EEP 260: CRITICAL BOOK REVIEW--EXTRA CREDIT

Activity: Read a novel that takes place in a developing country and complete a 6-page (minimum), double-spaced critical book review.

Interest Form: If you select this option, you must complete and turn in to me the “Indication of Interest” form.

Grade Weight: Maximum of an additional 5 percentage points on your final grade.

Grading: To receive full credit for this assignment, you must thoughtfully cover all points in the outline. Points will be deducted for poor grammar, spelling errors, and late papers.

Selecting a Book
Many novel that take place in developing countries depict the human side of development--the hopes, fears, and problems people face in their daily lives. Thus, they provide a human context to the theories and statistics that makes up so much of the development debate.

You may select any novel (150 pp. minimum) written by a citizen of a developing country. Below is a list of recommended titles. See me, if you need assistance in selecting a novel.

Book Review Outline.
Your review must include: 1) a cover page with publication information, 2) a summary of the novel, 3) your assessment of the novel, 4) a discussion of the main "development-related" problems your characters faced, and 5) a discussion of programs/policies you recommend that the government or NGOs might undertake to solve the "development-related" problems faced by the characters in your novel.

You must follow the format, exactly as outlined below. You MUST include the number and title of all main sections and all subsections! (i.e., text in bold). Each section MUST provide the information requested. The minimum length is six typed, double-spaced pages. Use 1" margins and a standard font (11 or 12 pt.).

Cover Page:
Your Name: __________________
Author: __________________
Title of Book:________________
Publisher and Year: ____________

Main Report:
1. Novel Summary (3 pages). In this section, you must summarize the novel so someone who hasn't read the book would understand the story line. Add details to support your discussion.

   1. Setting: Describe the country, year/period that the novel covers, the general setting (i.e., urban/rural), and the major ethnic groups, if relevant.

   2. Main Characters: Describe each of the main characters.

   3. Story Line/Plot: Summarize the story presented in the novel, from the beginning to the end of the book. This section must discuss what happened to the main characters (i.e., summarize the story)--what were the characters' main hopes, struggles, disappointments, and fulfillment?

   4. Purpose: The author used the story line/plot to convey a message. Discuss the main themes/ideas that the author was trying to convey. In other words, why do you think the author wrote the novel?
II. **Book Assessment** (1/2 page). In this section, you must give your opinion of the novel.

1. **Assessment.** What is your assessment of the novel? Discuss why you feel this way?

2. **Recommendation.** Would you recommend the book to another student in this class? Why or why not?

III. **Relationship of Novel to Course Concepts** (1½ pages). In this section, you must relate the problems that the characters faced to issues/topics covered in EEP 260.

Identify 3 major problems the characters faced. For each problem, discuss what you learned in EEP 260 that helped you to better understand the causes of the problem. Be specific--list each problem and then discuss what you learned in EEP 260 (i.e., lectures, readings).

For example: If the characters in your novel faced food shortages, you could discuss this problem in terms of the theory of demographic transition and a lack of new agricultural technology. As discussed in your readings, in traditional societies both birth rates and death rates were high, resulting in a relatively stable population. With the introduction of modern medicine, death rates fell rapidly--resulting in rapid population growth. With more people depending on the same amount of land, farm size declines and families are able to grow less food--unless new technology is introduced to increase yields or the non-farm economy grows rapidly enough to create new non-agricultural jobs.

IV. **Policies to Promote Agricultural and Rural Development** (1 page). In this section, you must propose solutions to the problems that the characters in the novel faced.

Suppose you were the President of the country in which the novel took place. For each of the 3 problems (same ones discussed in section III), discuss what you would do to solve it--given what you have learned in EEP 260.

For example: For the “rapid population growth” and “declining farm size” problem discussed above, you might propose that the government build more rural health facilities in order to make birth control information more easily available. Similarly, you might discuss the need to make available to farmers specific new agricultural technologies (e.g., improved seed, fertilizer) that could increase their crop yields and discuss specific government programs that could be introduced to encourage farmers to adopt these technologies (e.g., credit, extension).
SELECTED DEVELOPING COUNTRY LITERATURE

Several novels that are appropriate for this assignment are described below. You can borrow many of these novels from the MSU Library. Most of these novels can be purchased on-line for less than $10. If you choose to read a novel not listed below, your selection must first be approved by your instructor.

**SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA**

**Botswana**

*Alexander McCall Smith.* *The No. 1 Lady’s Detective Agency,* *The Kalahari Typing School for Men,* and *Morality for Beautiful Girls* and other books by Alexander McCall Smith—all of which chronicle the activities of Ms. Precious Ramotswe and provide great insights on daily life in contemporary Botswana.

**Ghana**

*Ayi Kwei Arman. The Beautiful Ones are Not Yet Born* (1969) portrays the life of a railway freight clerk in Ghana, who attempts to hold out against the pressures that impel him toward corruption in both his family and his country.

**Nigeria**

*Chinua Achebe. Anthills of the Savannah* (1987) portrays the social and personal turbulence of a late 20th century African country--Kanga by fictional name, but certainly Nigeria. It dramatizes political struggles among Africans; shows the continuing British and Western economic and cultural influences; and ends with the overthrow of the government. Using the conflict between the city and tribal villages, the ravages of the great African drought, and Third World politics as a backdrop, Achebe weaves a potent drama of modern Africa. You may not do a review of *Things Fall Apart*.

**Kenya**

*Meja Mwangi. Going Down River Road* (1976) portrays the struggles of Ben, who was cashiered as a lieutenant in the army, and subsequently worked as a building laborer in Nairobi. Ben survives attacks on his life only to find his girlfriend gone.

*Wa Thiong’o Ngugi. A Grain of Wheat* (1967) portrays the turbulence that inflamed Kenya in the 1950s and its impact on people's lives. Five friends make different choices when the Mau Mau rebellion erupts in colonial Kenya. Kihika joins the freedom fighters in the forest; Gikonyo supports the rebels, but is arrested and detained. Mumbi, Gikonyo's wife, works to keep family and home together in the village; Karanja chooses to support the more powerful British masters. Mugo ultimately betrays his friends and loses his life in a desperate attempt to stay alive and stay neutral.

**South Africa**

*Steve Jacobs. The Enemy Within* (1995) takes place in South Africa in the early 1990s, against a backdrop of de Klerk's rise to power. The novel tells the story of Jeremy Spielman, a Jewish junior barrister, and his defense of a Xhosa man accused of murder. The murder trial, an Afrikaner girlfriend, and a mother who has tried to keep him from gentles his whole life--all of which force Jeremy to confront his own love-hate relationship with the anti-apartheid struggle, South Africa's almost unconscious racism, anti-Semitism, and his faith in an unjust legal system.

**Zimbabwe**

*Samuel Chimsoro. Nothing is Impossible* (1983) follows the life of Simbai, a poverty-stricken young man whose parents are hard-working destitutes. The story is about how Simbai struggles to escape from his situation that characterizes his life. Rhodesia has turned his parents into landless farm-laborers who are brutally overworked and grossly underpaid by white farmers. Survival demands that Simbai himself becomes a farm-laborer-cum-house-servant at an early age. The novel is meant to capture how the hard-working and humble parents bequeath virtues such as determination, honesty, and hard work to their son.

*Shimmer Chinodya. Harvest of Thorns* (1989) presents a compelling picture of the transition between the old white dominated Southern Rhodesia, through the Bush War, to the new black regime.
ASIA

India

Arundhati Roy. *The God of Small Things* (1997) is a tragic story told through the innocent but shrewd eyes of a young girl and culminates in a “forbidden theme”—a love affair between an upper caste-woman and a Dalit. The novel explores issues of caste and class in modern India.

R.K. Narayan. *The Painter of Signs* (1976) is set in Malgudi, a small South Indian town. The novel portrays how the town is dragged into the twentieth century with the appearance of Daisy, a birth-control propagandist. She also drags Raman from his adolescent reveries and his sign painting into violent love.


Bharati Mukherjee. *The Tiger's Daughter* (1971) portrays the struggles of Tara, who was born in Calcutta and schooled in Poughkeepsie, Madison, and Manhattan. Tara leaves her American husband behind as she journeys back to India. But the Calcutta she finds on her return—seething with strikes, riots, and unrest—is vastly different from the place she remembers. In this tale of colliding cultures, Tara seeks to reconcile the old world—that of her father, the redoubtable Bengal Tiger—and the brash new one that is being so violently ushered in.


Shrilal Shukla. *Raag Darbari* (1969, translated in 1992) exposes village life through the eyes of a Master's graduate, Ranganath, who finds his book learning irrelevant in the face of the realities of a small North Indian village. With wit and humor, the author pokes fun at India and the West, while taking the reader on an unforgettable journey through north Indian living.


Kamala Markandaya. *Nectar in a Sieve* (1956) takes place in a small village in India, where a peasant woman recalls her life as a child bride, a farmer's wife, and a devoted mother amidst her struggles to meet changing times, poverty, and disaster.

Philippines

Edith L. Tiempo. *His Native Coast* (1979) is about an American man from Ohio who falls in love with a Filipina, who is partly westernized and partly tribal.

Jose Rizal. *Nole Me Tangere* (1886), which takes place during colonial times, is a social novel about a romance between a young Filipino who returned home after studying in Europe and the daughter of a priest. The novel, which was instrumental in creating a Filipino identity/consciousness, lampoons, caricatures, and exposes various element of colonial society.

Jose Rizal, *El Filibusterismo* (1891). This novel portrays the corruptions and abuses of the country's Spanish government and clergy.


Thailand

Minfong Ho. *Rice Without Rain* (1986) is about a group of students from Bangkok university who travel to a village to radicalize the peasant farmers. A local girl, who falls in love with student leader and return to Bangkok with him, then comes home—determined to preserve the best traditions of the village while improving the economic lot of the people.
**LATIN AMERICA**

**Brazil**
Graciliano Ramos. *Vidas Secas (Barren Lives, 1953)* follows a poor peasant family, as they travel across the drought-stricken northeast.

**Jorge Amado.** *Gabriela Cravo e Canela (Gabriela Clove and Cinnamon, 1962)* is a gentle social satire about life in Brazil.

**Clarice Lispector.** *A Hora da Estrela (The Hour of the Star, 1977)* takes a psychological look at what moving to the big city does to a young girl from the country.

**Colombia**
Gabriel Garcia Marquez. *Cien anos de soledad (100 Years of Solitude, 1982)*. Marquez, a Nobel laureate, is the creator of a style called *realismo magico* (magic realism). The novel, which portrays the struggles of a family over 100 years, is a literary reflection of a continent in which nature is overwhelming, politics is violent, and the economy is unstable.

**Ecuador**
Jorge Icaza. *Huasipungo (The Villagers, 1978)* portrays the exploitation of indigenous workers--the 1943 novel is still cited as a powerful indictment of injustice.

**Guatemala**
Miguel Angel Asturias. *El senor Presidente (The President, 1974)*, a novel by Nobel laureate Asturias, portrays life under a corrupt dictator.


**Rigoberta Menchu.** *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchu* (I, Rigoberta Menchu: An Indian Woman in Guatemala, 1984) is an autobiography. Menchu won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992 for her efforts on behalf of America's indigenous people.

**Jamaica**
Michelle Cliff. *No Telephone to Heaven (1987)* portrays the lives of three characters--a young Jamaican woman who returns home to teach after living abroad for several years, a rich young man who moves in high society, and a poor youth who is from the slums of Kingston.

**Mexico**
Mariano Azuela. *Los de Abajo (The Underdogs, 1952)* portrays the struggles of apolitical campesinos (small farmers), who are caught up in the Mexican Revolution.

**Peru**
Ciro Alegria. *El Mundo es Ancho y Ajen (Broad and Alien is the World, 1967)* explores the gulf between the indigenous culture of the Andes and the European culture of the capital.

**Mario Vargas Llosa.** *Historia de Mayta (The Real Life of Alejandro Mayta, 1986)* portrays the struggles of a well-meaning but ineffectual Marxist.