

## Department of English & Writing Studies

**English 9166A The Woman/Queer Question in Postcolonial Fiction:  
Seminar Room UC 4415 Time: Wednesday: 9.30-12.30**

**INSTRUCTOR: Taiwo Adetunji Osinubi**  
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**Office Hours: Tuesday 13.00-15.00 Thursday 14.00-16.00**

### **Description:**

Although scholars in postcolonial literary studies have long studied the representations of gender and sexuality in the novel, recent fiction has inspired new conceptual approaches to the entanglements of literature with debates on constructions of gender and sexual orientation. Historically, permutations of this entanglement were studied under numerous incarnations of “the Woman question” or “Gender and the Nation” adapted to different places and times. The emergence of non-normative sexualities in postcolonial literatures has prompted scholarship on “the Queer question.” Focusing on the twenty-first-century, students in ENG 9166A will study reiterations and intersections of the “Woman question” and the “Queer question” in the postcolonial novel. The objective is to take stock of and explain how interjections of sex, sexual orientation, gender constructions and the erotic into recent novels produce difficult attachments, complex identifications, unexpected visions of emancipation, and unpredictable forms of complicity and affiliation. In so doing, students are invited to debate how such complex erotic affiliations complicate early models of sexuality and gender in postcolonial literary studies. Discussions in class will focus on relations between such difficult attachments and literary form. The seminar will be based on discussions of novels and some secondary literature on sexuality and literary form.

### **Reading List (in the order of seminar discussions).**

Tagore, Rabindranath. *The Home and the World*.  
Umrigar, Thrity. *The Space Between Us*.  
Martin, Valerie. *Property*.  
Levy, Andrea. *The Long Song*.  
Hadeed, Saleem. *Guapa*.  
*Inxeba*. Dir. John Trengove. 2017.  
Iweala, Uzondinma. *Speak No Evil*.  
(*Get Out*. Dir. Jordan Peel. Recommended Viewing)  
Mbue, Imbolo. *Behold the Dreamers*.

Please note that the books are available at the UWO bookstore and on Amazon. The articles in the schedule below will be uploaded on the Course Readings online site of Weldon Library: <https://ares.lib.uwo.ca/ares/>. The film, *Inxeba*, is available on iTunes if you have access. There is also a copy you can borrow from the Arts & Humanities Film Resource Library in UC 1126. Please: do not keep the DVD for more than two days!

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### Seminar Schedule: (might be subject to minor revisions after first class)

1. September 12 Introduction  

Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. "The Shivering." *The Thing Around Your Neck*. Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2010. 142-166.  
Povinelli, Elizabeth A., and George Chauncey. "Thinking Sexuality Transnationally: An Introduction." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 5.4 (1999): 439-449.
2. September 19  

Rabindranath Tagore. *The Home and the World*.  
*The Nation and Its Fragments*. Ch. 6 & 7.
3. September 26  

*Inxeba*. (The Wound) Dir. John Trengove. 2017.  
Rubin, Gayle. Thinking Sex: Notes for A Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality. *Culture, Society and Sexuality: A Reader*. Chapter 9.  
Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble*. Chapter 1. "Subjects of Gender/Sex/Desire."
4. October 3  

Umrigar, Thrity. *The Space Between Us*.  
Bhabha, Homi K. *Nation and Narration*. Ch. 4
5. October 10 Fall Reading Break
6. October 17  

Umrigar, Thrity. *The Space Between Us*.  
Mohanty, Chandra. *Feminism without Borders*. Ch. 6  
Levine, Caroline. "The Affordances of Form."
7. October 24  

Martin, Valerie. *Property*.  
Newman, Louise Michele. *White Women's Rights: The Racial Origins of Feminism*. "Introduction: Woman's Rights, Race, and Imperialism."
8. October 31  

Levy, Andrea. *The Long Song*.  
Yuval-Davis, Nira. 'Intersectionality and Feminist Politics.' *European Journal of Women's Studies* 13:3 (2006), 193-209.
9. November 7  

Hadeed, Saleem. *Guapa*.  
Massad, Joseph Andoni. "Re-orienting Desire: The Gay International and the Arab World." *Public Culture* 14.2 (2002): 361-385.  
Rao, Rahul. "Queer Questions." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 16.2 (2014): 199-217.

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10. November 14

Hadeed, Saleem. *Guapa*.

Puar, Jasbir K. "Queer times, Queer Assemblages." *Social Text* 23.3-4 (84-85) (2005): 121-139.

Puar, Jasbir. 'I Would Rather Be a Cyborg Than a Goddess' Intersectionality, Assemblage, and Affective Politics. *Meritum: Revista de Direito da Universidade FUMEC* 8.2 (2013): 371-390.

11. November 21

Uzondinma Iweala. *Speak No Evil*.

*Get Out*. Dir. Jordan Peel. (Recommended film viewing)

Michael Warner, 'Introduction', in *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory*, ed. Michael Warner.

12. November 28

Mbue, Imbolo. *Behold the Dreamers*.

Nnaemeka, Obioma. "Nego-Feminism: Theorizing, Practicing, and Pruning Africa's Way."

13. December 5

Summary and Review Session.

Mbue, Imbolo. *Behold the Dreamers*.

Ebert, Teresa L. "For a Red Pedagogy: Feminism, Desire, and Need." *College English* 58.7 (1996): 795-819.

### **Assessment:**

Final research paper: 60%

Attendance and participation: 20%

Seminar presentation & paper: 20%

### **Seminar Presentation:**

Each student will be asked to make one seminar presentation. The presentation should be about 25 minutes long and must engage with the week's primary and critical reading. All presentations take place at the beginning of class. Speakers should stimulate /generate discussion and responses to the presentation by presenting questions, arguments, or passages from or about the week's reading. Or, the speaker could highlight theoretical problems from readings, tensions within texts, or conflicts between different authors. They could also present an argument based on close readings of an aspect of the novel.

The presentation will be submitted as a paper (6 pages) one week after the presentation. Please approach this submission as a formal paper that is based upon your presentation.

### **Research paper:**

The research paper is due at noon in my mailbox on December 12, 2018. It should be on a topic related to the course. The emphasis is on a research paper that addresses issues raised by this seminar: it may be an analysis of theoretical debates from readings, close reading of literary texts, or analyses of films addressing the subject of the seminar. This paper must draw upon substantial research beyond the texts on our lists. The research paper can be based on your presentation. Length: 15-18 pages.

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### **Participation:**

This grade will reflect your weekly attendance and your contributions to class discussions. It will also reflect your preparedness for weekly meetings and your grasp of the material. Three absences will mean that you forfeit your grade for this course. Please come to class with summaries of your readings, questions you want to raise, or passages you want the class to visit for close readings and discussion. I will note attendance, discussion activity, and attention to reading material.

### **Statement on Academic Offences:**

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_grad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf)

### **Graduate Course Health and Wellness**

As part of a successful graduate student experience at Western, we encourage students to make their health and wellness a priority. Western provides several on campus health-related services to help you achieve optimum health and engage in healthy living while pursuing your graduate degree. For example, to support physical activity, all students, as part of their registration, receive membership in Western's Campus Recreation Centre. Numerous cultural events are offered throughout the year. For example, please check out the Faculty of Music web page <http://www.music.uwo.ca/>, and our own McIntosh Gallery <http://www.mcintoshgallery.ca/>. Information regarding health- and wellness-related services available to students may be found at <http://www.health.uwo.ca/>. Students seeking help regarding mental health concerns are advised to speak to someone they feel comfortable confiding in, such as their faculty supervisor, their program director (graduate chair), or other relevant administrators in their unit. Campus mental health resources may be found at [http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental\\_health/resources.html](http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental_health/resources.html).

### **Further Readings:**

The following books, for background consultation, are on hold at the D. B. Weldon Library. The titles are suggested for your individual research and preparation for presentations or final papers. They provide overviews or introductions to key terms in this course.

### **Gender, Sexuality, Nationalism, Atlantic Slavery, Globalization.**

Boehmer, Elleke. *Stories of Women: Gender and Narrative in the Postcolonial Nation*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2009.

Brown, Vincent. *The Reaper's Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2008.

Chatterjee, Partha. *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993.

Hoad, Neville. *African Intimacies: Race, Homosexuality, and Globalization*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 2007.

### **Narrative Form and Poetics.**

Bhabha, Homi K, ed. *Nation and Narration*. London, New York: Routledge, 1990.

Boehmer, Elleke. *Postcolonial Poetics: 21st-Century Critical Readings*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

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Cooppan, Vilashini. *Worlds Within: National Narratives and Global Connections in Postcolonial Writing*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2009.

Levine, Caroline. *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2015.

Ray, Sangeeta. *En-Gendering India: Woman and Nation in Colonial and Postcolonial Narratives*. Durham: Duke UP, 2000.

### Some Questions for Discussions:

1. **Woman and Women:** Throughout the readings, you could compare the representation of women across the novels. When are women in the foreground/background? What is the relationship between women and the idea of community across various scales? What kinds of women actually feature in the novels and what are their roles/functions: mothers, lovers, wives, mentors, and allies? How are women presented as sexual beings? Are women's sexual desires fulfilled/reciprocated/frustrated? Do women's sexual desires have consequences? Do men's sexual desires have consequences? How does class/caste differentiate women? Which histories create which varieties of women?
2. **Sex:** What counts as sex across these novels? Which forms of sexual desires are articulated/represented and are they embedded in hierarchies of value? How is sex introduced as a theme: in which different circuits does it crop? Are the discourses around sex spiritual, legal, or scientific for example?
3. **Gender, sexuality, and national identities:** How do the entanglements of gender configurations with sexuality and national identity change across the novels?
4. **Sexuality, Class, and Capitalism:** What are the relations between the manifestations of sexual minority identities and finance? What role do countries in North America and Europe play in the articulation of queer identities and feminisms in these novels? Do you find any local articulations of gender/sexual identities that circulate alongside non-local forms? Do intersectional analyses shed light on these relations? Can we just add class to sexuality?
5. **Sex, Sexuality and Race:** In which ways are sex, sexuality, and race interwoven in these novels? How could we analyze these entanglements? Which relations are due to colonial legacies and which one could be ascribed to globalization (heuristically speaking)? And, in broader terms, are sex and race always co-implicated? Which analytical optics illuminate this co-implicated relation—i.e. which theoretical framework from the readings do you find useful? What does it mean to dwell within sexual and racial disadvantage in these novels?
6. **Liberation and Revolutions:** Some of these novels feature revolts/ revolutions and struggles for emancipation. How far are these developments related or do they attend to sexual liberties or gender equality? What are the effects of juxtaposing political revolutions to narratives of sexual/gender disadvantages?
7. **Form:** While thinking about the formal constructions of these novels, please consider Caroline Levine's elaborations in her introduction. How far does the form of the novel provide insight into the forms of erotic attachments and gender solidarities/dissonances we encounter? Please consider the function of character configurations, important/recurrent objects/space, elisions, juxtapositions, and pairings.
8. **The film, *Inxeba*.** Please consider the configurations of sexual desire, gender performances, the representations of sexual acts, and the correlations of spatial divides with sexual identities. Do the chapters by Judith Butler and Gayle Rubin clarify any aspects of the film?
9. **Summary/Review:** It would be good to think of questions/observations to bring to class for the last seminar. You could think about the recurrence of difficult attachments/pairings/solidarities and ask why authors deploy such constructions. You could then consider their effects/effectives across the

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novels as the attachments change according to different variables. Please consider the setting (time and place) of each novel and ask how time and place effect different configurations of our problematic. Why does the United States recur in these novels? How is the colonial metropolis deployed? How do discourses about women's questions and the queer question change across different terrains? How do novels replicate difficult entanglements? Which of the critical essays/book chapters did you find useful and why? What was missing for our readings and discussions? Please rethink our first class and your reading of "The Shivering." How would you modify your analysis now? Which theoretically framework would you use to write about it or teach it?

The following articles and book chapters could be consulted as you prepare your research articles. You are also welcome to draw on them for your presentations.

- Brenda Cossman, 'Continental Drift: Queer, Feminism, Postcolonial', *Jindal Global Law Review* 4:1 (2012), 17-35. <http://www.jgls.edu.in/JindalGlobalLawReview/CurrentIssue.htm>.
- Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 'Introduction: Axiomatic'.
- Michael Warner, 'Introduction', in *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory*, ed. Michael Warner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).
- Dwight A. McBride, *Why I Hate Abercrombie & Fitch: Essays on Race and Sexuality* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), Ch. 3: 'It's a White Man's World: Race in the Gay Marketplace of Desire'.
- Kathy Davis, 'Intersectionality as Buzzword: A Sociology of Science Perspective on What Makes a Feminist Theory Successful', *Feminist Theory* 9:1 (2008), 67-85.
- Momin Rahman, 'Queer as Intersectionality: Theorizing Gay Muslim Identities', *Sociology* 44:5 (2010), 944-61.
- Nira Yuval-Davis, 'Intersectionality and Feminist Politics', *European Journal of Women's Studies* 13:3 (2006), 193-209.
- Sylvia Walby, Jo Armstrong and Sofia Strid, 'Intersectionality: Multiple Inequalities in Social Theory', *Sociology* 46:2 (2012), 224-40.
- Dennis Altman, 'Rupture or Continuity? The Internationalization of Gay Identities', *Social Text* 48 (1996): 77-94.
- Sara Ahmed, 'Problematic Proximities, or why Critiques of "Gay Imperialism" Matter', <http://www.alanalentin.net/2009/11/09/problematic-proximities-or-why-critiques-of-gay-imperialism-matter/>.
- Nnaemeka, Obioma. "Nego-Feminism: Theorizing, Practicing, and Pruning Africa's way." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 29.2 (2004): 357-385.
- Ogunyemi, Chikwenye Okonjo. "Womanism: The Dynamics of the Contemporary Black Female Novel in English." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 11.1 (1985): 63-80.