UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL PIETERMARITZBURG
MAIN EXAMINATION: NOVEMBER 2015
SCHOOL OF ARTS
COURSE: English 306 – An Overview of African Literature
CODE: ENGL306P2

DURATION: 3 hours

TOTAL MARKS 100

Internal Examiner: Prof. M.Z. Malaba
External Examiner: Prof. R.A. Gray

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Students are requested, in their own interest, to write legibly.
2. This paper consists of 3 pages. Please see that you have them all.
3. Answer three questions.
4. Each answer should take the form of a coherent essay.

QUESTION 1

The fact that the novel is named after its principal female character is indicative of Solomon Plaatje’s determination to challenge the position of women in African societies. Discuss with detailed reference to Mhudi.

QUESTION 2

Evaluate the root causes of Africa’s predicament, as distilled in Achebe’s A Man of the People, and discuss whether the message of the novel is optimistic or pessimistic.

QUESTION 3

Analyse the depiction of two main characters in Red Dust and illustrate the way in which Gillian Slovo reveals the complexity of human beings and challenges the reader to avoid the temptation of relying on binary opposition as the yardstick for judging the characters’ behaviour.

QUESTION 4

“Colonialism and Babamukuru pit the modern against the classical. Maiguru denies that opposition. Instead she asserts the capacity of the classical to
QUESTION 4 continued

transform itself into the modern, thus retaining its Zimbabwean provenance.¹ Maiguru does not live out this transformation as she remains the subservient woman with no male willing to authorize her rebellion. Her experience of subalterity, however, situates her where she can identify the conventional prejudices in Babamukuru’s agenda for Tambudzai. It is as a woman she lets the gift take the place of the command. It is Maiguru’s womanhood which working through Babamukuru is agent of a change which will be effected in Tambudzai.” (Anthony Chernells)

Evaluate the veracity² of Chernells’ assertion, with detailed reference to Nervous Conditions.

QUESTION 5

Either

(a) Write a critical analysis of the following poem paying particular attention to the imagery Finuala Dowling uses.

“To the Doctor who treated the raped baby and who felt such despair”

I just wanted to say on behalf of us all
that on the night in question
there was a light on in the hall
for a nervous little sleeper
and when the bleeding baby was admitted into your care
far away a Karoo shepherd crooned a *ramkiejie* lullaby in the veld
and while you staunched
there was space on a mother-warmed sheet
for a night walker
and when you administered an infant-sized opiate
there were luxuriant dark nipples
for fist-clenching babes
and when you called for more blood
a bleary-eyed uncle got up to make a feed
and while you stitched
there was another chapter of a favourite story
and while you cleaned
a grandpa’s thin legs walked up and down for a colicky crier

¹ The place of origin of something.
² Accuracy or truthfulness.
QUESTION 5 continued

and when finally you stood exhausted at the end of her cot
and asked, "Where is God?",
a father sat watch.
And for the rest of us, we all slept in trust
That you would do what you did,
that you could do what you did.
We slept in trust that you lived.

Or

(b) Discuss the significance of the poet(s)'' use of symbols in *Voices of this Land*, with detailed reference to three poems.

QUESTION 6

Discuss the significance of racial consciousness within the Indian community that is depicted in Sumayya Lee's *The Story of Maha* and comment on its larger significance in South Africa as a whole.