



Communication and Marketing Department
Isebe loThungelwano neNtengiso
Kommunikasie en Bemerkingsdepartement

Private Bag X3, Rondebosch 7701, South Africa
Welgelegen House, Chapel Road Extension, Rosebank, Cape Town
Tel: +27 (0) 21 650 5427/5428/5674 Fax: +27 (0) 21 650 5628

www.uct.ac.za

14 October 2024

UCT lecture to unpack how language and culture have been marshalled historically to secure the interests of the powerful

Lecture shows how later independence movements wrought radical changes

The possibilities of theatre practice as a place of reckoning with injustice are brought into relief in a performance history of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, a play that gives the most pointed attention to slavery and colonisation.

During her inaugural lecture at the University of Cape Town (UCT), Professor Sandra Young from UCT's [English Literary Studies](#) will among other things, show how the play, given the contrasting interpretations it has been subjected to, offers a rewarding case study.

The lecture, titled "Exploring the literary imagination in times of reckoning: What might Shakespeare have to do with social justice today?," will be held at the LT1 Auditorium, Neville Alexander Building, School of Education, lower campus on Wednesday, 16 October 2024 at 17:30 SAST.

"I was interested to uncover how it (the play) was staged during the extensive period when the powerful economies of the north practised racial slavery. Archival research told a fascinating story: in the centuries before abolition, Shakespeare's version was almost never performed. It was replaced with a series of adaptations that shifted the emphasis so significantly that the slave characters were barely visible, or at least not treated as humans whose plight deserves attention. But later independence movements wrought radical changes, and contemporary artists continue to reimagine the play to address the concerns of a new generation," said Young.

How do works of the imagination help us to reckon with difficult histories in a world that continues to feel the impact of centuries of struggle through unjust social structures? This is the challenge Saidiya Hartman, writing about the lives of the enslaved, confronts when she poses the question: "What are the stories one tells in dark times?"

It is a question pertaining to the writing of history, as well as to creative practice, and it has challenging implications for the study of literature, which some might regard as an elitist pursuit. But scholars of literary and cultural studies are well placed to make an intervention,

by analysing how language and culture have been marshalled, historically, to secure the interests of the powerful.

Young is a professor of English Literary Studies. Her scholarship pursues questions of social justice in works both imaginative and historical. Her most recent book, *Shakespeare in the Global South: Stories of Oceans Crossed in Contemporary Adaptation*, examines how theatre practitioners reimagine Shakespeare's works to tell new stories of dispossession, struggle and survival.

Her first book, *The Early Modern Global South in Print*, traces the emergence of a racialised 'South' in early modern maps, geographies and natural histories. Her current book project began while a fellow at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington DC. A performance history of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, the study reflects on the spectre of slavery within public culture, from 1660 until today.

Her research is also concerned with contemporary cultures of memory and activism, as explored in her book project, *An Intimate Archive: The Work of Public Remembrance in the Wake of Apartheid* and a forthcoming co-edited special issue of *Interventions: International Journal of Post-Colonialism* on 'Feminism/Memory/Activism: Local Movements, Transnational Solidarities'.

Date: Wednesday, 16 October 2024

Time: 17:30 SAST

Venue: LT1 Auditorium, Neville Alexander Building, School of Education, lower campus

[RSVP](#) to attend the lecture in-person or online.

Inaugural lectures are an important part of the UCT academic project as they commemorate academics' appointments to full professorship. These lectures also provide a platform for professors appointed in the preceding five years to present the body of research that they have been focusing on during their careers.



Professor Sandra Young

Photo: Supplied

Issued by: UCT Communication and Marketing Department

Ends

Thami Nkwanyane

Media Liaison and Monitoring Officer

Communication and Marketing Department

University of Cape Town

Rondebosch

Tel: (021) 650 5672

Cell: (072) 563 9500

Email: thami.nkwanyane@uct.ac.za

Website: www.uct.ac.za