

Math, Music and Memory, Fall 2014

Paper on *Unbowed*

Due: Friday, Sept. 19, Start of Class

Your assignment is to write an essay responding to one of the two topics described below. The paper should be 3-4 double-spaced pages in length. This is not intended to be a “research paper” but rather an argumentative essay that provides a detailed and thoughtful response, supported with information and quotes from the text, to one of the two given topics. You do not have to answer every question posed for a given topic. The questions are intended to provide an overall framework for a particular theme. Your ultimate goal is to construct a thorough and well-supported academic argument. You should make some claims and then support and develop them with thorough reasoning, evidence from the text and/or well-accepted postulates.

You will be given two grades – one for the quality of your argument, the other for the quality of your writing (correct grammar, spelling, sentence structure, organization, etc.). Your overall grade will be the average of these two grades. Be sure to read your paper over carefully several times before turning it in. It is highly recommended that you read your paper out loud to another classmate or peer.

The specific topic you are addressing and your overall response to it should be clearly stated in the first paragraph. Your paper should have a clear and identifiable purpose, be well-organized and understandable. The body of the paper should contain your reasoning and the evidence that led to your conclusions. You do **not** need to summarize the book or any chapters from the book. You can assume that you are writing for someone who has read the book.

When quoting directly from the text, please include a reference to the page using the precise format demonstrated in the example below:

Maathai states that “. . . the missionaries described such instruments [gourds] in detail, but then encouraged the local people who had converted to Christianity to destroy them” (Maathai, p. 9).

You may utilize sources other than Maathai’s book, but this is not expected nor required. If you do use other sources and use quotations or other information, be sure to cite quotes as above and include a list of references at the end of your paper. You do not need to list *Unbowed* in a reference section if this is your only source.

Paper Topics

- *The Legacy of Colonialism*

Woven throughout the text is the impact of colonialism and British settlements on the culture and traditions of Kenya. One of the negative impacts, directly related to our cluster theme, is a loss of cultural memory and identity. For example, missionaries encouraged those Kikuyus who had converted to Christianity to destroy their *gichandi*, musical gourds used to convey messages and folk wisdom in an oral tradition. What were some of the systematic ways that British colonialist policies led to a loss of cultural memory and traditions? What were some of the impacts on the local way of life, particularly in terms of families’ relations to the

environment, the traditional economy, and education? What were some of the personal and psychological impacts of colonialism? What role did religion play in this area? What effects resulted from the promotion of English as *the* language? How did these issues impact the environmental and political problems that Maathai confronts and discusses in her memoir? What is her view about the impact of colonialism? Are there any positive effects to be discerned here?

- *How then Shall We Live?*

Our Montserrat cluster theme ends with the phrase, “how then shall we live?” Based on your reading of Maathai’s memoir, what particular aspects of her story did you find compelling and how do you envision incorporating those aspects into your own life and educational goals? Are there specific causes addressed in her book, such as environmental responsibility or social justice, that have inspired you? What personal qualities does Maathai possess that you admire? Has this book compelled you to learn more about a certain field, or to take a college class you hadn’t necessarily been considering? Part of the Holy Cross mission is to encourage students to “serve for and with others.” Do you feel a new (or renewed) obligation to “serve” after reading this book? Using examples and arguments from the text, describe some specific steps that you might take in your own life to address a societal issue that you feel passionate about.