

ENG 241 Introduction to African American Literature

Winter 2013, CRN 22637

T/Th 12-1:20, 307 Volcanology Building

Professor Thorsson

Email: thorsson@uoregon.edu

Office Hours: T/Th 10am-11:30am, 521 PLC

Course Description

This course is a survey of writings by African American authors from the late 18th century through the present. Studying fiction, essays, and poetry, we'll close read representative texts to identify formal and thematic elements that characterize the African American literary tradition. We will consider how these works exemplify and complicate lived and literary identities. In other words, how do these texts fit into or defy ideas about race, gender, and class on the one hand and classifications of genre, period, and literary style on the other. We'll study relationships among these works to uncover how they reflect on, depend on, or revise one another. We will also look for relationships between these works and other art forms, such as blues, jazz, folklore, and visual arts. The goal of this course is to help you engage with African American literature, improving your writing, reading, and critical thinking skills in the process.

Required Book (available at the UO Bookstore and the Knight Library reserves desk):

Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Nellie Y. McKay, Eds. *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature, second edition*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2004.

Course Requirements and Policies

Reading, participation, and attendance are mandatory. Bring the assigned readings to class and be prepared to discuss them. Your participation grade is based on class discussion, in-class writing, and group work.

Missing class more than twice in the term will result in reduction of your final grade by 1/3 of a letter grade for each absence beyond the two permitted. There is no distinction between excused and unexcused absences. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to get notes for that day from a classmate and/or otherwise catch up on any material you have missed.

Assignments must be submitted in hard copy at the beginning of class on the due dates listed below and formatted according to current MLA guidelines (1 inch margins, single-side print, stapled, correct citation and quotation including works cited). Consult the *MLA Handbook* if you are uncertain of correct MLA format. Late assignments will be marked down by 1/3 of a letter grade (B becomes a B-) for each day they are late. No assignments will be accepted more than one week after the due date.

If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please make arrangements to meet with the instructor soon. Please request that Accessible Education Center send a letter outlining your approved accommodations. Disability Services: disabsrv@darkwing.uoregon.edu, 541-346-1155, <http://ds.uoregon.edu/>.

The University Student Conduct Code (conduct.uoregon.edu) defines academic misconduct. Students are prohibited from committing or attempting to commit any act that constitutes academic misconduct. Students should properly acknowledge and document all sources of information (e.g. quotations, paraphrases, ideas) and use only the sources and resources authorized by the instructor. If there is any question about whether an act constitutes academic misconduct, it is the student's obligation to clarify the question with the instructor before committing or attempting to commit the act. Additional information about a common form of academic misconduct, plagiarism, is available at www.libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students.

We will discuss each assignment in detail as it approaches. Please also print and consult the assignment sheet posted on Blackboard.

Grading:

Participation	5%
Close Reading #1 (2-3 pgs)	10%
Close Reading #2 (2-3 pgs)	15%
Close Reading #3 (4-5 pgs)	25%
Midterm	20%
Final	25%

Week One

T 1/8	Introduction Phillis Wheatley, "On Being Brought from Africa to America" (1773) (p 219-220)
Th 1/10	Frederick Douglass, <i>Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, A Slave, Written by Himself</i> (1845) (p 387-421) Assignment Sheet (Blackboard)

Week Two

T 1/15	Douglass, <i>Narrative</i> (p 421-440) Close Reading Handout (Blackboard)
Th 1/17	Douglass, <i>Narrative</i> (p 440-452)

Week Three

T 1/22	Harriet Jacobs, from <i>Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl</i> (1861) (p 280-297)
Th 1/24	Jacobs, from <i>Incidents</i> (p 297-315)

Week Four

T 1/29

Frances Harper, all poems (1853-1900) (p 494-505)
Poetic Meter Handout (Blackboard)

Extra Credit (5 pts): Attend Prof. Louis Chude-Sokei talk and write a 2-pg response

Th 1/31

Booker T. Washington, "Chapter XI: The Atlanta Exposition Address," from *Up from Slavery* (1901) (p 594-597)
W.E.B. Du Bois, "Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others," and "The Sorrow Songs" from *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) (p 699-708, 758-766)
Close Reading #1 Due (2-3 pgs)

Week Five

T 2/5

Midterm

Th 2/7

Paul Laurence Dunbar, "We Wear the Mask" (1895) (p 918)
James Weldon Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912) (p 803-841)

Extra Credit 2-pg response to Prof. Louis Chude-Sokei talk Due

Week Six

T 2/12

Johnson, *Autobiography* (p 841-883)

Th 2/14

Sterling Brown, all poems (1927-1980) (p 1248-1266)

Week Seven

T 2/19

Langston Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" (1926) (p 1311-1314) and all poems (1921-1965) (p 1291-1311)

Th 2/21

Nella Larsen, *Quicksand* (1928) (p 1086-1123)
Close Reading #2 Due (2-3 pgs)

Week Eight

T 2/26

Nella Larsen, *Quicksand* (p 1123-1167)

Th 2/28

Gwendolyn Brooks, "kitchenette building" (1945) (p 1625)
Ann Petry, from *The Street* (1946) (p 1504-1516)

Week Nine

T 3/5

James Baldwin, "Sonny's Blues" (1957) (p 1728-1749)

Th 3/7

Amiri Baraka, "SOS" (1969), "Black Art" (1969), and "Wailers" (1982) (p 1942-1945)

Sonia Sanchez, "for our lady" (1969) (p 1964-1965)

Jayne Cortez, "How Long Has Trane Been Gone?" (1969) (2036-2038)

June Jordan, "Poem about My Rights" (1980) (p 2019-2021)

Close Reading #3 Due (4-5 pgs)

Week Ten

T 3/12

Toni Morrison, "Rootedness: The Ancestor as Foundation" (1984) (p 2286-2290)

Th 3/14

Final Exam