

John Jay College of Criminal Justice
The City University of New York

New Course Proposal
LIT 3XX. Text and Context

When completed, this proposal should be submitted to the Office of the Associate Provost for consideration by the College Curriculum Committee.

1. Department (s) proposing this course:
English

2. Title of the course:
Text and Context

Abbreviated title (up to 20 characters):
Text & Context

3. Level of this course:
 100 Level 200 Level X_300 Level 400
Level

4. Course description as it is to appear in the College bulletin:
(Write in complete sentences except for prerequisites, hours and credits.)

This course introduces students to the contexts within which literary works are created and interpreted, and gives them theoretical frameworks for their own interpretations. The course will place one or more literary texts into context by focusing on relevant historical backgrounds and critical reception. The course will also introduce a variety of interpretive approaches, and may include critical race theory, deconstruction, feminism, formalism, Marxism, new historicism, post-colonialist, psychoanalytic and reception theories. Each semester individual instructors will anchor the course in specific sub-topics, primary texts, cultures, and historical moments, depending on their areas of specialization.

5. Has this course been taught on an experimental basis?

No

Yes: Semester (s) and year (s):

Teacher (s):

Enrollment (s):

Prerequisites (s):

6. Prerequisites:

LIT 260, *Introduction to Literary Study* and at least one Historical Perspectives Topics course; or permission of the Chair.

7. Number of: class hours_3__ lab hours____ credits_3__

8. Brief rationale for the course:

After students have acquired the basic skills of literary analysis in *Introduction to Literary Study*, and as they are broadening their knowledge of literary history in their chosen Historical Perspectives courses, they will take this core course in theoretical perspectives and methods in the discipline of literary studies. Students will examine several modes of theoretical and critical inquiry, and they will study the ways in which particular theoretical parameters inform the reading of literary texts. They will learn to apply such theoretical tools consciously and judiciously in their own practice of reading and writing. Students will thus enter into a dialogue with the positions of other academic writers; this will increase the students' awareness of literary studies as an academic discipline and it will help them to view themselves as members of a larger community of writers and thinkers.

9a. Knowledge and performance objectives of this course:
(What knowledge will the student be expected to acquire and what conceptual and applied skills will be learned in this course?)

Through class readings, discussions, four papers, in-class student presentations, a final paper and exam, students will:

- Learn to understand the methods, concepts, goals and underlying assumptions of specific modes of literary criticism and will demonstrate this understanding in their class presentation, papers, final essay and final exam.
- Become aware of the theoretical underpinnings of any act of reading; an awareness that will be constantly reinforced in class discussion.
- Be able to recognize how texts and interpretations are informed by aesthetic, intellectual, cultural and political constructs, biases and perceived norms. Students will demonstrate their awareness of such frameworks in all forms of class work.
- Learn to employ particular theoretical frameworks in the concrete practice of reading and writing about literary texts. Students will practice this skill repeatedly in papers and class discussions and will be evaluated on their ability to accurately assess the framework's relevance to their interpretation.
- Increase their awareness of literary studies as an academic discipline and learn to write essays that engage both the texts under discussion and the texts of other

critical practitioners in the field. The final essay will enforce this awareness by asking them to critique a critical practitioners' approach.

- Come to recognize their own subject positions as readers and writers, to see themselves as members of a community of writers in a specific discipline, and to recognize and strengthen their own authorial voice in dialogue with others. Students will exercise their distance from critical practitioners in their final evaluative essay, which mandates that they assume their own voice in critiquing professionally published work.

Student success in attaining these goals will be measured by grades on assignments that are designed to foster these skills.

- 9b. Information literacy:
(Indicate what sorts of information seeking skills will be enhanced by this course, e.g., use of the internet, access to specialized data bases, literature search skills, etc.)

Students will be given explicit instruction in the use of the Modern Language Association Bibliography, EbscoHost Academic Premier, Gales Literary Index, and SocIndex. They will learn how to perform comparative searches among different databases, and finally to choose material relevant to their interests. The final exam in this course requires students to evaluate material found in a database search for its relevance, theoretical biases, strengths and weaknesses, thus specifically testing their information literacy.

10. Recommended writing assignments:
(Indicate types of writing assignments and number of pages of each type. Writing assignments should satisfy the College's requirements for writing across the curriculum.)

4 four-page papers (16 pages) = 60% of grade
1 ten-minute oral presentation (3-4 pages) = 10% of grade
1 five-page research paper (5 pages) = 30% of grade (along with identification part of exam)

11. Will this course be part of any major (s) or program (s)?
 No
 Yes. Major or program: the proposed English major
What part of the major? (Prerequisite, core, skills, etc.)

Part 3: Critical Methods.

This is the second required core course, following *Introduction to Literary Study* and at least one Historical Perspectives course.

12. Is this course related to other specific courses?
 No

Yes. Indicate which course (s) and what the relationship will be (e.g., prerequisite, sequel, etc.).

13. It is strongly advised to meet with a member of the library faculty before answering question 14.

If this course was taught on an experimental basis, were the existing library, computer, lab or other resources adequate for this course?

Yes

No. With whom has this been discussed? What has been recommended?

If this course was not taught on an experimental basis, are library, computer, lab or other resources necessary for this course?

No

Yes. With whom has this been discussed? What has been recommended?

Library materials were discussed with Ellen Sexton on November 1, 2007. We agreed that the library has the resources to support this course well, especially in regard to its information literacy component.

The Library has engaged in purchasing a number of resources for the proposed English major and is rapidly developing adequate resources to support this course. The online database collection adequately supports the course, and the bibliography for this course was created out of a CUNY+ search. More than half of the books listed in the bibliography were culled from the Library's recent acquisitions, increasingly strong in postcolonial studies.

14. Syllabus and bibliography:
Attach a sample syllabus for this course. It should be based on the College's model syllabus. The sample syllabus must include a week by week or class by class listing of topics, readings, other assignments, tests, papers due, or other scheduled parts of the course. It must also include proposed texts. It should indicate how much various assignments or tests will count towards final grades. (If this course has been taught on an experimental basis, an actual syllabus may be attached, if suitable.)

Attached

In addition, a bibliography in APA format for this course must be attached to this proposal.

Attached

15. This section is to be completed by the chair (s) of the department (s) proposing the course.

Name (s) of the Chairperson (s): Marny Tabb

Has this proposal been approved at a meeting of the department curriculum committee?

No Yes: Meeting date: 10/30/07

When will this course be taught?

Every semester, starting _____ Spring 2009 _____

One semester each year, starting _____

Once every two years, starting _____

How many sections of this course will be offered? _____ 1 _____

Who will be assigned to teach this course?

Professors Allen, Gray, Majumdar, Schlutz, Umeh, Powers, McKible, Carbonell, Tung

Is this proposed course similar to or related to any course or major offered by any other department (s)?

No

Yes. What course (s) or major (s) is this course similar or related to?

Did you consult with department (s) offering similar or related courses or majors?

Not applicable No Yes

If yes, give a short summary of the consultation process and results.

Will any course be withdrawn if this course is approved?

No

Yes, namely:

Signature (s) of chair of Department (s) proposing this course:

Date:

Revised: September 15, 2000

TEXT AND CONTEXT LIT 3XX, Section 01

John Jay College of Criminal Justice 445 West 59th Street, New York, NY 10019

Model Syllabus

Professor Allison Pease
Office: 1239N
Office Hours: By appointment
(212) 237-8565

Course Description:

Text and Context introduces students to the contexts within which literary works are created and interpreted, and gives students theoretical frameworks for their own interpretations. This course will introduce a variety of interpretive approaches, including critical race theory, gender-based criticism and feminism, formalism, and post-colonial theory. This semester we will place three texts, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902) Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and Buchi Emecheta's *Second-Class Citizen* (1975), into context by reading them (a) as part of a literary and cultural dialogue, and (b) texts with their own historical backgrounds and interpretive possibilities.

Learning Objectives:

Through class readings, discussions, four papers, in-class student presentations, a final paper and exam, students will:

- Learn to understand the methods, concepts, goals and underlying assumptions of specific modes of literary criticism.
- Become aware of the theoretical underpinnings of any act of reading.
- Be able to recognize how texts and interpretations are informed by aesthetic, historical, cultural and political constructs, biases and perceived norms.
- Learn to employ particular theoretical frameworks in the concrete practice of reading and writing about literary texts.
- Increase their awareness of literary studies as an academic discipline and learn to write essays that engage both the texts under discussion and the texts of other critical practitioners in the field.
- Come to recognize their own subject positions as readers and writers, to see themselves as members of a community of writers in a specific discipline, and to recognize and strengthen their own authorial voice in dialogue with others.

Required Texts:

Achebe, Chinua. *Things Fall Apart: A Casebook*. Ed. Isidore Okpewho. Oxford UP, 2003.
Achebe, Chinua. *Things Fall Apart: Classics in Context*. Heinemann, 1996.
Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness*. (Norton Critical Edition) 4th ed. Ed Paul B. Armstrong. W.W. Norton & Co, 2005.
Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness* (Bedford Critical Edition), 2nd ed. Ed. Ross Murfin. Bedford St. Martin's, 1996.
Emecheta, Buchi, *Second Class Citizen*. [1975]. Heinemann, 1994.

Baker, Nancy L. and Nancy Huling. *A Research Guide for Undergraduate Students*. Sixth Ed. Modern Language Association, 2006.

additional articles on e-reserve or library reserve

- Pater, Walter. "Conclusion," *The Renaissance*. [1872]. Oxford UP, 1998.
- Wilde, Oscar. "The Decay of Lying" and "The Critic as Artist" [1888]. *The Critical Writings of Oscar Wilde*. Chicago UP, 1982.
- Yeats, W.B. "The Second Coming" in *The Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats*. Wordsworth, 2000.
- Wa Thiong'o, Ngugi. "Decolonising the Mind" in *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. Heinemann, 1986.
- Nkosi, Lewis. "Tasks and Masks" in *Tasks and Masks: Themes and Styles of African Literature*. Longman, 1981.
- McLeod, Stephen. "What is Postcolonialism?" *Beginning Postcolonialism*. Manchester UP, 2000.
- Newell, Stephanie. "Things Fall Apart: Presence and Palimpsest in the Colonial-Scape" in *West African Literatures: Ways of Reading*. Oxford UP, 2006.
- Newell, Stephanie. "West Africa in Postcolonial Theory" in *West African Literatures: Ways of Reading*. Oxford UP, 2006.
- Coppolla, Francis Ford. *Apocalypse Now*. 1979.

Useful Academic Websites

Chinua Achebe: <http://www.scholars.nus.edu.sg/landow/post/achebe/achebeov.html>

Joseph Conrad <http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/conrad/index.html>

Buchi Emecheta <http://www.thecore.nus.edu.sg/post/nigeria/emecheta/emechetaov.html>

Postcolonial Studies Website at Emory University <http://www.english.emory.edu/Bahri/>

Cont. Postcolonial and Postimperial Literature in English <http://www.postcolonialweb.org/>

Course Requirements:

- Regular attendance and thoughtful, active participation in class discussions. Your grade in the course will drop by 1/3 of a grade (e.g., B- to C+) with four absences. After five absences you will fail the course. While I do not assign a grade for class participation, demonstration of your commitment to the goals of the course can and will affect your grade if you are "in-between" grades when it comes time to tally your final grade. If you have made a positive contribution to class discussion and/or made an effort with the course assignments, you will receive the higher grade. If you have been disruptive or made no visible effort, you will receive the lower grade.
- Four 4- page papers Assignments for each paper will differ, but in general they will ask you to address interpretive strategies we have studied and demonstrate critical analysis of their application to the texts. My policy on papers is very simple, and, quite strict: I accept no late papers. I maintain this policy in order to avoid evaluating individual excuses and emergencies, and in order to make the playing field among students as level as possible. Please do not ask me to compromise this policy as I hold it not out of lack of compassion for what I know are often valid reasons for not completing work, but out of a desire to be as fair as possible to as many students as I can.

- One ten-minute presentation on the relationship between a passage from the day's reading and a relevant literary theory.
- One two-hour final examination in which, using the Modern Language Association (MLA) Bibliography, you will perform independent research in which you select one article or book about one of the texts studied, describe the search process and terms you used to find this text, summarize its argument, explain the theoretical biases of the argument, and assess the strengths or weaknesses of the argument (5 pages). This will be assigned as a take-home portion of the exam. There will also be an identification portion of the exam in which you define terms and principles covered throughout course.

Grades:

60% of your grade will be based on the four graded papers.

10% of your grade will be based on your in-class presentation.

30% of your grade will be based on the final exam.

Course Schedule:

date	reading for the day	topics
Class 1	lecture and discussion: what is literary criticism?	the capabilities and limitations of literary criticism
Class 2	excerpt from Walter Pater's "Conclusion" to <i>The Renaissance</i> (handout); excerpts from Oscar Wilde's "Decay of Lying," and "The Critic as Artist"; slide show on impressionist art	subjectivity at the fin-de-siecle
Class 3	<i>Heart of Darkness</i> pp. 3-35	The Scramble for Africa / How to close-read <i>Heart of Darkness</i>
Class 4	<i>Heart of Darkness</i> pp. 35-90	Congo Free State King Leopold II (Norton Edition)
Class 5	<i>Heart of Darkness</i> pp. 90-140	The Congo Report Property and Trade vs. Forced Production (Norton Edition)
Class 6	<i>Heart of Darkness</i> pp. 140-193	Conrad, Casement, and the Congo Atrocities (Norton Edition)
Class 7	Contemporary Responses: Reviews and Letters Norton pp. 307-313 paper #1 due	Criticism in the early 20 th Century — what are the values?
Class 8	Nineteenth-Century European Attitudes toward Race Norton pp. 272-306	Race and <i>Heart of Darkness</i> in its time
Class 9	Guerard, "The Journey Within" pp. 326-336	Twentieth-Century

	Achebe, "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's <i>Heart of Darkness</i> " pp.336-348 Hunt Hawkins, " <i>Heart of Darkness</i> and Racism" Norton pp. 365-375	Critiques of Race in <i>Heart of Darkness</i>
Class 10	Reader Response Criticism and <i>Heart of Darkness</i> Rabinowitz "Reader Response, Reader Responsibility: <i>Heart of Darkness</i> and the Politics of Displacement" Bedford edition pp. 115-147	What is Reader Response Theory?
Class 11	<i>Things Fall Apart</i> pp. 1-37	The African Writer and the English Language (Oxford ed., ch. 1) "Chinua Achebe and the Invention of African Literature" (Heinemann ed., ix-xviii)
Class 12	<i>Things Fall Apart</i> pp. 38-76	"Igbo Cosmology" (Oxford ed, ch. 2) "Igbo Culture and History" (Heinemann ed., xix-1)
Class 13	<i>Things Fall Apart</i> pp. 76-110	"Eternal Sacred Order versus Conventional Wisdom" (Oxford ed, ch. 3)
Class 14	<i>Things Fall Apart</i> pp. 110-148	A comparative look at <i>Heart of Darkness</i> and <i>Things Fall Apart</i>
Class 15	"How the Center is Made to Hold in <i>Things Fall Apart</i> ," <i>Neil ten Kortenaar</i> Oxford ch. 5 "The Metamorphosis of Piety in <i>Things Fall Apart</i> ," <i>Clayton G. MacKenzie</i> Oxford ed., ch. 6 W.B. Yeats, "The Second Coming" (handout) paper #2 due	Cultural Criticism
Class 16	Ngugi Wa Thiong'o "Decolonising the Mind" electronic reserve Lewis Nkosi, "Tasks and Masks" — electronic reserve	Post-Colonial Criticism
Class 17	"Fire and Transition in <i>Things Fall Apart</i> ," <i>Bu-Buakei Jabbi</i> , Oxford ch. 9 "Realism, Criticism, and the Disguises of Both: A Reading of Chinua Achebe's <i>Things Fall Apart</i> with an evaluation of Criticism Relating To It," <i>Ato Quayson</i> , Oxford ch. 10 An interview with Chinua Achebe	Reader Response and <i>Things Fall Apart</i>

	Oxford ch. 11	
Class 18	<p>“What are Feminist and Gender Criticism?” (Bedford, 148-161)</p> <p>“Too Beautiful Altogether: Ideologies of Gender and Empire in <i>Heart of Darkness</i>” (Bedford 169-183)</p> <p>“Primitivism and the African Woman in <i>Heart of Darkness</i>” Marianna Torgovnick (Norton 396-405)</p> <p>“Masculinity, Modernity, and Homosexual Desire” Andrew Michael Roberts (Norton 406-420)</p>	Gender Based Criticism and Feminism in <i>Heart of Darkness</i>
Class 19	<p>“Problems of Gender and History in the Teaching of <i>Things Fall Apart</i>” Rhonda Cobham, Oxford ch. 7</p> <p>“Okonkwo and His Mother: <i>Things Fall Apart</i> and Issues of Gender in the Constitution of African Postcolonial Discourse” Biodun Jeyifo Oxford ed, ch. 8</p>	Gender Based Criticism and Feminism in <i>Things Fall Apart</i>
Class 20	<p>“What is Postcolonialism?” (handout)</p> <p>Stephanie Newell, “<i>Things Fall Apart: Presence and Palimpsest in the Colonial-Scape</i>” (West African Literatures, electronic reserve)</p> <p>“West Africa in Postcolonial Theory” (West African Literatures, electronic reserve)</p> <p>Edward Said, “Two Visions of Heart of Darkness” Norton pp. 376-396</p> <p>paper #3 due</p>	Post-Colonialism
Class 21	<p><i>Second Class Citizen</i>, pp. 1-53</p> <p>student presentations on gender-related passages</p>	Gender-Based Criticism / Nigerian Independence
Class 22	<p><i>Second Class Citizen</i>, pp. 54-96</p> <p>student presentations on either Post-Colonial or Gender-related passages</p>	Post-Colonialism/Gender Based Criticism
Class 23	<p><i>Second Class Citizen</i>, pp. 97-146</p> <p>student presentations on post-colonial related passages</p>	Post-Colonialism
Class 24	<p><i>Second Class Citizen</i>, pp. 147-196</p> <p>student presentations of formalist critiques of passages</p>	Formalism and Aesthetics
Class 25	<p><i>Apocalypse Now</i>, watch in class</p> <p>Lynda Dryden, “To Boldly Go: Heart of Darkness and Popular Culture” (Norton, pp. 500-506)</p>	Reception Theory

	paper #4 due	
Class 26	<i>Apocalypse Now</i> , watch in class Louis Grieff “Conrad’s Ethics and the Margins of <i>Apocalypse Now</i> ” Norton pp. 484-491	Post-Colonialism / using databases to perform searches
Class 27	<i>Apocalypse Now</i> , watch in class Margot Norris, “Modernism and Vietnam” Norton pp. 491-500	Texts in Conversation / using databases to perform searches
Class 28	discussion and final exam preparation	using databases to perform searches
Class 29	Final Exam final exam paper due	

Statement of College Policy on Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the presentation of someone else’s ideas, words, or artistic, scientific, or technical work as one’s own creation. Using the ideas or work of another is permissible only when the original author is identified. Paraphrasing and summarizing, as well as direct quotations, require citations to the original source.

Plagiarism may be intentional or unintentional. Lack of dishonest intent does not necessarily absolve a student of responsibility for plagiarism.

It is the student’s responsibility to recognize the difference between statements that are common knowledge (which do not require documentation) and restatements of the ideas of others. Paraphrase, summary, and direct quotation are acceptable forms of restatement, as long as the source is cited.

Students who are unsure how and when to provide documentation are advised to consult with their instructors. The Library has free guides designed to help students with problems of documentation.

(From the John Jay College of Criminal Justice Undergraduate Bulletin, p. 36)

Bibliography

- Amrbusini, Richard. *Conrad's Fiction as Critical Discourse*. Cambridge UP, 1991.
- Ashcroft, Bill, and Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, eds. *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. Routledge, 2006.
- Boehmer, Elleke. *Stories of Women: Gender and Narrative in the Postcolonial Nation*. Manchester UP, 2005.
- Caminero-Santangelo, Byron. *African Fiction and Joseph Conrad: Reading Postcolonial Intertextuality*. State U of NY P, 2005.
- Cole, Catherine M., and Takyiwaa Manuh and Stephan Miescher, eds. *Africa After Gender?* Indiana UP, 2007.
- Emenyonu, Ernest, ed. *Emerging Perspectives on Chinua Achebe*. Africa World P, 2004.
- Fishburn, Katherine. *Buchi Emecheta: Cross-Cultural Conversations*. Greenwood P, 1995.
- Hawley, John, ed. *Encyclopedia of Postcolonial Studies*. Greenwood P, 2001.
- Hochschild, Adam. *King Leopold's Ghost*. Houghton Mifflin, 1998.
- Kalu, Anthonia. *Women, Literature, and Development in Africa*. Africa World P, 2001.
- Kaplan, Carola and Peter Maillios. *Conrad in the Twenty-First Century: Contemporary Approaches and Perspectives*. Routledge, 2005.
- Klages, Mary. *Literary Theory: A Guide for the Perplexed*. Continuum, 2006.
- Lazarus, Neil, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies*. Cambridge UP, 2004.
- Lindsay, Lisa and Stephan Mieser, eds. *Men and Masculinities in Modern Africa*. Heinemann, 2003.
- Loomba, Ania. *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*. Routledge, 2005.
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- McLeod, Stephen. *Beginning Postcolonialism*. Manchester UP, 2000.
- Moses, Michael Valdez. *The Novel and the Globalization of Culture*. Oxford UP, 1995.
- Morton, Stephen. *Gayatri Spivak: Ethics, Subalternity and the Critique of Postcolonial Reason*. Polity, 2007.
- Podis, Leonard and Yakuba Saaka, eds. *Challenging Hierarchies: Issues and Themes in Colonial and Postcolonial African Literature*. Peter Lang, 1998.
- Prem, Poddar. *A Historical Companion to Postcolonial Thought in English*. Columbia UP, 2005.
- Rooney, Ellen, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Feminist Literary Theory*. Cambridge UP, 2006.
- Sougou, Omar. *Writing Across Cultures: Gender Politics and Difference in the Fiction of Buchi Emecheta*. Rodopi, 2002.
- Spittles, Brian. *Joseph Conrad: Text and Context*. St. Martin's P, 1992.
- Umeh, Marie, ed. *Emerging Perspectives on Buchi Emecheta*. Africa World Press, 1996.
- Wa Thiong'o, Ngugi. *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. Heinemann, 1986.
- Wisker, Gina. *Key Concepts in Postcolonial Literature*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.