

This module explores some of the major writings from Africa and the Caribbean of the period from independence from colonialism to the present. We will seek to examine the relationship between oral forms and literary texts, strategies of representing cultural histories, and the relationships between national and ethnic identities in emergent postcolonial states. The course will also encounter alternative and dissenting voices which express political and social discontent: insurgence, revolution, gender conflict, and the mythologies of the dispossessed. The aim of the course, first and foremost, is to introduce students to the vibrant, various, and accomplished literary culture of contemporary, postcolonial Africa and the Caribbean. In addition, students taking this course will practise close readings of the set texts, engage with the critical positions within the field of postcolonial writing and theory, and encounter complex debates about how national and postcolonial identity is reflected in these writings.

The course will divide into two parts, The first part (taught by David Richards) begins with Achebe's classic text of historical and cultural reconstruction of a pre-colonial African society on the eve of colonisation. The module will then look at two major African poets (Soyinka's epic mythologies, and Senghor's Senegalese negritude poetics), before examining Soyinka's major tragic drama *Death and the King's Horseman*. Ngugi wa Thiong'o's controversial novel is an overtly political response to the post-colonial betrayal of the ideals of the struggle for Kenyan independence. This part of the course will end with Okri's disturbing visionary narratives of an African postcolonial present. In the second half of the module (taught by Gemma Robinson) we will turn to the Caribbean. We will study Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, a controversial novel that explores the Caribbean's traumatic pre- and post-emancipation history. We move on to look at the Martiniquan poet, Aimé Césaire, together with the Guyanese poet, Martin Carter, two writers whose politics and poetic work have helped define modes of modern cultural identity and anti-colonial protest in the region. In Jamaica Kincaid's prose we will identify dominant features in the Caribbean coming of age novel, considering relationships between nation, gender and narration. We will watch finally the 1970s Jamaican film of rude boys and reggae, *The Harder They Come*, looking closely at its visual representation of the Caribbean and seminal soundtrack.

Primary Texts:

- Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (1958) (London: Penguin 2006)
- Wole Soyinka *Idanre* and Leopold Sedar Senghor *Nocturnes* (photocopies provided in class)
- Wole Soyinka *Death and the King's Horseman* (London: Methuen, 1975)
- Ngugi wa Thiong'o *Matigari* (London: Heinemann, 1989)
- Ben Okri *Incidents at the Shrine* 1986 (London: Vintage, 1993)
- Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) (London: Penguin, 2000)
- Martin Carter, *Selected Poems* [photocopies will be provided in class] and Aimé Césaire, *Notebook of a Return to My Native Land* (1956), trans. by Mireille Rosello with Annie Pritchard (Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe, 1995)
- Jamaica Kincaid, *Annie John* (London: Picador, 1985).
- NB: we will schedule a screening of *The Harder They Come* (dir. Perry Henzell). This film can be bought on DVD but it is not a compulsory purchase.

A list of secondary reading will be issued at the beginning of the course, but the following are helpful and provocative introductions to the subject:

Stephanie Newell, *West African Literatures: Ways of Reading*, Postcolonial Studies Series, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006

Caroline Rooney, *African literature, animism and politics* London: Routledge, 2000

Alison Donnell and Sarah Lawson Welsh, eds, *Routledge Reader in Caribbean Literature*

London: Routledge, 1996

Assessment

The class will meet weekly for two hours. Assessment will be by two essays (2000-2250 words each), which will count for 45% each of the total marks for the course. Students will also submit their seminar presentation in written form (maximum 1000 words) which will count for a further 10% of the total mark.