

Preliminary Web Course Description

*Please note: This is a preliminary web course description only. The department reserves the right to change without notice any information in this description. The final, binding course outline will be distributed in the first class of the semester.

School of English and Theatre Studies

Course Code: ENGL*3960-02	Course Title: Literature in History	Date of Offering: Winter 2018
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Course Instructor: Julie Cairnie	Course Format: Seminar
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Calendar Description: This course explores the processes by which specific texts or genres emerge from particular historical moments and by which we attempt to reconstruct those historically specific connections. Seminars will focus on such topics as the archive surrounding one text, problems of period and canon, or genres and historical change. (Individual instructors will determine choice of period and texts.)

Writing- and presentation-intensive course

Prerequisite(s): ENGL*2080

Restriction(s): Registration in the English major, minor, or area of concentration

Section Description: In this section of ENGL*3960 we probe the relationship between “history” and “childhood.” While history is typically associated with public and political narratives, childhood is often understood as private and personal stories and memories. Stories (histories) of childhood, however, can upset this opposition and point to the ways in which reflections on childhood capture significant historical moments. In *Under My Skin* the Nobel Laureate Doris Lessing explains, “One reason for writing this autobiography is that more and more I realize I was part of an extraordinary time, the end of the British Empire in Africa.”

There has been an explosion of African childhood memoirs. Our study is limited to Zimbabwe, a small country in southern Africa that has been in the throes of a massive economic and social crisis since the turn of the 21st century. Alongside this crisis, Zimbabwean writers have produced a disproportionate number of narratives of childhood. All of the texts we will examine engage with the bildungsroman – the novel/narrative of development and progress. “History” and “childhood” carry assumptions of development and progress, assumptions we will interrogate and trouble in ENGL*3960. We begin our course by setting up a theoretical framework that engages with “history,” “child,” and “bildungsroman.” Next, we turn to a foundational childhood narrative from the 1980’s by an internationally acclaimed Zimbabwean writer: Tsitsi Dangarembga’s *Nervous Conditions*.

Required Texts:

NoViolet Bulawayo, *We Need New Names* (2013; Little, Brown, and Company)

Shimmer Chinodya, *Tale of Tamari* (2004; Weaver Press)

Tsitsi Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* (1988; Lynne Piennner)

Alexandra Fuller, *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight* (2001; Random House)

Paul Williams, *Soldier Blue* (2008; New Africa Books)

Evaluation:

Seminar Presentation 20%

Two Seminar Responses 10%

Introductory Paragraph 5%

Short Essay (1000 words) 15%

Essay Proposal/Bibliography 10%

Final Essay (2000 words) 30%

Participation 10%

Other information that you wish share about the course (optional):

The course focus may change — please contact me before purchasing texts (jcairnie@uoguelph.

List the distribution requirements that this course fulfills:

20th/21st century