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# FRCH 313.01: Literature and Culture III - French and Francophone Literatures and Cultures of the 20th Century

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FRCH 313  
Les écrivaines de l'Afrique et de la Caraïbe  
TR 9:30-10:50  
LA 138

**Instructor Information:**

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**Course Description:**

WGSS 491/FRCH 313 African and Caribbean Women Authors (co-convening class with lectures in English; books and discussions in French or English) explores the writings of authors who identify as women across francophone Africa and the Caribbean through postcolonial, feminist, and queer perspectives. In Africa today, 120 million people speak French. Another 8 million people speak French in the Caribbean. In comparison, the population of France is 67 million, and yet the literature and cultures of the francophone world outside metropolitan France are still too often ignored or erased by the academy. In addition, the works of authors who identify as women still lack in many courses. This class aims to rectify that situation by exposing students to the writings of African and Caribbean francophone women authors and centering their experiences in the globalized and postcolonial contexts of today.

Readings will include the works of the Maryse Condé (Guadeloupe), Fatima Mernissi (Morocco), Ken Bugul (Senegal), Werewere Liking (Cameroon), and Évelyne Trouillot (Haiti) among others. Secondary readings will focus on African and Caribbean history and postcolonial feminist and queer theory.

In addition to meeting required French credits, this course fulfills a requirement for the Major and the Minor in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. If you enjoy this course and would like to know more about the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program, please contact me or drop by our office, LA 138A-B, or visit the website at [www.cas.umt.edu/wsprog](http://www.cas.umt.edu/wsprog).

**Course Objectives:**

- 1) Introduce students to the work of African and Caribbean francophone women authors.
- 2) Develop skills in reading and analyzing literary texts from other cultures.
- 3) Understand the cultural and historical contexts in which African and Caribbean women produce(d) literary texts.
- 4) Foster students' understanding of the impacts of colonization, race, class, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality on authors in the postcolonial world.

**Methods:** This class is designed as a seminar course. Your active participation is essential and counts as part of your grade. I will present certain biographical, historical, and cultural information to provide you with a context for your readings, discussions, and writings. I will propose my own interpretations of the readings, but you are not expected to accept these interpretations blindly. Each reader brings their own experiences to a literary text. If you disagree with my reading of a text, you should feel free to say so.

You will hear many different opinions and ideas during this course, some of which you may disagree with. One of the objectives of this class is to improve your written and oral communication skills so that each of you can become more confident in your own unique personal voice. I expect each student to respect the opinions and beliefs of their classmates and for the level of discourse in class to remain civil and academic. A failure to listen to others and to treat them with fairness and respect will have an adverse effect on your grade.

**Classroom Etiquette:** Students should arrive on time and not leave until class is over. All cell phones must be turned off and left off your desk or table. Students may use laptops or tablets to take notes. Students should not text while in class, and Internet use should be limited to topics related to class. First offense=tardy. Second offense=absence.

**Attendance:** Attendance is required. After one unexcused absence, your participation grade will be lowered one notch for each absence (A to A-). An excess of 5 unexcused absences will result in an F in the course. A failure to prepare and participate may also be grounds for being counted absent. Tardiness will not be tolerated. Two tardies will equal one absence. There will be NO make-up assignments or late submission of homework for unexcused absences. If you are sick or have some other emergency, please contact me.

**Readings:** In addition to the books listed above which you must buy, there are also a number of optional and required readings on Moodle. To access the Moodle readings: Go to <http://umonline.umat.edu/> and use your NetID and password to login. FRCH 313 should be listed on the next page. Select that course. The readings are in PDF format.

**Disability Accommodations:** The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students (DSS). If you think you may have a disability adversely affecting your academic performance, and you have not already registered with DSS, please contact DSS in Lommasson 154. I will work with you and DSS to provide an appropriate accommodation

**Plagiarism Warning:** A paper or journal is not an occasion to show how well you can quote or paraphrase an author, but how well you can think as an explorer of the work and ideas of your author. Any utilization of the words or work of others (including ideas) in any assignment must be given full reference credit. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism and will result in a zero on the assignment. Plagiarism is a violation of The University of Montana Student Code of Conduct and may result in university sanctions. If you have questions about proper citation and/or plagiarism, please see me.

*Please note: Plagiarism also includes writing your papers in English and using a translation program to switch it into French.*

**Indigenous Land Acknowledgement:** I would like to acknowledge that we are in the aboriginal territories of the Salish and Kalispel people, and express the university's appreciation of that.

**Content Warning:** During the course of this class, some difficult topics may come up, including gender-based violence, sexual assault, and racialized violence. There are other topics in this class that may also trigger difficult memories for you. You should feel free to talk to me about any issues you have with the topics we are discussing and ask for excused absences.

**Statement of Inclusivity and Diversity:** This classroom is a hate-free zone, and is part of WGSS's commitment addressing and redressing racism, Islamophobia, xenophobia, homophobia, transphobia, anti-Blackness, and all systems of privilege and oppression in our classes, in our academic units, and in higher education.

### **Graduate Student Increment**

Graduate students taking this course for graduate credit:

- 1) must submit a 18-20 page paper with 6+ outside sources
- 2) must facilitate one course meeting (to be selected the first week of class)
- 3) all other requirements are the same

## Books:

### WGSS 491 English :

- Suzanne Dracius, *Calazaza's Delicious Dereliction* (Tupelo Press)
- Maryse Condé, *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem* (UV Press)
- Évelyne Trouillot, *Infamous Rosalie* (Longleaf)
- Fatima Mernissi, *Scheherazade Goes West* (S+S)
- Malika Mokeddem, *Of Dreams and Assassins* (UV Press)
- A Rain of Words: A Bilingual Anthology of Women's Poetry in Francophone Africa* (UV Press)
- Ken Bugul, *The Abandoned Baobab* (UV Press)
- Véronique Tadjo, *Queen Pokou* (Casemate)
- Werewere Liking, *It Shall Be of Jasper and Coral* (UV Press)

### FRCH 313 French :

- Suzanne Dracius, *Exquise dérélition métisse* PDF
- Maryse Condé, *Moi, Tituba, sorcière* (Folio)
- Évelyne Trouillot, *Rosalie l'infame* PDF
- Fatima Mernissi, *Le Harem et l'occident* (Albin Michel)
- Malika Mokeddem, *Des rêves et des assassins* (B. Grasset)
- A Rain of Words: A Bilingual Anthology of Women's Poetry in Francophone Africa* (UV Press)
- Ken Bugul, *Le Baobab Fou* (Presse africaine)
- Véronique Tadjo, *Reine Pokou* (Actes sud)
- Werewere Liking, *Elle sera de jaspé et de corail* (Éditions l'Harmattan)

**Note on Books:** This is a 300-level French literature class that would normally include excerpts rather than entire books. Because of that, I will provide you with summaries of the books, and ask that you read certain chapters or sections of each book. You will read at least one book of your choice in total (see the Informal, ongoing reading journal assignment for details).

### Assessment:

Weekly "Explications de texte" (inc. bi-weekly items)	20%
Participation and Preparation (inc. attendance)	20%
Midterm Paper/Project	25%
Final Paper/Project	25%
Informal, ongoing reading journal	10%

**Explications de texte:** This course may expose you to many new authors, cultures, and ideas. It may challenge your accepted opinions. Each week you will submit a typed, double-spaced paper summarizing/analyzing that week's readings based on the French *explication de texte*. Your papers will be graded for style, clarity, historical accuracy and syntax. Margins must be 1 inch on the left, right, and bottom, and 2 inches on the top. Your name and other identifying information should be in the top margin. You will be graded on grammar, but a greater percentage of the grade will be based on content. Grammar review will be provided, as needed.

Explications de texte are due each Friday at midnight. The *explications de texte* will increase in length over the course of the semester, and the grades will be weighted accordingly. 17/1-14/2: 1/2 page; 21/2-21/3: 3/4 page; 2/4-26/4: 1 page.

For each week's entry, you should:

- Briefly summarize one of the primary-source readings for that week, including author, country of origin, very brief historical context, and main ideas of the assigned reading.
- THEN
- Connect the reading to the themes of the course/course learning objectives and secondary-source readings or course lectures/discussions.
  - Connect the readings to contemporary issues; why does the reading matter? This prompt is where you should reference either your or a classmate's item of interest.
  - Provoke further thought; pose one question for class discussion

Items of Interest: Every other week on Thursday, you will present an item related to that week's topics to your classmates, based on alphabetical last names (TBD, based on enrollment). In your EdT for each week, you must

indicate what your item of interest was or what one of your classmate's items was and how it connects to the readings and/or discussions for that week. Items may include historical details that you looked up to deepen your understanding of a text, explanations of words that are drawn from African languages and Créole dialects (not just French words you didn't know), news stories about the country an author is from, awards the author has won, etc.

**Preparation and Participation:** Coming to class prepared, i.e. having read all material and ready to participate in discussions, is essential and counts for a large percentage of your final grade. Participation does not merely mean responding when called upon but showing a willingness to raise your hand and enter discussions. Conversely, students will be discouraged from dominating the discussions so that all students have a voice in the classroom. A failure to listen to and respect other voices will have an adverse effect on your grade. Classroom work will include both general discussions and small group discussions. Quizzes may be given at the beginning of class as necessary. Attendance will be taken.

**Papers/Projects:** Instead of exams, this class will require a midterm and final paper or project. FYI--Students must do one paper (so not two projects) but can write two papers.

#### Research Papers

Papers will be 4-6 pages in length. The first paper is due March 5 and should focus on authors and topics from the first half of class. The second paper is due April 30 and should focus on authors and topics from the second half of class. Each paper must use at least 2 outside sources IN FRENCH, i.e. books, articles, etc., not read for class. Wikipedia.fr does not count. Use of websites as outside sources must be pre-approved by me. Essays must conform to the basic standards of proper composition. They should be typed, double-spaced with 12-point font, 1-inch margins. Essays must be carefully organized with proper paragraphing, correct sentence structure, and appropriate punctuation. You will be graded not just on content but also on organization, rhetorical skills, strength of argument including supporting evidence, and adherence to the convention of standard, written French. However, content will be weighted more heavily than grammar. **I will provide you with a handout of potential topics and more detailed instructions. Several weeks before the due dates, you will be required to submit a half-page proposal for your essays.** Electronic files must be .doc, .docx, .pdf, .rtf.

#### Creative Project

Because of the ways in which francophone women's writings challenge western literary and academic traditions, you may choose to submit a creative project for either the midterm or final. Your project could take many forms, from a powerpoint/prezi to artwork to poetry to dance to film. It should take its inspiration from the authors and topics from class. It must be accompanied by a 2-3 page, double-spaced paper that describes your inspiration, the project's connection to class, and your process. Students completing projects must schedule an approval meeting with me prior to beginning the project.

Your projects and papers are not an occasion to show how well you can quote, paraphrase or summarize an author, but how well you can think as an explorer of the work and ideas of your authors. Any utilization of the words or work of others (including ideas) in any assignment, written or oral, must be given full reference credit. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism. If you have questions about proper citation and/or plagiarism, please see me.

Please note: Plagiarism also includes writing your papers in English and using a translation program to switch it into French.

**Informal, ongoing reading journal:** You will choose one book from the list of readings above OR a book of your choice (written by a francophone women author AND approved by the instructor) to read, in full, in French. As you read the book, you will keep a journal of your progress. The penultimate Thursday of class, you will submit that journal which should be at least 3-4 pages (hand-written or typed) in length. This assignment is informal and is intended to get you more comfortable reading complete books in French. In your journal, you should explore your thoughts about the content and form of the book, in addition to the challenges and successes you have reading in French.