

**English 780B African (American) and Oceanian Literatures:  
Influences and Affinities (1970s-1990s)**

Kuykendall 406, Wednesdays 3:30-6:00

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Spring Office Hours: T-Th, 12:00-3:00 and by appointment

*Uh huh. But do it free us?* – Sonya Sanchez (title of play)

**DESCRIPTION/OBJECTIVES:** This course will begin with the question of why there has been so little scholarly discussion about relations among African American and Pacific literatures (written mostly between 1970-1990 in English), and consider what exploring a conversation about influences and affinities among them would have to offer. A coterminous point of departure will be the development of (post-colonial) approaches that foreground *poetics of relationship* among formerly minoritized literatures that are based on common liberatory aims. The course will approach works of art in this grain as “acts” that are at once personal, communal, and participatory within the broad and mobile projects of decolonization, in which national consciousness articulates itself with international movements. Toward the end of appreciating what and how the chosen texts perform, the course will, 1. review post-colonial and literary theory *relevant* for the joint study of African American and Pacific literatures, including reading frames such as “minor transnationalism” and regionalism (the “Black Atlantic” and the “Brown Pacific”), 2. consider historical moments and arenas when Third World critiques are taken up by African American and Pacific literary/social movements (anti-colonial literature in PNG, Polynesian Panther Party in Aotearoa, Freedom Rides in Aboriginal Australia), 3. discuss the influence of Africanist/post-colonial critique on several Pacific authors and movements, 4. read works of African American literatures alongside works of Pacific literature in order to appreciate influences and affinities among them, 5. discuss varieties of registers in which African American arts have influenced or have affinities with Pacific culture productions.

Students will write one five paper on a specific relation among an African (American) and Pacific author (i.e. Langston Hughes/Steven Winduo, Malcolm X/Haunani-Kay Trask, Toni Morrison/Sia Figiel [*Bluest Eye/Where ‘We’ Once Belonged*], Patricia Grace [*Beloved/Baby No Eyes*], Richard Wright/Alan Duff, Achebe/Soaba [*Things Fall Apart/Maiba*], Witi Ihimaera/James Baldwin—or on a particular theme as approached by African (American) and Pacific writers--share oral reports on terms, problems, and artistic moments and movements, and contribute to a manuscript or website on the conversation among African American and Pacific literatures. While the course emphasis is on “literary” texts, we will be concerned all along with the conversation among literary and extra-literary forms, and students may choose to work on other areas of expressive culture, including connections between African American and Pacific activism, philosophy, dance and music.

**REQUIRED TEXTS:** Alan Duff, *Once Were Warriors*; Sia Figiel, *Where ‘We’ Once Belonged*; Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* and *Song of Solomon*; Gayl Jones, *Corregidora* (these books are available at Revolution Books, 2626 South King Street).

(LAULIMA (<http://laulima.hawaii.edu>):

The majority of the course readings are available as PDF's on Laulima. If you have a problem accessing the reading, or hit a bad link, let me know as soon as possible. Course announcements, paper assignments, weekly reading questions, etc. will be posted on the site. You are encouraged to use the site actively to ask questions or make comments about the readings. There will be a few scheduled postings.

**SLOs: Students who complete this course should:**

- . Become more reflective about questions of “comparativism” as a method
- . Improve their abilities as critical and creative readers
- . Improve their abilities to engage in and present advanced research
- . Improve their ability to position arguments about Pacific and African American literatures within historical and critical traditions

**ASSIGNMENTS/GRADING:**

- . “Classroom” performance (25 %); includes short presentations on essays or movements; bi-weekly on-line (1-2 page) postings; a presentation of the semester paper (may be done collaboratively)
- . A short paper (five pages) (25%)
- . A semester paper (for this there will be an abstract, literature review, drafts – the semester papers may be written collaboratively) (50 %)

**ATTENDANCE:** You are granted three unexcused absences: after that I *may* deduct a grade for every unexcused absence; with more than *five* unexcused absences you *may* get an "F" and cannot receive an incomplete. An excused absence is one in which you let me know you had a credible and acceptable reason for missing class (health issue/family emergency), and do so in a timely manner, whenever possible beforehand. If you miss a class, it's especially important to check Laulima for any class updates.

**ACADEMIC HONESTY:** Material turned in for this class must be your own work; UH regulations strictly forbid plagiarism.

**CONFERENCES:** Please stop by my office to introduce yourselves in the first week or so (you could email for a time other than office hours), and certainly come by if you have questions, would like me to look at drafts, or want to discuss an upcoming report on a term/concept/historical-cultural background.

**CONDUCT:** The gist of the Student Conduct Code and UH Policy on Informational Technology Resources is that you act respectfully toward your peers both in class and in online environments. If you feel that another student is interfering with your ability to work productively, please discuss the situation with me; if my behavior is impairing your learning, speak with Kristin McAndrew, Associate Chair of the English Department.

## SYLLABUS

### WEEK ONE: January 15<sup>th</sup> : Introductions, Prospects, and Healing Arts

Power Point: Minor Histories, Iconographic scenes, Thoughts on Reading Relations

Passages from: John Edgar Wideman (from *Interview*), Albert Wendt ("Panthers"), Russell Soaba ("Island: Ways of Immortal Folk"), Teresia Teaiwa (from *Searching for Nei Nima'anoa*), Angela Davis ("The Rope"), Toni Morrison (from "Rootedness" & "The Nobel Prize Lecture"), John Pule, from *The Shark That Ate the Sun*; Steven Winduo on Langston Hughes' "The Negro Dreams of Rivers."

Youtube: Malcolm X and James Baldwin (9/5/63)(27:45)

*Recommended:* Dale Parker, "Postcolonial and Race Studies"; Alice Te Punga Somerville, "Introduction" to *Once Were Pacific*; Chad Allen, "Introduction" to *Transindigenous: Methodologies for Global Native Literary Studies*; Lionnet & Shih, "Minor Transnationalism," Deleuze and Guattari, "What is a Minor Literature?" (first few pages), Audre Lourde, "The Transformation of Silence Into Action"; Vince Diaz, "Sniffing Oceania's Behind"; Teresia Teaiwa, "What Remains to Be Seen: Reclaiming the Visual Roots of Pacific Literature"

### WEEK TWO: January 22<sup>nd</sup> : Cultural Dialectics & Authenticity

1. Gayl Jones, "The Quest for Wholeness: Re-Imagining the African-American Novel, An Essay on Third World Aesthetics"
2. Albert Wendt, "Sermon on National Development" (cf. "Toward a New Oceania"; "Novelists and Historians: The Art of Remembering")
3. Epeli Hau'ofa, "The Glorious Pacific Way" (from *Tales of the Tikong*, cf. UNESCO report)
4. Hegel, "Lord and Bondsman"
5. W. E. B. Dubois on "Double-Consciousness" (from *Souls of Black Folk*)

### POSTING #1 ON LAULIMA, DUE MONDAY 20<sup>TH</sup> (1-2 pages on one of the following, or reflections)

1. What do you see as the main point(s) of agreement and disagreement with Malcolm X and James Baldwin, and where do you lean/stand?
2. Why do you imagine that the influences and affinities among African American and Pacific literatures have often been mentioned but have not been discussed in detail by literary critics (the closest to a comparative study might be Elizabeth Deloughery's *Roots and Routes*, which discusses the Pacific in relation to the Caribbean)?
3. After Gayl Jones, write the beginning of "I am a Pacific novel," or that of another group/genre that has been generalized.

### **WEEK THREE: January 29th: Black Power Movements and Oceania**

1. Witi Ihimaera, "Clenched Fist" (4 pages)
2. Russell Soaba, *Wanpis* (to page 102) – see "Saying One You Want in PNG" (2 pages)
3. Russell Soaba, *Kwamra: a Harvest of Seasons*, "Preface" and a few poems
4. Watch at least Part One of the youtube on Polynesian Panthers (three parts about an hour)
5. Robbie Shilliam, "The Polynesian Panthers and The Black Power Gang: Surviving Racism and Colonialism in Aotearoa New Zealand"
6. Leo Hannett, "Niugini Black Power"

*Recommended:* "History of the Black Panthers" (a timeline and basic outline); Stu Dawrs, "Re-Historicizing The Ondobondo Poster Poems"; Paul Sharrad, "Out of Africa"; Jennifer Clark, "Black Power is Land Rights Now" (from *Aborigines and Activism*); Njoroge Njoroge, "He the One We Knew"; Haunani-Kay Trask, "Hawaii: Colonization and Decolonization"; Richard Hamasaki, "Dancing to the Dimdim's Beat"

### **WEEK FOUR: February 5th: Protest Writing and Existentialist Thought**

1. Albert Wendt, "Flying Fox in a Freedom Tree" (Note: There is an interesting film of this novella, which makes up the middle section of *Leaves of the Banyan Tree*)
2. Russell Soaba, *Wanpis* (finish book)
3. Ralph Ellison, "Preface" and Chapter One to *Invisible Man*
4. John Pule, "Clouds and Water"
5. Nora Vagi Brash, "Which Way Big Man?" (radio play on Laulima)
6. John Dominis Holt, "On Being Hawaiian"

### **WEEK FIVE: February 12th: Recognition, Structured Misrecognition, and (post)colonial Melancholy**

1. Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* (to page 109)
2. Passages from Toni Morrison's *Sula* and Albert Wendt's *Leaves of the Banyan Tree*
3. bell hooks, "The Oppositional Gaze"
4. Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholy"

*Recommended:* Charles Lawrence, "The Id, the Ego, and Equal Protection"; Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition"; Herbert Marcuse, "Repressive Tolerance"; Julia Kristeva on abjection; Dominick LaCapra on Trauma

### **WEEK SIX: February 19th: Black Arts Movement and Cultural Aesthetics**

1. Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* (to page 109)
2. Larry Neal, from "The Black Aesthetic"

3. Addison Gayle, "Blueprint for a Black Criticism"
4. Alice Walker, "In My Mother's Garden"
5. Reina Whaitiri, book review of *Baby No Eyes*

*Recommended:* youtube, "Gil Scott Heron The Revolution Will Not be Televised"; Scott Russell Lyons, "Rhetorical Sovereignty: What American Indians Want from Writing"

### **WEEK SEVEN: February 26<sup>th</sup>: Gender and Belonging**

1. Sia Figiel, *Where 'We' Once Belonged* & "A Writer's Notes"
2. Dan Taulapapa McMullin, "Jesus, Nafanua,
3. Kalikoa Ka'eo, Noenoe Silva on Hawaiian sexualities

*Recommended:* Sinavaiana and Kauanui, "Women's Writing in Oceania"; Barbara Smith, "Toward a Black Feminist Criticism"

### **WEEK EIGHT: March 5<sup>th</sup>: Roots and Routes: Politics of Mixing Sounds**

In the late 1980s, black Americans were using bongo-type drums to rap, and I thought, "Yeah, they're getting closer to that synthesis.—John Ioane, in Mellon and Pereira (39)

1. Sia Figiel, *Where 'We' Once Belonged*
2. Vince Diaz, "Indigeneity and Creolization"
3. Ngugi Wa Thiango, "Poor Theory" from *Globalectics*

*Recommended:* Paul Gilroy, from *The Black Atlantic*; Epeli Hau'ofa, "Our Sea of Islands"; Eduard Glissant on "poetics of relation"; Kamau Braithewaite on "creolization"; Ngugi Wa Thiango, "The Quest for Relevance"; Steven Winduo, "Interview"; kuualoha hoomanawanui, "Yo Brah" (on Jawaiiian music)

### **PAPER #1 DUE: FIVE PAGES ON A COMPARISON BETWEEN AN AFRICAN (AMERICAN) AND PACIFIC POET – OR ON A SIGNIFICANT ISSUE TAKEN UP IN EACH LITERATURE**

### **WEEK NINE: March 12<sup>th</sup>: Blues Aesthetics: Memory and Creativity**

1. Gayl Jones, *Corregidora* (to page 90)
2. James Baldwin, "Sonny's Blues"
3. bell hooks, "Homophobia in the Black Community"
4. Amiri Baraka, from *Blues People*

*Recommended:* Houston Baker, "Blues Ideology"; Henry Louis Gates, from *The Signifying Monkey*

### **WEEK TEN: March 19<sup>th</sup>: Gender, History, and Violence**

1. Gayl Jones, *Corregidora* (finish book)
2. Amiri Baraka, *The Dutchman* (recommended: youtube [six short parts] 1967 Anthony Harvey)
3. Grace Molissa (poems)

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 26<sup>th</sup>: NO CLASS, KUHIO DAY/SPRING RECESS**

**WEEK ELEVEN: April 2<sup>nd</sup>: Settler Colonialism, Rage, and the Pathologizing of Violence**

1. Alan Duff, *Once Were Warriors*
2. Excerpt from *Native Son*
3. Ralph Ellison, "Everybody's Protest Novel" (cf. "Richard Wright's Blues").
4. Cristina Thompson, "In Whose Face?"

Recommended: film of *Once Were Warriors* (screenplay by Riwia Brown); *Beth's story* (Rena Owen)

**WEEK TWELVE: April 9<sup>th</sup>: The Presence of Unseen Things**

1. Toni Morrison, *Song of Solomon* (Chap. 1-4)
2. Toni Morrison, "Rootedness: The Presence of the Ancestor"
3. Albert Wendt, "Inside Us the Dead"
4. LaVinia Jennings, *Africa in the Works of Toni Morrison*
5. Steven Winduo, "Loma'ha I am, in Spirits I call"
6. Pio Manoa, "Singing in Their Genealogical Trees"

**WEEK THIRTEEN: April 16<sup>th</sup>: Names and Identity**

1. Toni Morrison, *Song of Solomon* (Chap. 5-9)
2. LaVinia Jennings on *Song of Solomon*
3. From *Autobiography of Malcolm X*

**WEEK FOURTEEN: April 23<sup>th</sup>: Call and Response, Spoken Word, forms of Spirituality**

1. Toni Morrison, *Song of Solomon* (finish book)

**WEEK FIFTEEN: April 30<sup>rd</sup>: SEMESTER PRESENTATIONS**

**WEEK SIXTEEN: May 7<sup>th</sup>: SEMESTER PRESENTATIONS**