

Carleton University
Winter 2026 Preliminary Course Outline
Department of English

ENGL 4976A: *Issues in Postcolonial Literature*
Topic: Modern African Drama

Prerequisites: fourth-year standing or permission of the department

Instructor: Adam Barrows
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***** This is a preliminary syllabus only—texts and assignments are subject to change.
A complete version will be available closer to the start of the term. *****

Course description: This course introduces students to the rich tradition of modern and contemporary African drama. We will situate works by playwrights across the African continent within their national contexts, exploring the ways in which African theatre has served as a medium to address the legacies of slavery and colonialism, recuperate pre-colonial histories and traditions, and dramatize ongoing battles for economic freedom and gender equality. In the first half of the course, we will read classic modern plays from the 1960s and 1970s. In the second half, we will read plays by African women written and staged within the last fifteen years. Primary texts include works by playwrights from Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.

Learning Outcomes: In this course students will learn to: identify and discuss key themes and formal features of representative theatrical works by a range of African writers; independently research the work of one African playwright of their choice; place theatrical works by African writers within their respective national, cultural, political and historical contexts; conduct secondary research in the service of original literary analysis and argumentation.

Required Texts: (available through the Carleton University Book Store)
Jeyifo, Biodun, Ed. *Modern African Drama*. Norton, 2002 (New: \$34.95)
Hutchison, Yvette & Amy Jephtha, Eds. *Contemporary Plays by African Women*. Methuen, 2019 (New: \$52.50)

Evaluation: (NOTE: Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.):

Attendance: 10%
Response Papers: 40%
Essay Proposal: 10%
Final Essay: 40%