

## Syllabus:

**English 369, African Literature, Macalester College, Fall 2004**

### **South African Literature**

Instructor: David Chioni Moore  
Class: T-Th 10:10-11:40, Carnegie 208  
Office hours: Wed 1-4, in Carnegie 413, and by appointment  
Contacts: w: 696-6242 h: 647-1655, 10 am to 9:00 pm mooredc@macalester.edu

*Introduction:* For fall 2004, English 369, African Literature, will focus on the literature of a single nation among Africa's fifty-three: South Africa. Like the United States, South Africa was long populated by indigenous peoples, and was colonized by the Dutch and then British. Like the United States, the early European colonists, finding the diverse native peoples highly resistant, brought slaves from abroad – in South Africa, mainly from Malaysia and Indonesia. As in the United States, South Africa's Europeans fought long wars against the native peoples, and an internal war between themselves, and followed this with apartheid, further immigration of foreign peoples, struggles against apartheid, and eventual partial, still incompleting resolution.

Against this backdrop, this course will survey South African writing from the 1940s to the present. We will read novels, letters, memoirs, and political tracts, and screen one film and several television shows. The texts, drawn from all major South African population groups, are often powerful, painful, and compelling. They include writings by Paton, Rive, La Guma, Biko, Mda, and Moodley, as well as by *four* Nobel laureates: two for literature – Gordimer and Coetzee – and two for peace – Mandela and (in the Biko introduction) Tutu.

*Recommended Preparation:* Ideal preparation for this course would include good background in both literary and African (most specifically South African) studies. Since this is a rare combination, students with one or the other (or with comparative background in American race and ethnic studies and literature) will be welcomed in the course. Students with neither area of prior preparation should consult the instructor before finalizing enrollment

*Course Conduct:* The class will be run as a joint exploration, rather than a dispensation of information. Close reading and discussion of texts will be mixed with presentations by class members and the professor.

*Assignments/Evaluation:*

an oral presentation on a topic to be determined	8%
must-pass historical/geographical South Africa mega-quiz	12%
first paper (5-6 pages)	15%
second paper (5-6 pages)	15%
active and insightful class participation	20%
a longer (10-12 page) final paper	30%

*Notes:* Timely class attendance is integral to the course and its grade. Inform me in advance of conflict with any religious holidays and/or any relevant disability issues. We'll arrange acceptable alternatives and/or accommodations, and your grades will be unaffected.

*Paper format:* word-processed, double-spaced, *numbered pages*, stapled, 1" margins all around, 12-point font. A title page with a good title, and then your name, course title, my name, and date. Generous acknowledgments of all contributors, works, and sources used at the end of the paper. I assume your font gives you 300 or more words per page. Papers are due under my office door by the day and time noted, and drop 1/2 grade per day from that point. Further writing requirements and suggestions are posted on my website. RTFM.

**Schedule:**

- 1 S9 (Thursday only) Introduction of course and participants; brief S.A. history outline
- 2 S14 Alan Paton, *Cry the Beloved Country*, 1948
- 3 S21 Richard Rive, *Emergency*, 1964
- 4 S28 Alex La Guma, *In the Fog of the Seasons' End*, 1972.
- 5 O5 Steve Biko, *I Write What I Like*, 1978  
→First paper (5-6 pp, reading in detail) due Mon Oct 6th, 2pm under my office door
- 6 O12 *film* Mapantsula screened Sunday Oct 10, 7pm, *Humanities 4th floor*  
Oliver Schmitz and Thomas Mogotlane, dirs., *Mapantsula*, 1988
- 7 O19 J. M. Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians*, 1980
- 8 O26 Tues: South African history/geography mega-quiz  
*Fall Break Thurs-Fri Oct 28-29*
- 9 N2 Nadine Gordimer, *July's People*, 1981  
(note: the postcolonial critic Jahan Ramazani visits Macalester this week)
- 10 N9 Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom* (first portion), 1995  
→Second paper due (5-6 pp.) Monday Nov 10th, by 2 pm
- 11 N16 Zakes Mda, *The Madonna of Excelsior*, 2002
- 12 N23 *video* Prime Time South Africa screened Sun Nov 21, 7pm, *Hum. 4th floor*  
South African Broadcasting Inc., *Prime Time South Africa* (mid-1990s television)  
*Thanksgiving Break Thurs-Fri Nov 25-26*
- 13 N30 Praba Moodley, *The Heart Knows No Colour*, 2003
- 14 D7 Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom* (to end), 1995

15 D14 Tu: topic t.b.d.  
Th: course conclusion

Classes end Friday Dec 17; finals period is Dec 19-23 (Sun-Thurs)

**Final papers due Tuesday December 21, by 2 pm under my office door.**

**Course Books (available at Ruminator Texts):**

1. Alan Paton, *Cry the Beloved Country* [1948]. New York: Simon & Schuster/Scribner, 1995.
2. Richard Rive [1964]. *Emergency*. Cape Town: New Africa Books, 2000.
3. Alex La Guma, *In the Fog of the Seasons' End* [1972]. Oxford: Heinemann, 1992.
4. Steve Biko, *I Write What I Like* [1978]. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2002.
5. J. M. Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians* [1980]. New York: Penguin, 1999.
6. Nadine Gordimer, *July's People* [1981]. New York: Penguin, 1982.
7. Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1995.
8. Zakes Mda, *The Madonna of Excelsior*, New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2002.
9. Praba Moodley, *The Heart Knows No Colour*. Cape Town: Kwela Books, 2003.

**To be separately supplied or screened:**

- Geographic information packet on South Africa, for quiz preparation
- Oliver Schmitz and Thomas Mogotlane, dirs., the film *Mapantsula*, 1988
- South African Broadcasting Inc., *Prime Time South Africa*. Five television programs originally broadcast 1995-1996. San Francisco, CA : California Newsreel, 1997

Course extends over 15 weeks, including three part-weeks: 1 intro week, 9 books, 1 book over two weeks (Mandela), 2 films, 1 quiz, and 1 conclusion.

Alternative thoughts for structuring this course: 1. Begin with Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm*, or, more challengingly, William Plomer's wild *Turbott Wolfe*. 2. In place of Rive, select from Abrahams (perhaps *Tell Freedom*), Modisane (the difficult but rewarding *Blame Me On History*), or Mphahlele (perhaps *Down Second Avenue*). 3. Integrate poetry or drama – though at the loss of some theory, memoir, film or television. 4. For a U.S. audience, begin with the letters between Rive, Abrahams, Modisane and Mphahlele with Langston Hughes. 5. Include key topical writings such as the Freedom Charter, a TRC transcript, or other texts.

**First Paper Assignment:**  
**English 369: South African Literature**  
**D. C. Moore, September 28, 2004**

Five to six pages, due Wednesday, October 8th, by 2:00 PM under my door at Carnegie 413. Carefully note format requirements on syllabus.

So far this semester we have read three important early works of modern South African literature: Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country*, Rive's *Emergency*, and La Guma's *In the Fog of the Season's End*. The three texts are, moreover, quite different one from the next.

For your first paper, focus on one of the following three questions, via substantial comparative investigation into two of the above three texts:

- What *future* is (or is not) imagined for South Africa in these two texts?
- Which groups or classes of South Africans are (or are not) granted *agency* in these two texts?
- What image (or images) of *whiteness* are presented in these two texts?

A most elementary level of “comparative investigation” would be, for example, to say “*Cry* imagines future X for South Africa, while *Fog* imagines future Y.” I would expect, though, that papers will extend beyond simple juxtaposition of statements about two texts. Rather, in your paper explore the hows and whys of the differences or similarities between your two chosen texts on the topic you select. This might involve questions of audience/readership, authorial intent, historical situation, authorial situation, and/or many other factors.

I will expect, also, that papers will make substantial use of style analysis (in all its many varieties) to develop and sustain your claims. As one part of this, at some point in the paper – the outset, the middle, or elsewhere – you will need to offer a detailed (at least 150 words), exemplary analysis of a brief fragment (between 10 and 25 words) of one of your two focus novels. In this analysis as elsewhere, place significant pressure on the source text, paying attention to details, delving into relevant or key features or passages from the texts. Do not simply offer quotations from the texts and expect them to explain themselves. Throw light upon their richness.

Finally, make sure to draft, write, and then re-write your paper. There are few good writers in the world, but there are lots of good revisers. Any questions, feel free to call, email, or discuss in class. Broadly relevant email questions will be responded to the whole class. I will respond on Monday evening to drafts emailed to me by Sunday, October 3rd, 11:59 pm.

**Second Paper Assignment:  
English 369: South African Literature  
D. C. Moore, November 4, 2004**

Six pages, due Monday, November 15th, by 3 pm under my door at Carnegie 413. Carefully note format requirements on syllabus.

So far this semester we have read and viewed a broad range of South African literary and cultural production, by Paton, Rive, La Guma, Biko, Schmitz & Mogotlane, Coetzee, Gordimer, and (in progress) Mandela. We have, in addition, briefly studied the history and geography of South Africa.

For your second paper, focus on one of the following three questions, which you will address via substantial comparative investigation into at least two of the above texts, *other* than texts which you focused on for Paper One:

- Discuss the nature of violence presented in two or more works: its textual/filmic handling, context, lessons, characterology, “race” and more.
- Discuss the image (or images) and handling of gender in two or more works.
- Steve Biko offers rich commentary on his notion of Black Consciousness. Discuss Biko’s theories with respect to one or more South African course texts.

As in the previous paper, I will expect papers to “lay out the basics” – in other words, recount the key comparative features of each chosen text with respect to the given subject – but also then to explore questions deeper than the initial juxtaposition might suggest. This might (or might not) involve thorny questions in the areas of narrative stance, violence, gender, and/or black consciousness, and might (or might not) extend to audience/readership, authorial intent, historical situation, authorial situation (insofar as you know it), and/or many other factors. Be sure, of course, to extend well past class discussions.

I will expect, also, that your paper will make substantial use of style analysis (in its many varieties) to develop and sustain your claims. Thus pay attention to the details of the texts you work with, supplying and then analyzing relevant or key details and passages from the texts. Don’t simply place quotations from the texts on the page, and expect them to explain themselves. Work with your quotations in detail to bring out their richness.

Finally, make sure to draft, write, then re-write, and then chisel your paper. There are few good writers in the world, but there are lots of good revisers. Any questions, feel free to call, email, or discuss in class. Broadly relevant email questions will be responded to the whole class. I will respond to drafts submitted to me reasonably before submission; thus drafts submitted by Friday, Nov 12th at 3pm will be responded to by Sunday the 14th at 11:00 pm.

## Final Paper Assignment:

### English 369: South African Literature D. C. Moore, November 30, 2004

Twelve pages, due Tuesday, December 21st, by 2:00 p.m. under my office door at Carnegie 413. Also: note “workshop” requirement in the very last paragraph of this assignment. For the final submission, carefully note format requirements on syllabus.

During this semester we have read and viewed a broad range of South African literary and cultural production, by Paton, Rive, La Guma, Biko, Schmitz & Mogotlane, Coetzee, Gordimer, the South African Broadcasting Corporation, Mda, Moodley, and Mandela.

For your final paper you will have the option to focus on any of eight broad themes which cut across the texts encountered in this class, which you will address via substantial comparative investigation. Four requirements are as follows. First, engage substantially with at least three of the texts from class; you may of course touch on more if appropriate. Second, bring to bear at least three outside sources on your paper. At least one of these three must be a work of literary criticism or scholarship as sourced on the Modern Language Association database; the others may also be literary criticism or scholarship, or may be from some other domain. (Note that the MLA database is a search-and-citation index, not a source for full-text articles. Identify your articles using the MLA DB, and then read them in print or other formats.) At least two must *not* be web-based. Cite all web-based material carefully. Third, because some of the topic-choices reprise those offered earlier in the semester, do not write on a topic you have already written on. Fourth, one or more of the main texts you engage with must be either (or both) Mda or Mandela.

The eight topics:

1. We have seen a range, and possibly a trajectory, of South African works from 1948 to 2004. Basing your thoughts on a tracing of a trajectory from the works to date, speculate as to what a *future* work or field of South African literature might look like. You will likely want to attend to artistic, formal, media-choice, political, social and/or demographic issues in developing your argument.
2. Nelson Mandela’s massive autobiography covers most of the time period and engages (or interestingly does not engage) almost all of the themes developed in this course. Read *Long Walk to Freedom* against or in conjunction with two or more other works from this course, on a theme or themes of your judicious choosing.
3. Or, do the same thing with the differently encyclopedic *The Madonna of Excelsior* by Mda.
4. Discuss the nature of violence presented in three or more works: its textual/filmic handling, context, lessons, and more.

5. Discuss the image (or images) and handling of sex and/or gender in three or more works.
6. Steve Biko offers rich commentary on his notion of Black Consciousness. Discuss Biko's theories with respect to one or more South African course texts. This essay must include substantial (but not total) engagement with Nelson Mandela's autobiography.
7. "Race" in South Africa is differently configured from race in the United States. Develop a rich (i.e. not simplistic) essay on the question of race in selected works of South African writing and culture.
8. Make me an offer. If there has been something sticking in your craw all semester, or an important literary or social issue which you think merits address in a substantial final paper, write me a 300-word email – not a mind-dump, but a specific, focused proposal for the engagement of your topic, **by Friday, December 5th, at 3pm. Include a sense of argument, outline, texts chosen, and more.** I will email you back quickly with my thoughts and advice.

As in the previous papers, I expect papers not only to "lay out the basics" – in other words, recount the key comparative features of each chosen text with respect to the given subject – but also to explore the deeper questions that the initial juxtaposition might suggest. This might (or might not) involve questions of audience/readership, authorial intent, historical situation, authorial situation (insofar as you know it), and/or many other factors. Be sure, of course, to extend well past class discussions.

I will expect, also, that your paper will make substantial use of style analysis (in all its many varieties) to develop and sustain your claims. Thus pay attention to the forms and details of the texts you work with, supplying and then analyzing relevant or key details and passages from the texts. Don't simply place quotations from the texts on the page, and expect them to explain themselves. Work closely with your quotations in detail to bring out their richness. Let textual analysis make your case.

Finally, make sure to draft, write, and then re-write your paper. There are few good writers in the world, but there are lots of good revisers. Any questions, feel free to call, email, or discuss in class. Broadly relevant email questions will be responded to the whole class. I will respond to drafts submitted to me (email is fine) by Friday, December 17th, at noon.

**Lastly: Workshop.** Bring to class Thursday, December 9th, an unstapled, two-page, single-spaced (with blank lines between paragraphs, as here) initial cut of your final paper. I will gather these into one large file, and print a packet of the whole immediately after class. This packet will be the subject of class on Tuesday, December 14th, and the first third to half of our last class on Thursday, December 16th.

Note for people using this syllabus:

South African literature is incredibly rich. This syllabus is just one version of how to teach a South Africa literature survey. Here are some thoughts:

- In place of Rive, one might teach Eshia (Ezekiel) Mphahlele's *Down Second Avenue*, Peter Abrahams' *Tell Freedom* (which is a bit long), or Bloke Modisane's *Blame Me On History* (which might be a bit challenging early in the course or for beginning students).
- Prior to Paton, one might have Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm*, or, more scandalously, William Plomer's *Turbott Wolfe*.
- Any of many books by Nadine Gordimer or J. M. Coetzee might be substituted for my Gordimer and Coetzee selections.
- One might certainly swap my Mda selection for Mda's roughly contemporaneous *The Heart of Redness*.
- The Moodley book is an example of current "genre" fiction – it is an out-and-out supermarket-style romance novel – not "high literature."
- I regret teaching no drama and no poetry, and I would love under other circumstances to screen episodes of *Takalani Sesame*, a.k.a. *Sesame Street South Africa*. And indeed there are dozens of other worthy books that under other circumstances might work extremely well in this course.