## **Populism and the Postcolonial African Novel**

Veranstaltungsart: HS

Seminarhaus SH - SH 1.107, Datum & Uhrzeit: Do, 12-14

Modulkürzel: BA ES 3.3 / L3 FW 3.2 + FW 4

[Moodle](https://moodle.studiumdigitale.uni-frankfurt.de/moodle/course/view.php?id=6879)

Populism is loosely defined as the mobilization of civic dissent for political causes. Often conflating and cross-cutting with political dictatorship, the African continent bore witness to the rise and fall of a series of dictatorships in the postcolonial era. From Muammar Ghaddafi to Robert Mugabe, and from Jomo Kenyatta to Edi Amin, a fatal mix of populism, dictatorship, and dynasty politics have posed an existential threat to postcolonial African nation formations. As a genre, the populist novel operates through narrative devices of humour, gossip, and mythmaking – all of which lend deeper insights into the (interpellated) compliance of the masses with the dictatorship regimes. Drawing upon these complex generic configurations of language, power, and communication, the seminar reads select texts and films from Kenya, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, South Africa, and Libya which help underscore how the populist novel as a literary genre unfolds deep within the political void left over by the failures of post-independence nation-building processes, while forging a renewed understanding of the relationship between language, power, victimhood, and resistance.

2) Literatur:

### The Trial of Robert Mugabe by Chielozona Eze (2009)

*Beneath the Lion's Gaze* by Maaza Mengiste (2010)

*The Dictator’s Last Night* by Yasmina Khadra (2015)

**Course Requirements and Term Paper Guidelines**

**Participation Credit**

* All students should post one paragraph of critical commentary on the essays/novel/text/film assigned for the session on [moodle](https://moodle.studiumdigitale.uni-frankfurt.de/moodle/course/view.php?id=6879).This should be done by Wednesday midnight, every week. The commentary should be between 3-5 sentences and should answer the following questions: what is the main gist of the reading? Do you agree/disagree, and why?
* All students are required to **lead a session** (in groups of three or four maximum) with the following tasks: present the central argument of the reading/s assigned for that session with a critical and reflective perspective. At least one of the session leads is expected to **bridge the session**, i.e. summarize the discussion from that previous session and present it (5 minutes maximum) at the opening of the class. *Please prepare and send one page of summary of your session leading/bridging (combined) a day before to me by email.*

**For Full Credit – *all of the above* and a** 15–20-page essay/ Hausarbeit 1.5 space, Ariel font 11, topic to be discussed with me before you start writing the paper.

**Deadline** for the final paper/s: **See the Moodle Dashboard.**

**Seminar Plan**

Session 1: Oct. 17 Introduction, Course Management

[Voting with Betel Juice](https://reconciliationtim.ca/timor/voting-with-betel-juice-a-timorese-short-story-by-dadolin-murak/) by Dadolin Murak

Session 2: Oct. 24 –

“Discoursing Populism: Types, Typologies and Contexts” by Malreddy et al.

Documentary, [The War on Democracy](https://johnpilger.com/the-war-on-democracy/) by John Pilger

Session 3: Oct. 31 – No Session – Dienstreise

Session 4: Nov. 07

“Mass Dictatorship and the Modern State” by Roger Griffin

“Populism and Democracy in Africa” by Alexander Mukulilo

Session 5: Nov. 14

“Populism as Vernacular Practice” by Lauren Derby

Session 6: Nov. 21

“Portrait of a Bandit” *Bandits* by Eric Hobsbawm

“Fragile Democracy: Media Freedom and Radical Polarisation in Ethiopia” by M. Muyiwa

Session 7: Nov. 28

*Beneath the Lion’s Gaze* by Maaza Mengiste (2010) – Plot, Form, Characters & Summary

Session 8: Dec. 5

– No Session –

Session 9: Dec 12

*Beneath the Lion's Gaze* by Maaza Mengiste (2010) – Themes, Populism, Leftwing Nationalism, Ethnonationalism

Session 10: Dec 19

“History, politics and dogs in Zimbabwean literature, c.1975–2015” by Innocent Dande &

Sandra Swart

Session 11: Jan 16

The Trial of Robert Mugabe by Chielozona Eze (2009) – Plot, Form, Characters & Summary

Session 12: Jan 23

The Trial of Robert Mugabe by Chielozona Eze (2009) – Themes, Populism, Ultra-Nationalism, Anticolonial Nationalism.

Session 13: Jan 30

*The Dictator’s Last Night* by Yasmina Khadra (2015) – Plot, Form, Characters & Summary (*one of the Seesion Leads should provide an introduction Lybian society and culture*)

Session 14: Feb 6

*The Dictator’s Last Night* by Yasmina Khadra (2015) – Themes, Populism, Ultra-Nationalism, Anticolonial Nationalism

Session 15: Feb 13

Conceptual Summaries: Session Leads recap