Becoming a Model Minority: The Depiction of Japanese Canadians in the *Globe and Mail*, 1946 – 2000.” *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, Volume 41, Number 1–2, 2009, pp. 137-154 (Available on Project Muse)
- 25 *Obasan*
- *Themes and textual strategies
- Dec 2 *Obasan*
- *Overview of critical reception
 - *Conclusion of semester.