FR 406/606 and WMST 406
Francophone Literature and Film in Translation
“Francophone Voices: Theory, Image and Fiction”

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Course Description
Francophone Studies is a recent field that emerged in response to the traditional Francocentric curriculum offered in French Studies thus far. Consequently this course focuses on film, literature and media that expose the thoughts, esthetics and values of French-speaking cultures around the world that have been silenced or overlooked by dominant French discourse. The French word for voice (voie) is pronounced the same way as voix, which means “path.” This homonymy could be said to exemplify the whole artistic production from the French Caribbean (les Antilles), French speaking Africa, Vietnam, European minorities, etc. This class will examine how colonized and other wise minority voices found a way to be heard, what strategies they used and how they redefine their identities through poetry, literature and plays before entering the postcolonial era where films began to play an important role. Students will also read the main thinkers and intellectual voices that expose and analyze the ways in which oppression of various groups took place, as well as the new ethics and theories that were created and disseminated in response to such domination. Students will pay a particular attention to gender both in literary and filmic sources as well as in theoretical texts. This course will also insist on students learning how to identify the inherent esthetics resources of literature and film in representing women and men struggling with issues related to race, class, gender and social inequities. Through assigned readings, screenings, essays, class discussions and group activities students will become familiar with a variety of Francophone authors, filmmakers, thinkers as well as some aspects of popular culture, such as rap music and internet media postings. They will practice critical thinking, cultural analysis and communication skills that can be applied in other academic and professional fields as well as in their own personal lives when faced with diversity either at home or abroad.

Course Pre/Co-requisites, Silver Core Curriculum Information
Prerequisite(s): CH 201 or CH 202 or CH 203; ENG 102; junior or senior standing

This capstone course satisfies Core Objective 10 and 13 of the Silver Core Curriculum.

CO10. Diversity and Equity: Students will develop a set of cognitive, affective and behavioral skills and characteristics that support effective and appropriate attentiveness to and analysis of diversity and equity.

CO13. Integration and Synthesis: Students will be able to integrate and synthesize Core knowledge, enabling them to analyze open-ended problems or complex issues.

In addition this course helps students to develop the skills described in Core Objectives 1 and 3. These objectives are reinforced throughout the curriculum in other courses students take to fulfill core and major requirements:
CO1. Effective Composition and Communication: Students will be able to effectively compose written, oral, and multimedia texts for a variety of scholarly, professional, and creative purposes.

CO3. Critical Analysis and Use of Information: Students will be critical consumers of information, able to engage in systematic research processes, frame questions, read critically, and apply observational and experimental approaches to obtain information.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) and Correlation to Core Objectives (COs)

Students successfully completing FR 406/606 and WMST 406 will achieve the following SLOs:

1. Students will be able to articulate in writing and verbally the intersections between identity, gender, class and race as portrayed in various Francophone films and literary pieces. (CO10; CO3; CO11)

2. Students will be able to demonstrate critical reading skills when interpreting, analyzing, discussing and evaluating a variety of texts, films and popular media originating from all around the Francophone world. They will pay particular attention to diverse manifestations of social inequities and systematically analyze the dynamic between a specific dominant discourse and the values supported by the behaviors and discourses produced by various characters presented in the movies, novels and other pop culture sources. (CO10; CO11; CO12; CO3; CO6; CO13)

3. Students will be able to assert through discussion, weekly written assignments and essays their ability to analyze and interpret primary sources in different forms such as Francophone novels, cinema and popular media. They will be asked to decipher the ethical principles at work in each work as well as what obstacles such principles encounter. (CO 10; CO11; CO12; CO3)

4. Students will be able to articulate in writing, or if called upon verbally, an understanding of diverse global Francophone identities in comparison to dominant Francocentric cultures within a Eurocentric context. This will be achieved specifically through the study of literature, film, theoretical and academic articles and essays, history and politics. (CO3; CO10; CO11; CO13)

5. Students will be able to pose and discuss ethical questions relevant to colonization, racial discrimination, homophobia and social injustice through artistic decisions made by authors and film directors. (CO3; CO10; CO11; CO12; CO13)

6. Students will be able to analyze and synthesize through assignments, research papers and class activities an awareness of theories and research relevant to the study of Francophone literature and film with special attention given to identity within an oppressed group, whether related to race, class, gender or culture. (CO10; CO11; CO3; CO13)

Required Texts/Film Screenings and Unique Class procedures

Books to be purchased:

I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem by Maryse Condé
In the Flicker of an Eyelid by Jacques Stephen Alexis
Johnny Mad Dog by Emmanuel Dongala
Blue, White, Red by Alain Mabanckou

E-reserve texts: A variety of required and supplemental readings have been placed on E-reserve for this class. In order to access them you need to go to the library website, click on “Reserve” and enter your personal information and my last name. Scanned excerpts include but are not limited to: Amié Césaire
Notebook of a Return to the Native Land and Frantz Fanon’s Black Skins White Masks, Judith Butler’s Gender Trouble, Édouard Glissant’s Cross Cultural Politics, Calixthe Beyala, etc.

Required Films:
You will view all films out of class on your own time. Most films will be put on reserve at the library. Go downstairs to the Media Center (@one), ask for the movie title and watch the movie in a viewing station. Two people can watch it at the same time using headsets. A group of 5 is also possible.

Indigènes directed by Rachid Bouchareb
Sugar Cane Alley directed by Euzhan Palcy in collaboration with Joseph Zobel
White Material by Claire Denis
La haine directed by Mathieu Kassowitz
How to Make Love to a Negro Without Getting Tired from the novel by Dany Laferrière.
Dakan directed by Mohamed Camara.

Assignments Description, Assessment Criteria and Grading

This class requires a variety of weekly assignments that normally include reading, writing and discussion preparation, along with required film viewings outside of class. To each class you must bring the book(s) that we are reading, your typed homework and any E-reserve material necessary for that specific class. Your homework will be collected and evaluated on a regular basis. There will also be a group presentation (3 people) for which I will give you separate instructions about relevant topics and what is expected from you. At the end of the semester you will write an integrative final paper.

Note about Graduate students: This class is composed of students registered at both 400/600 levels. While the basic substance of the course (reading assignments, topics to be prepared for class discussion, theoretical approaches) is the same, graduate students are required to teach one class, lead two discussion topics, and produce a longer and more substantial midterm and final essay. The whole class will benefit from having more advanced students and they will be held to a higher standard of scholarly and critical ability than undergraduates during grading. The first week of class we will meet in person to discuss the details of my expectations of graduate-level work and the requirements, we will have additional meetings as necessary throughout the semester.

Grading

Undergraduates:
25% Assignments/Quizzes
25% Midterm (8-10 pages)
30% Final (10-15 pages)
20% Participation and other class activities

Graduate students:
25% Assignments/Quizzes
25% Midterm (12-15 pages)
30% Final (15-20 pages)
20% Teaching, Participation and other class activities
Attendance and Participation

This class is mandatory since we meet once a week. You are only allowed one absence, and preferably none. If you have an excessive number of unexcused absences equal to a third of the course length you may fail. Final grades for students with three or more unexcused absences or who have missed a quarter of the course length may be dropped by one letter grade. If you are ill or have a serious problem, I will only excuse you if you present me with a convincing document in support of your explanation. **Homework is also mandatory.** I do not accept late work. If you are not in class when a test is given or when I evaluate your homework, you will get an F unless you present a documented excuse or send in your homework for that day on time. Please make sure that you **have the contact information of at least three other students** in case you need to know what was covered in class in your absence. **About being late to class:** The beginning of class is a very valuable moment. Not only are we mentally fresh and ready to start working right away but it is also the time for various announcements and information about class related matters. All of us can be accidentally late but only few individuals are systematically late; this not only shows disrespect to the Professor but also to the group as a whole and the subject matter. **Three tardies equal one absence.**

Please **turn off your phone!**

An objective of this class is to develop your critical ability and your knowledge of world cultures and struggles. We are going to engage in many discussions based on your readings and homework, which is why it is crucial that each of you come prepared. You are part of a group and I expect you to participate and engage in an intellectual adventure that will take us around the globe, across languages and through cultures. Full participation of each student is expected.

**Course Calendar/Topics Outline:**

**Week 1: Aimé Césaire and Maryse Condé**

Reading Assignment: Read the first half of Aimé Césaire’s long poem *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land* and Part 1 of Maryse Condé’s *I, Tituba Black Witch of Salem*

Written Assignment: 1) Césaire’s lyrical style moves constantly between celebration and criticism of its colonized Martinican compatriots. Detail the subject(s) of his praise and the subject(s) of his anger. Give specific reference, so we can discuss the passages that you chose.

**Week 2: Césaire and Condé cont.**

Reading Assignment: Read second half of *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land* and Part II of *I, Tituba Black Witch of Salem*

Written Assignment: 1) What in Césaire’s poetic style appears to you to be the result of his French education, and which specific passages correspond to his Martinican identity?

2) Read carefully the passages where Césaire refers to Africa. The poet communicates his fascination with his African roots through various thematic strategies. What are they? And why are they so powerful?

3) In Condé’s novel select three relevant passages for class discussion about Tituba’s relationship to men spanning from childhood to womanhood.
Week 3: Condé cont.

Reading Assignment: Finish Condé’s novel

Assignment: 1) Describe Tituba’s relationship to her slave lover John the Indian and how his views and behaviors towards their masters differ from hers. 2) How does Condé integrate the history of slavery in her novel and how does she portray Christian beliefs?

Week 4: Euzhan Palcy

Quiz on Notebook of a Return to the Native Land and I, Tituba Black Witch of Salem

Film: View Sugar Cane Alley by Euzhan Palcy with collaboration of author Joseph Zobel.

Written Assignment: 1) How is the close relationship between old Médouze and the little boy filmed in terms of light, sound and mise en scène?

2) This story is a Bildungsroman: we discover what it takes for Joseph to become an educated young man. Education is viewed by French deconstructionists (i.e. Foucault, Derrida) as a monument: it is a solid construction erected by power in order to assess its own values. Could this vision be applied to Joseph’s experience in the context of colonized Martinique? What passages confirm or weaken the link between savoir and pouvoir (knowledge and power)?

3) What parallel can you draw in terms of gender and racial oppressions between Césaire’s poem, Condé’s novel and Palcy’s film?

Week 5: Jacques Alexis

Reading Assignment: Read “Mansion” One and Two from In the Flicker of an Eyelid by Haitian author Jacques Alexis

Written Assignment: 1) Pay attention to passages that belong to the semantic field of « sight » and comment briefly on their role in the story. (Find a minimum of 5 of them).

2) Describe how the author introduces and develops the character of « the man » both physically and mentally.

3) After reading half of this book can you guess where the story will take you next? Try to sketch three possible directions.

Week 6: Alexis cont. and Leopold Sedar Senghor

Reading Assignment: Finish In the Flicker of an Eyelid and read through Senghor’s collected poetry

Written Assignment: 1) Since Alexis was a pioneer in trying to sketch the concept of magic realism, what are the narrative components corresponding to realism and what are the ones pertaining to magic?

2) Choose three poems by Senghor and prepare an informal oral presentation of them based on style and content. Explain your personal choice of these poems.
**Week 7: Midterm essay due!**

You will write an 8-10 pages (12-15 pages for graduate students) essay based on the novels, films, class discussions and theory covered thus far. Your analysis should present and develop a topic related to the main inquiries addressed in our course regarding race, gender and social inequities. You may also use assignment questions as starting points. I also recommend that you use the theoretical tools placed on E-reserve for you such as Fanon’s chapter 1 entitled “The Fact of Blackness,” chapter 2 “The Woman of Color and the White Man,” etc. You can also integrate other sources of your choice.

**Week 8: Emmanuel Dongala**

Reading Assignment: Read until p.150 of *Johnny Mad Dog*

Written Assignment: 1) Which African countries have been known to use children soldiers? Does Dongala specify where his novel takes place? Explain his choice

2) Why did the author choose a dual narration strategy?

3) On E-reserve read Dongala’s own experience with civil war. What components of his novel do you think are based on his first hand contact with the realities of an African civil war, and what elements pertain to fiction?

4) Describe gender roles within the child soldier culture presented in the book and analyze how they differ to or resemble the traditional model assigned to young men and women in the dominant culture.

**Week 9: Dongala cont. and French Rapper Médine**

Reading Assignment: Finish *Johnny Mad Dog*  

Writing Assignment: 1) French Rapper Médine: Browse the Internet for him and describe in a one-page portrait the artist’s work and his involvement with the beur population of France as well as his connection to global cultural politics.

2) “I fight wars! In war, you kill, you burn buildings, you rape women. That’s normal. That’s what war is all about — killing is natural. But that doesn’t mean I am a common murderer!” (p. 313). This quote from Johnny Mad Dog reveal his “style” both literally and philosophically – if such a word can apply to him. The author constantly adapts his use of language to the ethics and personality of his characters. Find a passage where Laokolé expresses the ethical counterpart to Johnny Mad Dog’s views on war and humanity in general.

**Week 10: Claire Denis**

Film: *View White Material*  

Writing Assignment: 1) Claire Denis wanted her main character to be far than a perfect heroine and show how a white woman born and raised in Africa could have two facets: one that carries on the old postcolonial values and another that is more in tune with the current postcolonial era in which she lives. Pick two scenes where we see Marie (played by Isabelle Huppert) exemplifying each of these two facets.

2) Children soldiers appear in various situations and each time they are filmed quite differently. Choose three scenes where they appear and describe them using some of the cinematic language learned in class: make sure to include the specific names for each shot and pay close attention to the relationship between image and sound.
**Week 11: Alain Mabanckou and Édouard Glissant**

Reading Assignment: Read Part I and II (“The Country” and “Paris”) of *Blue, White, Red*. Then read Glissant’s essay entitled “Cross Cultural Politics”.

Written Assignment: 1) How does Moki’s experience both at home and then in Paris echo some of the themes analyzed by Glissant in his essay?

**Week 12: Mabanckou cont. and Rachid Bouchareb**

Reading Assignment: Finish Mabanckou’s novel *Film: View Days of Glory*

Written Assignment: 1) Comment on the ending of *Blue, White, Red* and write two paragraphs about how you see or imagine Moki’s future ten years from the time the novel ends.

2) When *Days of Glory* came out in 2006, Bernadette Chirac who was the French first lady at the time, told the Press that she knew very little about the role that Francophone African soldiers played during World War II and also was not aware about the post-war issue raised by the movie. What was your reaction? What did you learn and which are the main inequities exposed by Bouchareb? How are they related to issues raised in French rap?

**Week 13: Mathieu Kassowitz, Jacques Benoit and Dany Lafferière**

Film: View two films, *La haine* and *How to Make Love to a Negro Without Getting Tired*

Written Assignment: 1) *La haine* became a cult movie in France because it exposed at the same time cultural, racial and religious discrimination (a Black, a Beur, and a Jewish character) linked to the difficult socio economic conditions of a Parisian banlieue. As for Laferrière’s book and movie, it is centered on an immigrant Haitian character living in Montréal, which is a situation close to the one of Laferrière himself. The tone and style of these two movies are very different yet they both deal with unresolved contemporary issues and questions linked to Édouard Glissant’s essay “The Known and the Uncertain.” Comment, describe and analyze the main aesthetic and thematic differences between the two movies, and establish direct and indirect connections with Glissant’s interpretation of the “Known and the Uncertain.”

**Week 14: Mohammed Camara**

Film Screening: View *Dakan*.

Written Assignment: *Dakan* was released in France in 1999. It made history because it was the very first Francophone African movie that portrayed a homosexual relationship between two young men. As discussed in class the “making of” *Dakan* faced an array of difficulties linked to the fact that Camara chose to film his movie in his home country of Guinea instead of France where he now resides.

1) What were these difficulties and what could Camara’s motivations be for filming on site? (Search the Internet for additional info)

2) Some of the on site obstacles had unforeseen esthetic consequences, can you identify them? Describe a scene where a “forced” setting gave the movie an artistic atmosphere.
3) Camara depicts a very distinct parental situation for each of the boys. Could we say that on the parents side the fear of homosexuality transcends gender and class? Or is it too much of a short cut? Develop a plausible discussion over this question.

4) Despite the fact that much of the societal and parental resistance takes place in a traditional French Guinean setting, do you see any kind of similarities between the ways that homophobia manifests itself in your own country and in Camara’s movie?

5) The English title for Dakan is Destiny. How do you interpret this title?

**Week 15: Final Review of Literature, Film, Raps and Assignments**

Assignment: Students’ choice of new Raps not covered yet in class.

**Finals Week: Final Integrative Paper Due on Final Exam Date.**

The University's Academic Standards policy states:

Academic dishonesty is against university as well as the system community standards. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following:

Plagiarism: defined as submitting the language, ideas, thoughts or work of another as one's own; or assisting in the act of plagiarism by allowing one's work to be used in this fashion.

Cheating: defined as (1) obtaining or providing unauthorized information during an examination through verbal, visual or unauthorized use of books, notes, text and other materials; (2) obtaining or providing information concerning all or part of an examination prior to that examination; (3) taking an examination for another student, or arranging for another person to take an exam in one's place; (4) altering or changing test answers after submittal for grading, grades after grades have been awarded, or other academic records once these are official.

Sanctions for violations of university academic standards may include the following:

(1) Filing a final grade of "F"; (2) reducing the student's final course grade one or two full grade points; (3) awarding a failing mark on the test or paper in question; (4) requiring the student to retake the test or resubmit the paper.

Copying someone else's entire paper or article is a clear example of academic dishonesty, but note that plagiarism can take other, less obvious forms as well. "Language, ideas, thoughts or work of another" includes any material used in your assignments and essays that was written or produced by others. Using brief phrases or sentences from books, articles, Internet sites, documents, or other sources without letting your reader know where they came from is a form of plagiarism. You must properly acknowledge your use of other people's words by placing them in quotation marks and citing all sources used in your paper. Even if you paraphrase someone else's ideas and do not quote them directly, you must still indicate where those ideas came from. Citations should also be given for little-known facts and statistics.

Students caught cheating and/or plagiarizing in this class will be failed in the course without regard to length of assignment or time during the semester. In addition, all cases of academic dishonesty are reported to the Office of Student Conduct and become part of the student's academic record. Potential employers as well as the directors of graduate and professional programs to which students may apply can request copies of these records, in which case the academic dishonesty charge will be disclosed.
Disabilities Statement

The Foreign Languages and Literatures Department is committed to equal opportunity in education for all students, including those with documented learning disabilities. If you have a documented disability and will be requiring assistance, please contact the Disability Resource Center (Thompson Building Suite 101) as soon as possible to arrange for appropriate accommodations and then contact me.

Academic Success Services

Your student fees cover usage of the Math Center (784-4433 or www.unr.edu/mathcenter/), Tutoring Center (784-6801 or www.unr.edu/tutoring/), and University Writing Center (784-6030 or http://www.unr.edu/writing_center/). These centers support your classroom learning; it is your responsibility to take advantage of their services. Keep in mind that seeking help outside of class is the sign of a responsible and successful student.

Statement on Audio and Video Recording

Surreptitious or covert videotaping of class or unauthorized audio recording of class is prohibited by law and by Board of Regents policy. This class may be videotaped or audio recorded only with the written permission of the instructor. In order to accommodate students with disabilities, some students may be given permission to record class lectures and discussions. Therefore, students should understand that their comments during class might be recorded.