

English 3315—African American Literature

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(Email is my preferred form of communication outside class)

Office Hours: 11-12, MW

Course Description and Objectives

This course is a survey of African American literature from the eighteenth century to the present. We begin with early poetry and narrative by enslaved and free persons including Phillis Wheatley, Olaudah Equiano, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Jacobs, James M. Whitfield, Maria Stewart, and Frank J. Webb before the U.S. Civil War. We then proceed through the literature of the Reconstruction and post-Reconstruction periods, including major works by Frances E.W. Harper, W.E.B. DuBois, Charles Chesnutt, and Paul Laurence Dunbar, before moving to the Harlem Renaissance and such figures as Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston. Ralph Ellison's brilliant mid-twentieth-century novel *Invisible Man* will launch us into a consideration of African American Literature in the modern, Black Arts, and contemporary eras, including such classics in the field as James Baldwin's essays and fiction, Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," Malcolm X's *Autobiography*, the varied literary production of Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, Audre Lorde, and Lucille Clifton, and more recent works by such figures as Ta-Nehisi Coates, Elizabeth Alexander, Tracy K. Smith, Colson Whitehead, Barack Obama, and Suzan-Lori Parks. Students will be able to identify major figures and periods in African American literature and some of the major formal and thematic dimensions of this greatly varied tradition. They will also have the opportunity to develop research and writing skills that can prepare them to make critical contributions to understanding this crucial field.

Required Texts

The Norton Anthology of African American Literature. 3rd ed. Volumes 1 and 2.

Frank J. Webb—*The Garies and Their Friends*

Frances E. W. Harper—*Iola Leroy*

Ralph Ellison—*Invisible Man*

Because careful reading is one of the goals of this course, I strongly recommend that you have a good college dictionary at your side while reading in order to look up unfamiliar terms and references. I would particularly recommend that you make use of the *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, which is available through the UTEP library web page.

For information on MLA format, grammar, punctuation, clarity, organization, and editing, I recommend the following site: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>

Course Requirements

Reading Responses: For each day of class, you will bring a typed, double-spaced response of at least 150 words to the readings for the upcoming session. The response is due at the start of the session. Late responses will not be accepted and cannot be made up. Hand-written responses and those sent over email will likewise not be accepted. Each response should have a clear, specific title that indicates the nature of what you have to say. Please post the word count at the bottom of your response. These responses will constitute **20%** of your grade.

Exams: There will be three exams, consisting of short answer, identification, and definition questions, each of which will account for **20%** of your grade.

Paper: There will be one paper for this class, 6-8 pages (1800-2400 words), exclusive of works cited, which you will be working on throughout the semester. This paper will constitute **20%** of your grade. A more detailed description of this assignment will be provided early in the semester.

Grades

A=90-100%

B=80-89%

C=70-79%

D=60-69%

F=0-59%

Course Policies

Originality of Work: The work you do for this course must be your own. No credit will be given for any un-cited material from an outside source. If you appear to have deliberately committed plagiarism, your case will be referred to the Dean of Students for disciplinary action.

Late Work: Late work will not be accepted for any reason. You are responsible for making all arrangements necessary to ensure that your work is always completed, printed, and turned in on time.

Attendance and Participation: Prompt and full daily attendance and engaged participation are required for this class. If you are absent or late (even by a minute) or if you leave early on a particular day, you have not met the requirement for that day. Because there are a variety of reasons why you may be prevented from arriving on time on a particular day, I give some latitude: I allow up to six absences or instances of tardiness. Upon a seventh instance of either lateness or absence, you will lose five points off your final grade for each instance of absence or tardiness. The only further latitude is for absences for official university business or documented health crisis.

Email Etiquette

Email is a useful tool if you have questions for me, and emailing me is generally the easiest and most efficient way to make contact outside class. Given that this is a university setting, you should recognize that your emails are documents that represent you professionally, and therefore should rise to certain standards of professional decorum. There are some basic guidelines that you should follow, both in my class and in your other classes.

1. All emails should have a clear subject heading.
2. All emails should have a clear, courteous salutation. "Dear Dr. Yothers:" or "Dear Professor Yothers:" would be appropriate in the case of this class.
3. All emails written for professional purposes should adhere to standard grammar, punctuation, and capitalization.
4. All emails should be signed with your name (otherwise, your reader may not know who you are!)
5. Emails should be sent from your UTEP account. If you do use another account, be sure that the name on the account is appropriate for professional interactions.
6. If there are any attachments, you should explain your reason for sending them and indicate the program in which they were written.
7. You should consider your rhetorical context when emailing. What is the purpose of your email, and how can you most effectively accomplish that purpose? Three particularly important matters to keep in mind are brevity, clarity, and courtesy. If your email is not clear, specific, and to the point, you may not elicit the response you desire. If your email is discourteous, you diminish the professionalism of the persona you present to others. To cite just one example, some professors find emails that include calls for action "ASAP" to be discourteous or even presumptuous.

Emails that do not meet the standards of professionalism, clarity, and courtesy outlined above may well be disregarded.

Schedule

Note: If any revisions are made to the schedule, I will give you at least two class sessions' (one week's) notice.

<u>Date</u>		<u>Readings/Assignments</u>
January 15	M	Martin Luther King, Jr. Day—No Class
January 17	W	Introduction to the class
January 22	M	Phillis Wheatley, from <i>Poems</i> (pp. 137-150); Jupiter Hammon, "An Address to Miss Phillis Wheatley" (pp. 91-93)
January 24	W	No class meeting: Read Olaudah Equiano, <i>The Interesting Narrative</i> (pp. 112-136) and bring response, along with your first response to Douglass, on January 29. Also, please visit http://owl.english.purdue.edu , and find one resource that addresses an issue that you have found to be challenging in your writing. Bring that resource with you to class on 1/29 as well.
January 29	M	Frederick Douglass, <i>Narrative of the Life...</i> (330-380)
January 31	W	Frederick Douglass, <i>Narrative...</i> and "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July" (381-93; 402-13), James M. Whitfield, "America" ¹ (422-28); George Moses Horton, all (171-75)
February 5	M	Harriet Jacobs, <i>Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl</i> (221-61); Sojourner Truth, "Arn't I a Woman"
February 7	W	Frank Webb, <i>The Garies and Their Friends</i> (pp. 43-193)
February 12	M	<i>The Garies and Their Friends</i> (pp. 194-368)
February 14	W	Frances E. W. Harper, <i>Iola Leroy</i> (pp. 7-105)
February 19	M	<i>Iola Leroy</i> (pp. 105-215) "Eliza Harris," "Learning to Read" (449-50; 455-56) Maria Stewart, "Lecture Delivered at Franklin Hall" (183-86)
February 21	W	Exam 1
February 26	M	W. E. B. DuBois, from <i>The Souls of Black Folk</i> (687-760); Spirituals (10)
February 28	W	Charles Chesnutt, "The Passing of Grandison," "The Wife of His Youth" (591-610)
March 5	M	Paul Laurence Dunbar, "We Wear the Mask," "Sympathy"; Langston Hughes, "Mother to Son," "The Weary Blues," "Song for a Dark Girl," "Christ in Alabama," "Ballad of the Landlord," "Trumpet Player," "Dream Boogie," "Harlem," "Theme for English B," "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain"
March 7	W	Zora Neale Hurston, "How it Feels to Be Colored Me," "The Gilded Six Bits"
March 12	M	Spring Break
March 14	W	Spring Break
March 19	M	Ralph Ellison, <i>Invisible Man</i> (pp. 3-195)
March 21	W	<i>Invisible Man</i> (pp. 196-408)
March 26	M	<i>Invisible Man</i> (pp. 409-581); Gospel
March 28	W	Exam 2
April 2	M	Richard Wright, from <i>Black Boy</i> ; Robert Hayden, "Homage to the Empress of the Blues," "Frederick Douglass," "Those Winter Sundays,"; Gwendolyn Brooks "The Children of the Poor," "The Lovers of the Poor," "We Real Cool," "A Bronzeville Mother Loiters in Mississippi. Meanwhile, a Mississippi Mother Burns Bacon"

April 4	W	James Baldwin, "Notes of a Native Son," "Sonny's Blues"; Gospel, Jazz, Blues
April 9	M	Malcolm X, from <i>The Autobiography of Malcolm X</i> , Martin Luther King, "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," Audre Lorde, "Poetry is Not a Luxury," Alice Walker, "In Search of Our Mother's Gardens," "Everyday Use"
April 11	W	Toni Morrison, <i>Sula</i> , "Unspeakable Things Unspoken"; Lucille Clifton, all poems
April 16	M	Octavia Butler, "Bloodchild"; John Edgar Wideman, "Brothers and Keepers"
April 18	W	Elizabeth Alexander, all poems ; Barack Obama, "A More Perfect Union"
April 23	M	Charles Johnson, "The Education of Mingo," Colson Whitehead, from <i>John Henry Days</i>
April 25	W	Suzan-Lori Parks, <i>Topdog/Underdog</i> ; Hip-Hop
April 30	M	Rita Dove, "David Walker," "Parsley"; Jamaica Kincaid, from <i>Annie John</i> , Natasha Trethewey, "Liturgy," Paper Due
May 2	W	Tracy K. Smith, "My God, It's Full of Stars," "Ta-Nehisi Coates, "Letter to My Son" (<i>Atlantic Monthly</i>)
May 11	1:00-3:45 F	Exam 3
		Have a pleasant summer!