

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	Course Title: Literature and History	Date of Offering: F'20
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Course Instructor: Julie Cairnie	Course Format: Seminar
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Brief Course Synopsis:

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*.

Methods of Evaluation and Weight:

Seminar Presentation (collaborative) 25%
(Consultation: 5%; Delivery: 15%; Handout: 5%)

Creative Project (children’s book, podcast, or video) 25%
(Consultation: 5%; Project: 20%)

Commonplace Book (journal) 20%
(1500-2000 words + creative materials)

Final Essay (2000 words) 30%
(Proposal: 5%; Essay: 20%; Writing Reflection: 5%)

Texts and/or Resources Required (e.g. Internet access, specific textbook title, lab kit, etc.)

Books to Buy/Borrow (all available as ebooks)

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

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

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

Dambudzo Marechera, *House of Hunger* (1978; Pearson)

*There will be a significant selection of readings on Courselink

This course counts towards the following distribution requirement(s) for students who registered at the University prior to the Fall of 2018:

-20th/21st century

Information about mode of delivery (synchronous/asynchronous/other details):

-Synchronous

-Interactive Seminar Class; online collaboration with peers (approximately two hours per week)

-The course focus may change. Please contact the instructor before purchasing texts (jcairnie@uoguelph.ca).

*Students who registered at the University of Guelph after Fall 2018 must fulfill the “new” major and minor requirements. Students who registered at the University of Guelph prior to Fall 2018 must fulfill the requirements of the Calendar in effect when they first enrolled unless they have filed a Schedule of Studies Change Request to change to the 2018-2019 calendar. For more information, please consult the major and minor checklists at <https://www.uoguelph.ca/arts/sets/undergraduate/english/current-student-information>.