

RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE

ENGLISH 326

AFRICAN AMERICAN LITERATURE

In this course, you will be introduced to a number of literary and critical texts that attempt to discuss and/ or define African-American literature. This introduction is, of course, only a way to begin to approach our readings of the texts and is not in any way meant to exclude or preclude any other directions of inquiry that might present themselves as time goes on. But such an inquiry necessarily begs us to consider what it means to (or what we individually mean when we...) talk about black or Black or "Black" or Afro-American or African-American literature. The success of the course is entirely dependent on each of us participating fully in the reading and discussion of these texts. It is not assumed that any of us will always speak from the space of authority and fact: interrogation and speculation are encouraged.

Texts:

Souls of Black Folk – WEB DuBois

Their Eyes Were Watching God - Zora Neale Hurston

Uncle Tom's Children - Richard Wright

Dutchman and The Slave – Leroi Jones (also known as: Amiri Baraka)

Middle Passage - Charles Johnson

The Black Poets - Dudley Randall

Sula - Toni Morrison

OBJECTIVES

- The student will demonstrate a familiarity with key concepts of the field (such as, “ethnicity,” “the Other,” “marginalization,” “race,” “hybridity,” “creolization,” etc.).
- The student will demonstrate in depth historical and cultural knowledge of Africans in the Americas].
- The student will acquire familiarity with some important works of African-American literature.
- The student will respond in writing to both artistic and cultural aspects of selected texts.
- The student will develop brainstorming and problem-solving techniques.
- The student will further develop analytical and critical writing skills.
- The student will work with a few primary non-print sources – visual art, media, film, music, folklore, etc.
- The student will demonstrate an understanding of secondary materials, including non-print (film, music, internet) and theoretical texts
- The student will demonstrate an interrelated awareness of cultural diversity in the U.S.
- The student will recognize the interaction of history, culture, and literature inherent in African American studies.
- The student will become aware of several themes that bridge the various elements of the course (e.g., education, childhood, family, sexuality, etc.).

Grading:

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| Short Papers and Two 6 – 7 page analytical papers on novels | 40% |
| Midterm Test | 20% |
| Participation, presentations | 20% |
| Final Project | 20% |

More than 3 unexcused absences will adversely affect your grade.

Project I:

The Harlem Renaissance –

You will present on one important figure of the Harlem Renaissance – writer, dancer, artist, social leader, philosopher, etc. Your written evaluation of him / her is due September 23. You will discuss your figure in class on September 28.

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| Aug 31 | Introduction to Course |
| Sept 2 | Poems by Paul Laurence Dunbar; “The Wife of His Youth” (Chesnutt); Forethought and Chapter One, <u>Souls of Black Folk</u> |
| Sept 7 | Labor Day |
| Sept 9 | Chapters 2 – 5, 7 |
| Sept 14 | Chapters 10 - conclusion |
| Sept 16 | “The New Negro” (Locke); “Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain” (Hughes); “The Negro-Art Hokum” (Schuyler); “Criteria of Negro Art” (DuBois); “How It Feels to Be Colored Me” (Hurston) |
| Sept 21 | Critiques of Van Vechten; “The Caucasian Storms Harlem” (Fisher); “Looking for Zora” (Walker); Selected Poetry (<u>Black Poets</u> : 59 – 70; 78 – 101) |
| Sept 23 | HARLEM RENAISSANCE PAPER DUE |
| Sept 28 | Discuss Renaissance Figures |
| Sept 30 | <u>Their Eyes Were Watching God</u> |
| Oct 5 | <u>Their Eyes Were Watching God</u> |
| Oct 7 | PAPER DUE; |

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| | “Blueprint for Negro Writing” (Wright); <u>Uncle Tom’s Children</u> |
| Oct 12 | Columbus Day |
| Oct 13 | TAKE HOME MID TERM EXAM (NO CLASS) |
| Oct 14 | <u>Uncle Tom’s Children</u> |
| Oct 19 | <u>Dutchman and The Slave</u> |
| Oct 21 | <u>Dutchman and The Slave</u> |
| Oct 26 | “Black Is... Black Ain’t” (video) |
| Oct 28 | Selected Poetry |
| Nov 2 | “Playing in the Dark” (extract) (Morrison); <u>Sula</u> |
| Nov 4 | <u>Sula</u> |
| Nov 9 | Sula |
| Nov 11 | Veteran’s Day |
| Nov 16 | PAPER DUE ; Essays by Audre Lorde and bell hooks |
| Nov 18 | “Space Traders”; Contemporary Matters |
| Nov 23 | Contemporary Matters |
| Nov 25 | <u>Middle Passage</u> |
| Nov 30 | <u>Middle Passage</u> |
| Dec 2 | Selected Poetry |
| Dec 7 | Final Projects |
| Dec 9 | Final Projects |