Course Description:
The term "African diaspora" has been used to refer to the grouping of diverse peoples and cultures that have, although dispersed throughout the world, retained a consciousness of shared origins and struggles. This course will take up a diverse group of works from the African diaspora, inviting students to make connections and distinctions about themes, genres, formal devices, political outlooks, etc., while exploring the complexities of multiple audiences having in common English as the lingua franca of a globalized economy.

The concept of an African diaspora is powerful in that it allows us to speak of continuities and connections within the African world experience, without compromising the uniqueness and historical specificity of each culture under its rubric. We will also engage questions about the translation of oral cultures into writing, the representation of "otherness," access to history, the legacy of colonialism, the painful consequences of neocolonialism and current attempts at “colonizing in reverse.”

Intended Learning Outcomes--hopefully students in this course will
(1) demonstrate an understanding of knowledge held both outside and inside the Western tradition--the history, ideas, and critical issues pertaining to the peoples of the African diaspora;
(2) understand the complex relationship of cultures within and across the African diaspora;
(3) understand the various negotiations writers in the diaspora make when they choose to write within/ against traditionally western generic conventions;
(4) demonstrate the ability to write sustained, coherent, analytical, and persuasive arguments, following the conventions of Standard English and incorporating researched materials;
(5) demonstrate the oral ability to present their individual ideas to the class and persuasively discuss the complexity of the texts and cultures under discussion and, consequently, their different interpretations.

Required Texts:
Andrea Levy. The Long Song. ISBN # 978-0374192174
Joan Anim-Addo. Haunted by History. ISBN # 1902294033
Ade Solanke. Pandora’s Box. Oberon Modern Plays. # 9781849434973
Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. The Thing around Your Neck. ISBN # 978-0-307-45591-8
Course Packet

Required Films:
(1) Sankofa
(2) Slam

Portfolio Grading:
The writing assignments you turn in are first drafts. While they should be free of spelling errors and grammatical mistakes (i.e. not rough drafts), they won’t be finished products. Think of them as work-in-progress—not graded until revised and reworked to “perfection.” Your portfolio will be an extension and development of your work during the semester. Do not lose any version of your essays because I do not have a grade book. Keep all your writings (including extra-credit write-ups) in a folder because I will collect everything yet one more time on the last day of class, to reach a final decision about your grade.

ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION:
This course is non-graded until the very end of the semester. Your final grade will depend upon active and engaged class participation which includes the day you lead the discussion on ONE text (25%) and progress in writing critically [a midterm essay (20%), a literary analysis that incorporates research (35%), and a final exam (20%) will be
assessed. I tell all my students on the first day, the highest grade they can anticipate (if they do not talk in class) is a B- even if they can write like God herself. Note that I will send you home the second time you come to class without the readings—no buts about it. We need to look at specific passages TOGETHER, and your memory of the text will not be enough. I will also reserve the right to quiz the class on all the readings due on each day.

An "A" student will do all the work and excel in most of it. Active, thoughtful, and consistent class participation and progress in writing critically are musts. The student who earns a "B" may lapse in one area, but she is generally committed to the work and to the class. A "C" student will do the assignments and participate in class, but will show no particular effort in doing the work thoughtfully or in engaging in class discussion reflectively and/or regularly. Since students who are unable to keep up with the work or to attend class regularly will be advised to drop the course, I do not anticipate "D" or "E" students in this class. (I would really begin to worry after three absences!)

WRITING: Papers are to be typed, preferably Times New Roman 12’ font, with double spacing and one-inch margins at the top, bottom, and sides of your text; do not justify your text. Your name, the title of the course, my name, and the date the paper is turned in should be typed on the top-left of the page, single-spaced; the title should be centered on the page, two spaces below all that. There will a header with your last name and page number starting on page 2. No header on title page (yes, this is the only time we will not follow MLA conventions). The paper should be stapled together—never a fancy folder or cover page.

THE CENTER FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE: Tutors at the Writing Learning Center (210 Milne Library) can help you with brainstorming ideas, organization, some grammar, and revision. For more information or to schedule an appointment, go to http: //www.geneseo.edu/english/writing_center. Do not wait until the paper is due to seek help.

SUNY Geneseo will make reasonable accommodations for students with documented physical, emotional or learning disabilities. You should contact the Assistant Dean for Disability Services (Dr. Tabitha Buggie-Hunt, Erwin 22) and also talk to me to discuss needed accommodations as early as possible in the semester (preferably the first week).

SCHEDULE OF READINGS: This schedule may change at any time according to class needs and demands. When a teacher puts a syllabus together, she does not know what to expect, for each group is different. Even if it is a text she has taught before, some students may find different meanings in it and want to stay with the work longer than anticipated--I will allow this to happen. You need to be in class to note such changes or resort to the class list (our email addresses and phone numbers) to inquire about them. The class list is also a wonderful way to build community and make lasting friendships. Get to know one another PLEASE.

Unit I: Recovering African Pasts (Weeks 1-6)

This section of the course introduces students to the project and the challenge of defining an African diaspora [diasporas?] and to “the danger of a single story” (Adichie). Looking at the movie Sankofa and reading Andrea Levy’s neo-slave narrative, The Long Song, Joan Anim’Addo’s Haunted by History, a few essays and short stories, we will attempt to understand some of the complexities and consequences of the transatlantic slave trade and European colonization. We will also begin to define the concept of diasporic linkages among recent and long-established communities of African descent in the Americas and in Europe, and to discuss the different ways in which "Africa” has been evoked and remembered throughout the diaspora.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week One</th>
<th>Week Two</th>
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<tr>
<td>W 1/21 Overview of the course/Shared assumptions about literature in a globalized economy/Understanding the concept of diaspora and of systemic inequality “Diaspora: a definition” (handout) Portfolio grading explained</td>
<td>M 1/26 Sankofa discussion (INVENTORY OF MOST OF THE THEMES IN THE COURSE)</td>
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<tr>
<td>F 1/23 Sankofa [film to be shown in class]</td>
<td>W 1/28 Grace Nichols’ “Wherever I Hang” (handout)—Jacob Trost (discussion leader)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Assignment/Readings</td>
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| F 1/30    | “Transatlantic Slavery: against Human Dignity” (CP)  
|           | “Chronology of Main Events” (CP)                                                    |
|           | **Week Three**                                                                       |
| M 2/2     | Andrea Levy. *The Long Song*                                                         |
|           | Why slave narratives in the 21st Century?                                             |
| W 2/4     | *The Long Song*                                                                      |
| F 2/6     | *The Long Song*                                                                      |
|           | **Week Four**                                                                        |
| M 2/9     | M. Nourbese Philip’s “The Absence of Writing or How I Almost Became a Spy”          |
| W 2/11    | Review generic conventions: what counts as a poem  
|           | M. Nourbese Philip’s poems: “Anonymous,” “Sprung Rhythms,” and “A Habit of Angels” |
| F 2/13    | Vanessa Richards, “He lays on his back”  
|           | “Who’s Afraid of Black Sexuality” by Stacey Patton (CP)                              |
|           | **Week Five**                                                                        |
| M 2/16    | Joan Anim-Addo, *Haunted by History*  
|           | Writing about the Literatures of the African Diaspora                                |
| W 2/18    | *Haunted by History*                                                                 |
| F 2/20    | *Haunted by History*                                                                 |
|           | **Week Six**                                                                         |
| M 2/23    | *Haunted by History*                                                                 |
| W 2/25    | Lenelle Moise, “The Children of Immigrants” (CP)                                     |
| F 2/27    | Lenelle Moise, “quaking conversation” (CP)                                           |
|           | Midterm Essay DUE today                                                               |
|           | **Unit II: Snapshots from the Present (Weeks 7-10)**                                  |
|           | Focusing mostly on the stories collected in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *The Thing around Your Neck* will allow us to identify the work that still needs to be done towards a more equitable world (among other things). We will also read Ade Solanke’s play, *Pandora’s Box* (2013), to understand the complexity of “the present” for African Diasporic peoples but, more important, to explore the ways “the empire writes back” to the center. Throughout the course the importance of history (and its rewriting) will be emphasized. |
|           | **Week Seven**                                                                        |
| M 3/2     | Louise Bennett, “Colonization in Reverse”  
|           | Edwidge Danticat, “Children of the Sea” (CP)                                         |
| W 3/4     | Andrea Levy, “Loose Change” (CP)                                                     |
| F 3/6     | Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *The Thing around Your Neck*                                |
|           | **Week Eight**                                                                        |
| M 3/9     | *The Thing around Your Neck*                                                          |
| W 3/11    | *The Thing around Your Neck*                                                          |
| F 3/13    | *The Thing around Your Neck*                                                          |
|           | **Week Nine**                                                                        |
| M 3/16    | Spring Break, NO Class                                                               |
| W 3/18    | Spring Break, NO Class                                                               |
| F 3/20    | Spring Break, NO Class                                                               |
|           | **Week Ten**                                                                         |
Unit III: Imagining Possible Futures (Weeks 11-15)

This section of the course focuses on literature in which there is a clear emphasis on fashioning a liberated future—literatures of the African Diaspora as forces in cultural transformation. Benjamin Zephaniah’s Propa Propaganda and other poems by contemporary Black British writers will not let us forget poetry (the word) as a force for liberation. The movie Slam will almost literally make you see it.

### Week Eleven

- **M 3/30**: Grace Nichols’ “Icons” and “First Generation Monologue” (CP)
- **W 4/1**: Benjamin Zephaniah. Propa Propaganda
- **F 4/3**: Propa Propaganda

### Week Twelve

- **M 4/6**: Propa Propaganda
- **W 4/8**: "Pride" by Jackie Kay (CP)
- **F 4/10**: Bernardine Evaristo’s “Revenge” (CP)

### Week Thirteen

- **M 4/13**: Slam (film shown in class)
- **W 4/15**: Slam
- **F 4/17**: Slam (discussion of the movie against all the themes we have identified so far)

### Week Fourteen

- **M 4/20**: Lemn Sissay, “Colour Blind”
  - Mutabaruka, “Dis Poem” (CP)
  - You are required to attend two GREAT Day presentations and write a response
- **W 4/22**: Pete Kalu’s “Old Radicals” (CP)
- **F 4/24**: Malika Booker’s "Cement" (CP)

### Week Fifteen

- **M 4/27**: Fred D’Aguiar's "The Never-Never" (CP)
- **W 4/29**: What papers have we been writing for Friday’s Editing DAY?
- **F 5/1**: Editing Day for the Final Paper

### Week Sixteen

- **M 5/4**: Last Day of Classes: review for the final exam.
- **W 5/6**: Study Day Office Hours: 2-4

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**FINAL EXAM FINAL – Thursday, May 7th, 8:00-11:00 (Welles 119)**

WHOLE Portfolio DUE today.

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**Final Thoughts:**

1. You cannot take this course as a correspondence class. What happens in every class cannot be made up by borrowing notes or doing extra work. If coming to every class is going to be a problem, this course is not for you. In order for this class to run smoothly each of us must make a commitment to come to every class, to be here on time, and to meaningfully engage the readings.
2. You should keep everything I hand back with comments in a folder—I do NOT have a grade book.
3. If you fall behind, TALK TO ME. Don't disappear. I'm not assigning late penalties, but don't take advantage of that.
(4) You will be able to revise your first essay as many times as it takes for an “A.” I will let you revise the final paper if you hand it in before GREAT Day.
(5) Plagiarism is intolerable. Refer to the College Policies in your Handbook and/or attend one of the Spring 2015 Avoiding Plagiarism Workshops at Milne Library.

Wednesday, February 4, 3:00-3:50 Room: Milne 104
Thursday, February 5, 6:00-6:50 Room: Milne 104
Monday, February 9, 7:00-7:50 Room: Milne 104
Thursday, February 12, 5:00-5:50 Room: Milne 104
Tuesday, February 17, 2:30-3:20 Room: Milne 104
Wednesday, February 18, 6:00-6:50 Room: Milne 104
Friday, February 27, 2:30-3:20 Room: Milne 104
Monday, March 2, 7:00-7:50 Room: Milne 104
Wednesday, March 4, 4:00-4:50 Room: Milne 104
Tuesday, March 10, 5:00-5:50 Room: Milne 104
Thursday, March 12, 4:00-4:50 Room: Milne 104
Wednesday March 26, 4:00-4:50 Room: Milne 104
Wednesday, April 1, 7:00-7:50 Room: Newton 214
Thursday, April 2, 5:00-5:50 Room: Newton 204

Writing about the Literatures of the African Diaspora

Oral and written African literatures have flourished simultaneously on the continent. Despite the fact that modern literatures are written, the contemporary writer is carrying out the timeless mission of the oral artist of defending the cultural ethos of her people. For Europe insisted on denying Africa its past in order to justify European presence in the continent, and to maintain the subjugation of African peoples. Civilizing Africa became, as Rudyard Kipling referred to it in a different historical context, the "white man's burden."

As a rejection to such denial, the purest form of Afrocentrism asserts that the entire African continent is the true cultural source of black trans-Atlantic communities. In order to understand African-American literature, for example, it is first necessary to understand the roles that the oral culture and the slave narrative had in its tradition. Enslaved Africans adapted the English language and used it to pass on what they remembered of their own cultures combined with what they witnessed on new soil. Afro-Caribbean literature also reflects the history, the place, the religion, and the ethos of the peoples of the region. The common themes of alienation and homelessness arise from the slave origins of Afro-Caribbeans: expatriation, loneliness, and longing for home, the quest for self-identity, and the class conflict of the intellectual also appear as common themes.

How do diaspora discourses represent experiences of displacement, of constructing homes away from home? What experiences do they reject, replace, or marginalize? How can we attempt to convey the complexity of the diaspora in a 4-5 page paper? We'll try. Your job is to focus on the interaction of cultures (transculturation), as you explore pan-African links/themes in African diasporic texts.

You must remember that when we write about a poem, a play, a novel, a short story, or any other literary work, we argue for our interpretation, using the "facts" in the text as our evidence. A good paper on literature is argumentative: you will try to persuade your reader to read the text through your vision of it. Make sure to always contextualize your argument. You cannot avoid history when dealing with diasporic literatures.

You will let the structure of your argument take priority over the structure of the text. After deciding on what you want to say about the text you are reading, you will find the best possible way of organizing your argument. The chronology of the text, the scenes in a play or the sequence of stanzas in a poem are only very rarely the best way of organizing your argument because you may very easily sound as if you are retelling the story, the poem, the play, rather than saying something original about it.

It is also very important to reach a certain balance between points you make in your own voice, instances when paraphrasing the text becomes crucial, and passages where you let the text speak for itself. Although the best evidence is the author's own words, only indent quotes (more than four lines) if absolutely necessary! Make sure that all the connections between your claims and the evidence you select are clear. A "bad writer" will pile on quotations without showing how they apply to her/his argument. Do not be a hit-and-run quotation writer.

Do not forget that by convention we write about literature in the present tense. If you read your paper out loud (which I strongly recommend), you will realize that by writing as if the events are taking place right in front of you, your claims on the work also seem harder tocontest.

Make sure your interpretation fits the "facts" and does not neglect major aspects. Your argument will be stronger if you incorporate objections to it in the body of your paper, to try to refute them right then and there, rather
than wait for your reader to remind you of such objections when it is too late. Remember that you are not the first person to write about any given text, nor the last. Your paper should include the existing conversation on the work.

The most conservative interpreters stick exclusively to the text because they are afraid to take risks. Your interpretations will go beyond the facts of the text to speculate on what they imply, the motivations behind characters’ actions, the meanings behind the words on the page. No text can be said to contain a single, fixed meaning since readers' determinations of meanings are dependent on social, cultural, and literary assumptions that are prone to change.

You are encouraged to write in the first person rather than pretend to be objective/ impartial about what you are saying. Donna Haraway emphasizes the extent to which all knowledge is situated rather than "disembodied." Gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, historical and geographical location compromise the fictions of unified subjects and disinterested knowledges. Pay as much attention to the “what” of the texts you read as to the “who, when, and WHERE” of their production.

Readings are also never final: I have reread texts in different moments in my life to find very different meanings. It is o.k. to say, "it seems to me that at this point the character faces a..."

Guiding Questions for When You Revise your Early Drafts:

1. Does the introduction to the paper provide the background you need to understand the argument/ analysis that follows? Does it attract your interest? How would you improve it? Write down the essay’s argument in your own words, as you understand it from reading the introduction.

2. Read every topic sentence of every paragraph at least twice. Does it introduce the paragraph well? Does it flow nicely from the last sentence of the paragraph that precedes it? Find WAYS OF IMPROVING TRANSITIONS and topic sentences.

3. Does the writer use quotations well? Circle at least two examples in the paper itself. Are there page numbers after every quote? Does the writer remember how to punctuate with quotation marks? How well do the quotes contribute to and support the writer’s argument? MARK ANY HIT-AND-RUN QUOTATION(S). Is there any section in the paper that would benefit from more quotes from the text? How many indented quotes are there? Are they also double-spaced without quotation marks and period inside the parentheses? Remember that you only indent if the quote is longer than four lines (we are using the MLA format).

4. How much does the writer vary the way to introduce her quotes? Evaluate all verbs used to introduce quotes. Suggest ways of improving them. Remember that “SAY” is a weak verb.

5. Can you recognize the writer’s voice, the writer ethos, throughout the paper? Mark the passages in the paper where you miss the writer’s presence.

6. Pretend you are not the writer of this essay. Anticipate possible objections to your argument. Write plausible refutations.

7. Has the writer varied her sentence structure often enough? Could she have combined sentences more effectively? Remember “the arms of your sentence” (107).

8. Read over the concluding paragraph. Does it merely summarize the paper? What emotion/idea/ question does the writer try to leave you with?

9. Has the writer used the Present Tense consistently?

10. Do you find the title catchy? Appropriate as a “doorway into your argument?” Suggest another one if you are not satisfied.

11. Check the paper for any mechanical or grammatical problems. FIX THEM.

The Research Paper:

The first step for the success of this assignment requires that you have something to argue about a text on our syllabus that you have not written about for the first essay. Like before, I will not tell you what your argument is. A good starting point, obviously, is for you to find out information on the author and the context behind the text. Once you know more about both, you will be better equipped to focus your questions to develop your own original thesis. The more focused the argument, the stronger the paper.

Pay special attention to focusing your introduction. I usually write my introductions last. You only really know what the paper is going to accomplish once you are done drafting it. The introduction makes a promise it must fulfill. Think of a catchy title and of a first sentence that will really grab your reader. Finally, make sure your introduction announces the organizational layout of the whole paper. It must.

Remember that you may change the sequence of paragraphs (the organization of the paper) for the best effect as many times as you revise, so you need to make sure transitions are always present and topic sentences are focused enough. Remember that topic sentences advance the argument and are (preferably) thematically connected to the
whole. Remember also to write in the Present Tense throughout (reading the paper out loud more than once is the only way to spot tense inconsistency).

Avoid unnecessary repetition of words—it’s one of my pet-peeves.

Another important aspect of a successful research paper is for you to vary your sources: a book, an essay from a critical anthology, a journal article, a web source, a published interview perhaps. All your references must be recent (within the last five years) otherwise your teacher may suspect plagiarism.

Make sure you achieve a balance between instances where you paraphrase what other writers have said (you still need to use the MLA format for parenthetical citations) and times when direct quotes are required. Are you ultimately in charge of the researched material? You will write in the first person point of view, and vary the way to bring other voices into your “symphony” (vary the ways to introduce quotes). Figure what the quote is doing and introduce it properly: according to “so and so,” “so and so” suggests, notes, emphasizes, argues, points out, claims, rejects, etc. should be used accordingly (refer to the list of verbs in our course packet).

I need to hear your voice (ethos) throughout. You need to sound intelligent and balanced for your claims to be considered. Never praise the author of the text you are writing about. And PLEASE do not sound condescending. Your audience is someone who knows the text very well, so avoid paraphrasing without purpose. Remember that chronology is NEVER the best way to organize your argument.

Anticipate possible objection(s) to your argument and build plausible refutations. If there is a passage in the text you’re writing about that contradicts what you are saying, do not hope that Maria will not know it’s there… Bring it in. Your argument will be stronger if you attempt to refute such objections as you develop the essay.

Finally, a strong conclusion does not merely repeat everything you have already said in the paper.

EDITING QUESTIONS FOR THE RESEARCH PAPER (You are required to have a draft for editing day on the last day of class):

1. Does the introduction to the paper provide the background you need to understand the argument/analysis that follows? Notice that an introduction can be more than one paragraph. Does it attract your interest? How would you improve it? Formulate the central research question/argument as you understand it from reading this introduction.
2. What is the writer’s answer to that question? Is the answer clearly developed? Argumentative? Logically sound? How so?
3. Does the writer use quotations well? Circle at least two examples in the paper itself. Are there page numbers after every quote? Does the writer remember how to punctuate with quotation marks? How well do the quotes contribute to and support the writer’s argument? MARK ANY HIT-AND-RUN QUOTATION(S). Is there any section in the paper that would benefit from more quotes from the text? How many indented quotes are there? Are they also double-spaced without quotation marks and period inside the parentheses? Remember that you only indent if the quote is longer than four lines (we are using the MLA format).
4. Does the writer use criticism/researched material well? How much does she vary the way to introduce her sources? Suggest ways of improving that. Remember: first time you introduce a critic use WHOLE name. You cannot merely use the parenthetical citation. Use the last name after that.
5. Are the sources varied? Recent? Evaluate use of MLA format throughout and for the “Works Cited” page.
6. Describe the writer’s organizational strategy paragraph by paragraph. Is there any point in which the structure of the paper becomes unclear? Evaluate transitions and topic sentences and suggest ways of improving them when necessary.
7. Can you recognize the writer’s voice, the writer ethos, throughout the paper? Mark the passages in the paper where you miss the writer’s presence.
8. Do you feel you understand the text better now than you did before reading this paper? If yes, explain how.
9. Do you disagree with any of the assertions made about the text, either interpretations or evaluations? Are there ways in which you would have handled the argument differently? Suggest ways in which the writer might incorporate your objections (by refuting them) into the paper.
10. Read over the concluding paragraph. Does it merely summarize the paper? What emotion/idea/question does the writer try to leave you with?
11. Has the writer used the Present Tense consistently?
12. What is your most important suggestion for revision?
13. Tell me how reading this paper has given you a new perspective on the essay you are working on yourself? Or not
14. Do you find the title appropriate to the argument? Is it catchy? Can you suggest another one?

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Spring 2015 Campus Events: Write a response for extra credit 😊 All extra-credit responses belong in your portfolio [after I have read them]—You are NOT to revise them. You must hand them in soon after the event. Of course the events that count for extra credit are the ones that have some relevance to the class. For example, I’ll announce English Department readings and other events as they come to my attention. They count as extra credit only if you write a response.

February 19th, Thursday, at 7pm, "Who is Dayani Cristal," Newton classroom # TBA. The film traces the journey of a Central American migrant whose body is found in the Arizona desert. It is an excellent film that shows the human side of immigration policy, as well as the effects of structural inequality and violence in Central America and Mexico.

February 28th, Saturday, BSU dinner. Union Ballroom at 6PM.