ENGL 3315/AFST 3390: African American Literature

“Literary Representations of Black Experiences and the Archive”

MW 1:30-2:50 p.m. MT (Mountain Time) | ONLINE-Synchronous | Fall 2020

Professor DeLisa D. Hawkes

Virtual office hours: MW from 3-4 p.m. MT

Email: ddhawkes@utep.edu

Course Description

The experiences of people of African descent in the United States can be said to include shared histories of enslavement, racial discrimination, and a host of other inequities. However, the definition of “Blackness” and the extent to which these experiences define a group is a common subject within African American literature. Leading New Negro Renaissance writers such as W.E.B. Du Bois and Zora Neale Hurston, for example, often debated on how to best represent the race in art and literature. Furthermore, archives – public or private-owned collections that museums and libraries curate to represent a group of people, a historical period, or a geographic location – provide some insight into how societies value certain narratives when attempting to represent and define identities, including Blackness. In this course, we will explore the monolithic view called “the Black experience” and examine how the archive challenges or adheres to such a view. Through our team-based study of African American literature and archival materials, we will closely examine how issues surrounding representations of “Blackness” in art, literature, and knowledge repositories intersect with other identities such as color, gender, and class to challenge a monolithic view of African Americans and the larger Black Diaspora.

Course Objectives

Upon the successful completion of this course, students will:
1. Have a working knowledge of major and understudied writers and authors of African American literature and their historical contexts.
2. Analyze literature with an understanding of the literary and political frameworks that inform African American literature and literary criticism.
3. Perform close readings of literature and other print culture materials.
4. Conduct scholarly research using library resources and digital archives.
5. Propose and support a concise argument in an argumentative essay with attention to grammar, punctuation, and proper MLA citation.
Course Format

This course will be taught 100% online in a synchronous setting. The course is designed using a modular format—that is, we will meet each Monday and Wednesday from 1:30-2:45 p.m. MT via Zoom, and course materials will be “packaged” as a single module in one area for a given week. The link to our Zoom meeting space is available on left side of our Blackboard site under “Zoom Classroom”.

Required texts available at the University Bookstore

1. *Barracoon* by Zora Neale Hurston, 9780062748201
2. *Black No More* by George S. Schuyler, 9780375753800
4. *Mischief Makers* by Nettie Jones, 9781555841645
5. *Twelve Years a Slave* by Solomon Northup, 9780143125419
7. *Forty Acres* by Dwayne Alexander Smith, 9781476730547

*Note: I require hard copies of texts to avoid issues with citation and to ensure active participation during class discussion. Keep in mind that these are not the only required texts that we will examine in this course. Selected chapters, articles, poems, and films will be provided for you on Blackboard and posted under the appropriate module.*

Course Requirements

- **Attendance and Active Participation (35%)**

This course relies on active participation and regular attendance. “Active participation” means making meaningful, thoughtful contributions to class and team discussions. Since archives are usually curated by a curatorial team and literature engages with public sentiments about a number of topics within society, I will divide the class into teams in which students will hold team discussions and complete a number of weekly activities towards a major project. Each student will evaluate their team members for active participation. I will consider what is reported in the evaluations when assigning final grades.

Students must have hard copies of the texts readily available, take notes, prepare questions, respond to in-class questions, and attend at least 1 virtual office hour session. Logon to Zoom prepared to speak about the course materials and, at times, to direct the conversation. Be sure to be [logged on to Blackboard and Zoom with your cameras on and mics muted by 1:30 p.m. MT every Monday and Wednesday](#).

**Students may miss no more than two classes.** Once a third absence occurs, the student’s grade will be negatively impacted. If a student misses more than four classes, then I will drop the student from the course. Students are urged to contact me in advance if they are experiencing extenuating circumstances. Students are responsible for getting notes from a classmate.

Part of the attendance and active participation score requires students to **submit a 300 to 400-word reflection every other Thursday** demonstrating that they have read *every* text assigned since their last
reflection (20%). Students do not need to express a completely developed argument. However, the reflections should illustrate the student’s thoughts as they engage with the material, discussing how they see it influencing their own research and how they are beginning to think differently about various topics from week to week. Students should use these reflections to help develop their research paper.

- **Research Paper (25%)**
  In a 10 (full) to 12-page research paper, each student will present their own original argument that engages with 1 or 2 texts from our assigned reading list. The paper must demonstrate the student’s familiarity with the literary theory and critical debates that we’ve discussed over the course of the semester. Each student will have the opportunity to discuss their research and writing process with me and their teammates before the due date.

- **Digital Literary Exhibit (25%)**
  There are many ways for scholars to share their research with others beyond the standard book or scholarly article these days. One way is via institutions such as research archives and museums that the general public can access. For this assignment, each team will work together to curate a digital literary exhibit. This team-based learning project has 2 parts:

  Part one requires team members to find 5 archival objects and/or documents relevant to 1 text from our course materials from either UTEP’s special collections library or any other digital archive to include in their curated digital exhibit. At least 3 documents must come from the ProQuest Historical Newspapers database. In a collaboratively written 4 (full) to 5-page essay, the team must critically describe the objects and/or documents with attention to their location, description provided by the archive, its relevance to our course material, and its relevance to current events or debates. Ultimately, the team will interrogate how these material objects challenge or agree with ideas about Black experiences in the US as represented in the texts that we read for this course. Each team should consider what is the message that they would like a public audience to gain from looking at these objects/documents as a collection. How do they enhance the team’s reading of the course texts? How do they challenge contemporary notions about a particular current event or debate represented in the course texts?

  Part two requires team members to present their exhibit to the entire class during the last week of the semester. Each team member will have a moment to speak about the archival materials and how the team connected them with a text from the course readings. Each team member should be prepared to engage their classmates with their exhibit, inviting them to engage in a class discussion based on questions that the team has prepared. Each team’s presentation should last approximately 15 to 20 minutes.

  Do not discard those objects and/or documents that the team did not agree to include in your exhibit. Briefly mention those in final presentation and state why these were ultimately not included in the exhibit. Be sure to include pictures of the items in a separate page that will not count as one of the 3 to 4-pages of the essay.

  Note: The following contacts might be useful should a team decide to consult the UTEP Special Collections Library.

  Joy Urbina
  Instruction Librarian
  jurbina4@utep.edu
Reading Quizzes and Discussion Board Posts (15%)

Reading and discussion is essential to successfully complete this course. Students will have **either an individual reading quiz or team-based discussion board post due every other week**. Reading quizzes will be completed individually and usually consist of 5 to 10 multiple-choice questions. Discussion board posts will require each member of your team to respond to a prompt and to comment on each other’s posts. These are in addition to the individually written bi-weekly reflections.

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Course policies

**I do not accept late work.** Course assignments are turned in through Blackboard. Feel free to turn in assignments early. Assignments and readings are due on the date listed on the syllabus. Pay attention to the due date and time for each assignment. Once an assignment is locked, I will not reopen it.

The best practice is to try to submit assignments at least 15 minutes before they are due to avoid technical difficulties. Students should save all work (answers to discussion posts, quizzes, and essays) in a separate Word document as a back-up. If students are experiencing difficulties submitting their work through the course website, please contact the UTEP Help Desk.

**I will not discuss grades until 48 hours have passed after receiving feedback** on an assignment. Additionally, I will not discuss grades via email or after the assignment has been returned with feedback after two weeks has passed. Please schedule an appointment with me to discuss grades during my virtual office hours.

Students are expected to have completed the assigned reading for every class period. Because close reading and referencing to specific passages will serve as our primary tools for class discussions, students will need to have hard copies of each reading readily available for our course sessions. This includes not only the required course books, but the additional readings posted on Blackboard. Be sure to login on time with writing instruments, notebooks, etc. **Students’ grades will be negatively impacted if they log in to Blackboard and Zoom late.**
All papers should be **double-spaced, typed in 12-point Times New Roman font and include 1-inch margins.** All bibliographic information should adhere to the most recent **MLA citation guidelines.** Students should **upload their assignments as Word documents (.doc or .docx).** Any other format will not be graded. **Students must save their papers using the following format:** last name, first initial_course – assignment; Example: Watson, R_ENGL 5324 – Research Paper

Address me as Professor Hawkes.

Lastly, please note that I am currently teaching this course from the east coast. I check my email throughout the day from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. MT, Monday through Thursday. **I do not check my email Friday through Sunday.** Please be patient. I will respond to your email during my work schedule.

**Technology Requirements**

Course content is delivered through Blackboard where I’ve posted the link to our Zoom classroom. Students must ensure that their UTEP e-mail account is working and that they have access to a stable internet connection. Additionally, students will need to have access to a computer/laptop, a webcam, and a microphone. Make sure that the following software has been downloaded and updated on these devices: Microsoft Office, Adobe Acrobat Reader, Windows Media Player, QuickTime, and Java.

Word and other Microsoft Office programs (including Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook and more) are available for free via UTEP’s Microsoft Office Portal. Click the following link for more information about [Microsoft Office 365](#) and follow the instructions.

Please do not contact me for technical assistance. Rather, contact UTEP’s Help Desk.

**Netiquette**

As we know, sometimes communication online can be challenging. It’s possible to miscommunicate what we mean or to misunderstand what our classmates mean given the lack of body language and immediate feedback. Therefore, please keep these netiquette (network etiquette) guidelines in mind:

- **Always consider audience.** This is a college-level course; therefore, all communication should reflect polite consideration of others’ ideas.
- **Respect and courtesy must be provided to classmates and to the instructor at all times.** No harassment or inappropriate postings will be tolerated.
- **When reacting to someone else’s message, address the ideas, not the person.** Post only what anyone would comfortably state in a face-to-face situation.
- **Blackboard is not a public internet venue; all postings should be considered private and confidential.** Whatever is posted in these online spaces is intended for your classmates and professor only. Do not copy documents and paste them to a publicly accessible website, blog, or other space.

**Course Session Recordings**

Course sessions will be recorded in order to enable students to have access to class lectures, group discussions, and so on in the event they miss a synchronous or in-person class meeting due to illness or
other extenuating circumstance. Our use of such technology is governed by the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and UTEP’s acceptable-use policy. A recording of class sessions will be kept and stored by UTEP, in accordance with FERPA and UTEP policies. I will not share the recordings outside of course participants, which include students enrolled in the course, teaching assistants, or graduate assistants, and any guest faculty or community-based learning partners with whom we may engage during a class session. As such, students may not share recordings outside of this course. Doing so will result in disciplinary action.

Test Proctoring Software

Some course assignments will make use of Respondus Lock Down Browser and Respondus Monitor inside of Blackboard to promote academic integrity. Students are encouraged to learn more about how to use these programs prior to the first quiz. Please review the following guidelines:

- The assessments will only be available at the times identified on the course site.
- Students may take the test at any time before the due date.
- A reliable Internet connection is essential to completing the exam. If students must go to a location to take the assessment (such as the library), they should be sure to follow those locations’ health and safety requirements.
- Once the window closes, answers will be saved, and no changes can be made.
- Respondus Lockdown Browser requires that all tabs are closed prior to the start of an assignment.
- Respondus Monitor requires a webcam and microphone.
- Students will be required to show the webcam their student ID prior to the start of a test.
- Your face should be completely visible during the test. Blocking the camera will disable the test.
- No notes or textbook materials are permitted during the test. Respondus Monitor requires students to take a video of your surrounding area (desk, chair, walls, etc.)
- Students should not have conversations with other people and/or leave and return to the area during the test.

Plagiarism Detecting Software

Most course work and assessments will be submitted to SafeAssign, a plagiarism detecting software. SafeAssign is used review assignment submissions for originality and will help students learn how to properly attribute sources rather than paraphrase.

Copyright Statement for Course Materials

All materials used in this course are protected by copyright law. The course materials are only for the use of students currently enrolled in this course and only for the purpose of this course. They may not be further disseminated.

COVID-19 Precautions

Student must STAY AT HOME and REPORT if they (1) have been diagnosed with COVID-19, (2) are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, or (3) have had recent contact with a person who has received a
positive coronavirus test. Reports should be made at screening.utep.edu. If students know of anyone who should report any of these three criteria, they should encourage them to report. If the individual cannot report, the student can report on their behalf by sending an email to COVIDaction@utep.edu.

For each day that students attend campus—for any reason—they must complete the questions on the UTEP screening website (screening.utep.edu) prior to arriving on campus. The website will verify if you are permitted to come to campus. Under no circumstances should anyone come to class when feeling ill or exhibiting any of the known COVID-19 symptoms. If students are not feeling well, I encourage them to please let me know as soon as possible. Students are advised to minimize the number of encounters with others to avoid infection.

Wear face coverings when in common areas of campus or when others are present. You must wear a face covering over your nose and mouth at all times in this class. If you choose not to wear a face covering, you may not enter the classroom. If you remove your face covering, you will be asked to put it on or leave the classroom. Students who refuse to wear a face covering and follow preventive COVID-19 guidelines will be dismissed from the class and will be subject to disciplinary action according to Section 1.2.3 Health and Safety and Section 1.2.2.5 Disruptions in the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures.

Accommodations and Support Services

The University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations and auxiliary services to students, staff, faculty, job applicants, applicants for admissions, and other beneficiaries of University programs, services and activities with documented disabilities in order to provide them with equal opportunities to participate in programs, services, and activities in compliance with sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008. Reasonable accommodations will be made unless it is determined that doing so would cause undue hardship on the University. Students requesting an accommodation based on a disability must register with the UTEP Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS). Contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services at 915-747-5148, or email them at cass@utep.edu, or apply for accommodations online via the CASS portal.

Food and Housing Insecurity: If students are experiencing difficulties securing sufficient food or a stable place to live, they can visit the following website for a list of contacts and services available to UTEP students: https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/dean-of-students-office/emergencyaid/

Military Students: Please visit the following site to connect with the Military Student Success Center: https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/mssc/

Undocumented Students: Please visit the following site with links to resources on campus to support undocumented students: https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/dean-of-students-office/daca/index.html

Mental Health Assistance: The Counseling Center is staffed by counseling and clinical psychologists who offer support for personal, interpersonal, and vocational issues. In addition to individual counseling, they offer career counseling services for exploratory students, and academic skills counseling (time management, study skills, test anxiety, etc.). If you want to consult with professionals, call (915) 747-5302 or visit https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/counsel/counseling-services/
Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty is prohibited and is considered a violation of the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures. It includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, and collusion. Cheating may involve copying from or providing information to another student, possessing unauthorized materials during a test, or falsifying research data on laboratory reports. Plagiarism occurs when someone intentionally or knowingly represents the words or ideas of another as one's own. Collusion involves collaborating with another person to commit any academically dishonest act. Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. All suspected violations of academic integrity at The University of Texas at El Paso must be reported to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (OSCCR) for possible disciplinary action. To learn more, please visit HOOP: Student Conduct and Discipline.

Diversity and Respect for others

I consider the diversity of my students to be critical to the educational mission of my courses and expect every member of our class to contribute to an inclusive and respectful culture. It is my intent that students from diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and learning needs be well served by this course and that the diversity that students bring to class be viewed as a resource and strength. Dimensions of diversity include intersections of sex, race, age, national origin, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, intellectual and physical ability, primary language, faith and non-faith perspectives, income, military service, political affiliation, marital or family status, and education. I aim to present materials and activities that foster a positive learning environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination.

This course will engage with a host of challenging topics, including enslavement, sexual violence, racial slurs, and intersecting forms of political and cultural oppression. I trust that each of you, as emerging scholars and critical thinkers, have much to contribute to this course. For all of these reasons, you should be prepared for conversations and reading material touching upon topics such as these throughout the semester in an academic setting. Remember to be respectful and open-minded to views that you may not agree with.

Course Schedule

* Note: Due dates and readings are subject to change. Check Blackboard daily.

**August 24th – First day of class**

- Introduction to the course

**August 26th**

- Langston Hughes, “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain” (See Blackboard)
- George Schuyler, “The Negro Art Hokum” (See Blackboard)
- Zora Neale Hurston, “How it Feels to Be Colored Me” (See Blackboard)
- Reflection due on Thursday, August 27th by 5:00 p.m. MT
August 31
- Selection from W.E.B. Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk* (See Blackboard)
- Correspondence between Du Bois and Hurston (See Blackboard)

September 2
- Selection from Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark* (See Blackboard)
- Video on The Archives TBD

September 7 – Labor Day; No class

September 9
- Frederick Douglass, “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?” (See Blackboard)
- Solomon Northup, *Twelve Years A Slave*, Introduction – Chapter VIII
- Reflection due on Thursday, September 10th by 5:00 p.m. MT

September 14
- Solomon Northup, *Twelve Years A Slave*, Chapter IX – XVI

September 16
- Solomon Northup, *Twelve Years A Slave*, Chapter XVII – end

September 21
- Video or article on end of Transatlantic slave trade TBD
- Zora Neale Hurston, *Barracoon*, Forward – Chapter VII

September 23
- Zora Neale Hurston, *Barracoon*, Chapter IX – Afterword
- Dana A. Williams and Jimisha Relerford, “The (Ever)Lasting Significance of Zora Neale Hurston’s *Barracoon*” (See Blackboard)
- Reflection due on Thursday, September 24th by 5:00 p.m. MT

September 28
- George S. Schuyler, *Black No More*, Introduction – Chapter 6

September 30
- George S. Schuyler, *Black No More*, Chapter 7 – end

October 5
- Selection from Damon Young, *What Doesn’t Kill You Makes You Blacker* (See Blackboard)

October 7
- Reflection due on Thursday, October 8th by 5:00 p.m. MT
October 12th

October 14th

October 19th

October 21st
- **Reflection due on Thursday, October 22nd by 5:00 p.m. MT**

October 26th
- Video TBD on African-Native Americans
- Nettie Jones, *Mischief Makers*, Chapters 1 – 8

October 28th
- Theda Perdue, “Native Americans, African Americans, and Jim Crow” (See Blackboard)
- Nettie Jones, *Mischief Makers*, Chapters 9 – 16

November 2nd
- Nettie Jones, *Mischief Makers*, Chapters 17 – end

November 4th
- Selections of Langston Hughes’s Simple Stories
- **Reflection due on Thursday, November 5th by 5:00 p.m. MT**

November 9th
- Dwayne Alexander Smith, *Forty Acres*, Chapters 1 – 29
- Guest speaker: Jessica E. Johnson, National Museum of African American History and Culture

November 11th
- Dwayne Alexander Smith, *Forty Acres*, Chapters 30 – 51

November 16th
- Dwayne Alexander Smith, *Forty Acres*, Chapters 52 – 73

November 18th
- Dwayne Alexander Smith, *Forty Acres*, Chapters 74 – end
- **Reflection due on Thursday, November 19th by 5:00 p.m. MT**

November 23rd
• Individual conferences to discuss research paper and Team meetings to discuss exhibits

**November 25th**
• Individual conferences to discuss research paper and Team meetings to discuss exhibits

**November 30th**
• First set of digital literary exhibit presentations

**December 2nd – Last day of class**
• Second set of digital literary exhibit presentations
• Digital Literary Exhibit Essays and Team Member Evaluations due today by 5:00 p.m. MT

**December 9th – Research papers due by 5 p.m. MT**