

ENGL 474A Studies in Contemporary Literature (3 credits)

Section 001

Term 1 – 2010/11 MWF: 12:00-1:00

Instructor: Dr. Suzanne James

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Post-Apartheid South African Writing

“It was easier to write about the past . . . because the past created ready-made stories. There was a very clear demarcation between good and evil . . . Black was good; white was bad. Your conflict was there. There were no gray areas. We no longer have that. In this new situation, black is not necessarily good. There are many black culprits; there are many good white people. We have become normal. It’s very painful to become normal.”
(Zakes Mda)

Fifty years of oppression under the South African apartheid system inspired an impressive corpus of protest literature, but how have writers responded to the collapse of the racist regime and its replacement with a democratic constitution? We will begin our exploration of recent South African writing with a study of Antje Krog’s powerful first-hand account of the hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, followed by a play, fictional works and a selection of contemporary poetry. Texts will be discussed both in the context of South Africa’s historical legacy and its current cultural and political realities.

This section of English 474 may be used as a credit towards a minor in African Studies.

Tentative Reading List:

- Antje Krog, *Country of My Skull*
- Phaswane Mpe, *Welcome to our Hillbrow*
- Njabulo S. Ndebele, *The Cry of Winnie Mandela*
- Zakes Mda, *Ways of Dying*
- Jane Taylor, *Ubu and the Truth Commission*
- Custom Course Package including poetry, short stories and critical/theoretical readings

Course Requirements:

- In-class essay – 25%
- Term paper – 35%
- Participation – 10%
- Final examination – 30%