

ENG 241 Introduction to African American Literature

Fall 2011, CRN 12649

Tuesday/Thursday 2-3:20, Gerlinger 248

Professor Thorsson

Email: thorsson@uoregon.edu

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

Writing Associate: Peter Gallagher, peterg@uoregon.edu

Course Description

This course is a survey of writings by African American authors of the 19th and 20th centuries. 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 Books (available at the UO Bookstore and the Knight Library reserves desk)

- Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Nellie Y. McKay, editors, *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, second edition and accompanying CD
- Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*, Vintage Edition

Additional readings are posted on Blackboard.

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, group work, and one question you will bring in to spark our discussion of a particular text.

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.

Close readings 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* or *Bedford Handbook* if you are uncertain of correct MLA format. Each of your close readings will analyze a short passage of your choice from among the assigned readings. Close readings must observe and analyze both the form and content of your chosen text. Each of your close readings should address a different text.

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.

The midterm and final will require that you identify the author, work, and time period of several passages and that you answer short essay questions.

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 the Counselor for Students with Disabilities

send a letter outlining your approved accommodations. Disability Services: disabsrv@darkwing.uoregon.edu, 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.

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 1

T 9/27	Introduction
Th 9/29	No class

Week 2

T 10/4	Phillis Wheatley, "On Being Brought from Africa to America" (p 219-220) Frederick Douglass, <i>Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, A Slave, Written by Himself</i> (1845) (p 387-421)
Th 10/6	Douglass, <i>Narrative</i> (p 421-452) Close Reading Handout (Blackboard)

Week 3

T 10/11	Booker T. Washington, "Chapter XI: The Atlanta Exposition Address," from <i>Up from Slavery</i> (1901) (p 594-597) W.E.B. Du Bois, "Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others" from <i>The Souls of Black Folk</i> (1903) (p 699-708)
Th 10/13	James Weldon Johnson, <i>The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man</i> (1912) (p 803-841) Close Reading #1 Due (2-3 pgs)

Week 4

T 10/18	Johnson, <i>Autobiography</i> (p 841-883)
Th 10/20	Sterling Brown, all poems (1927-1980) (p 1248-1266) Poetic Meter Handout (Blackboard)

Week 5

T 10/25	Langston Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" (1926) (p 1311-1314) and all poems (1921-1965) (p 1291-1311)
Th 10/27	Ann Petry, from <i>The Street</i> (1946) (p 1504-1516) Gwendolyn Brooks, "kitchenette building" (1945) (p 1625)

Week 6

T 11/1	Midterm
Th 11/3	Ralph Ellison, <i>Invisible Man</i> (1952) (introductions, prologue and chapters 1-2)

Week 7

T 11/8

Ellison, *Invisible Man* (chapters 3-9)

Th 11/10

Ellison, *Invisible Man* (chapters 10-18)

Close Reading #2 Due (2-3 pgs)

Week 8

T 11/15

Ellison, *Invisible Man* (chapters 19-epilogue)

Gayl Jones, "Glossary" from *Liberating Voices* (Blackboard)

Th 11/17

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

Week 9

T 11/22

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)

Th 11/24

No Class, Thanksgiving

Week 10

T 11/29

Alice Walker, "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens" (1974) (2430-2437) and "Everyday Use" (1973) (p 2437-2442)

David Bradley, from *The Chaneyville Incident* (1981) (2577-2584)

Th 12/1

Final Exam

T 12/6

Close Reading #3 Due (4-5 pgs) to Professor Thorsson's office (521 PLC) by 5pm