

THE INTEGRATION OF A RESOURCE WEB SITE IN THE TEACHING OF ON-LINE AND TRADITIONAL COURSES.

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Abstract

<http://www.mercynet.edu/faculty/morales/AfricanLiteratureResource>

The African Literature Resource Web site serves both distance learning and traditional, campus-based classes. The site has links to an interactive map page of Africa; an "Informational" page containing important links in the field of African, Caribbean and Diasporan literature; a "Writers" page with text links and video clips of selected writers in these fields [e.g. Dennis Brutus, South African poet; Nawal El Saadawi, Egyptian novelist; Narrudin Farah, Somalian novelist]; an "Academic Institutions" page with links to national and international archival and library centers. In addition, there is a "Student" page with selected course-work articles by students from a current African Literature course. A Directory link lists the e-mail addresses of African Literature Association members.

The purpose of this site is to service the research and resource needs of on and off-line classes, which in my case include African Literature, Caribbean Literature, the Black Atlantic World and Recent Nobel Laureates. Naturally, the site can also be of use for the general student/reader who has an interest in these fields.

The "Academic Institutions" link is active and lists academic institutions associated with the African Literature Association. Users of the Web site can go directly to these resources, which are generally national and international archival or library sites.

The "UWAP Bulletin" posts upcoming events/conferences etc.

As of now, the "Writers" page has two QuickTime videos of authors; the other author links are text-driven. What I propose to add to this page are live 60-second interviews of authors. This is the major portion of the proposal and probably the most dynamic. Students tend to develop closer ties with authors they hear and see. On the current page, Dennis Brutus reads poetry to a student body; Nawal El Saadawi talks about the social commitment of her writing; Narrudin Farah discusses his daily work regimen as a writer.

The "Information" page list a number of quality resource sites that will aid in scholarship and research. One example is H-Africa, a listserv for African Studies academics. Their Web site has a search engine that will give the logs of a discussion around the subject of a search. Henry Louis Gates' Wonders of the African World series on PBS generated a great deal of interest, generating over 700 messages for that topic.

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Students are actively involved in the project. Over the years, our institution has supported student attendance at conferences with faculty and these students report their impressions on the "UWAP Bulletin" page. Moreover, on the "Students" page, responses to assignments from the current African Literature class appear. Following is a typical essay question:

Ketu H. Katrak in her *Wole Soyinka and Modern Tragedy: a Study of Dramatic Theory and Practice* [Greenwood, 1986] argues that Soyinka's sympathies rest with Elesin:

Soyinka's poetic language and the subtlety with which he has cast the dice for and against this ritual of suicide have misled critics...into believing that the playwright is celebrating the custom. Soyinka is [criticizing] this tradition, though indirectly as is consonant with his artistic method. This is implied in Soyinka's sympathy to Elesin's basic human instinct for survival rather than for death....Although Elesin is condemned by the community, the dramatist captures his human plight, his fear before the frightening abyss. Soyinka is surely questioning this kind of heavy communal demand which requires a man to sacrifice his life for the sake of some unspecified benefit to the community. [89-90]

Agree or disagree with professor Katrak's position using specific examples from the play and the Gotrick essay.

Students are forewarned that their audiences will be worldwide. It will be interesting to see if these papers differ in quality from papers with a more limited audience.