

African-American Literature I

008:135:002 – Topics in American Literature
10:55 – 12:10 TTh E146 AJB

Lena M. Hill (lena-hill@uiowa.edu)
Office Hours: TTh (9:15-10:45) & by appt

Office: 470 EPB
Office Telephone: 335-1384

Required Text

The Norton Anthology of African American Literature, Second Ed. available at Prairie Lights Bookstore

Course Overview

We will study literature written by black Americans from the middle of the eighteenth century to the middle of the twentieth. In reading and discussing these texts, we will ponder salient issues related to the creation of a literary tradition. How does historical context account for literary themes and subjects? How do African-American authors interact with mainstream American writers? What do we make of the artistic choices, innovations, and revisions our reading exhibits? How do aesthetic concerns relate to political circumstances? How does analyzing relationships between literature of different periods provide deeper analysis of individual texts? By the end of the semester, we should feel comfortable answering these and other questions related to African-American literature written during the two hundred year period we cover in this course.

Course Requirements

Class Participation

This course asks that you engage critically and actively with demanding readings. I will expect you to come prepared for our work together, to meet deadlines, and to respond thoughtfully to class discussion. *Please be aware that merely attending class does not constitute effective participation.*

Written Work

You will be graded on 3 types of written assignments:

1. **Reading Quizzes**: I will administer regular reading quizzes throughout the semester. Some are scheduled on the syllabus, but others will be unannounced. These short quizzes are designed to assess whether you are keeping up with the reading.
2. **Two Essays**: You will write one short essay (3-4 pgs) and one longer essay (5-7 pgs). Students will turn in an outline for each essay that includes your main claim. The outline will count for 5 points of your essay grade.
3. **Final Exam**: The final will test your familiarity with our texts and the major periods we discuss. It will also require you to consider the relationships between individual texts, writers, and genres.

Practical Matters

Grading

This course will employ a +/- scale. Your final grade will be determined by the following breakdown:

Class Participation: 10%

Reading Quizzes: 20%

Essay #1: 20%

Essay #2: 25%

Final: 25%

Attendance and Punctuality

Students are expected to attend all class meetings. *There will be no make-ups for reading quizzes, and essays will not be accepted late.* Please contact me ahead of time if you need an extension or need to complete an assignment before its scheduled date. If you are absent more than three times—regardless of the reasons—your final course grade may be lowered one whole letter grade (e.g. from B+ to C+). After the fourth absence, each subsequent missed class will result in a +/- reduction (e.g. from C to C-). Chronic tardiness will negatively impact your class participation grade.

Format for Written Work

Please format your text in a common, readable 12pt font (like this one) with 1-inch margins and headings. Double-space text for essays and be sure to include your name and page numbers on your essays. This is not a course in the mechanics of writing, but I am happy to help you with any questions or concerns you may have about points of style, usage, or grammar. I also encourage you to take advantage of the services offered by the Writing Center. For main location, satellite centers, and hours, visit their website at www.uiowa.edu/~writingc/.

Student Rights and Other Responsibilities

This course is given by the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and its home department is English. Students wishing to add or drop this course after the official deadline must receive approval of the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. Details of the University policy of cross enrollments may be found at http://www.clas.uiowa.edu/faculty/policy_undergrads_outside.shtml.

Departmental/Collegiate Complaint Procedures

All students in the College have the right to adjudication of any complaints you have about classroom activities or instructor actions. Information is available at www.clas.uiowa.edu/students/academic_handbook/ix.shtml/. You should first attempt to resolve the issue with the faculty member involved. Lacking a satisfactory outcome, you can turn to the Associate Chair of Undergraduate Programs, Douglas Trevor (douglas-trevor@uiowa.edu, 335-0472). If a satisfactory resolution remains unmet, you may contact the English Department Chair, Jonathan Wilcox (jonathan-wilcox@uiowa.edu, 335-0454). After these options have been exhausted, you may turn to the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and submit a written complaint to the Associate Dean for Academic Programs, 120 Schaeffer Hall (335-2633). Please note: in complaints involving the assignment of grades, it is college policy that grades cannot be changed without the permission of the department concerned.

Students with Disabilities

You have the right to expect a classroom environment that enables you to learn, including modifications if you have a disability. Students with disabilities that may require some modification of seating, testing, or other class requirements should discuss them with me so that appropriate arrangements may be made. It is the student's responsibility to contact Student Disability Services, 3100 Burge Hall (335-1462), and obtain a Student Academic Accommodation Request form (SAAR).

Plagiarism and Cheating

All of our work will be conducted according to a spirit of integrity. Plagiarism and cheating are serious forms of academic misconduct. Examples of them are given in the Student Academic Handbook: www.clas.uiowa.edu/students/academic_handbook//ix.shtml. To deliberately present the work of someone else as your own is to plagiarize. I will not accept work that I suspect may be plagiarized in whole or in part. If my concerns are not allayed after speaking with a student whose work I suspect, I will write an account of the chronology of the plagiarism or cheating incident for the departmental chair, who will send an endorsement of the written report of the case to the Associate Dean for academic programs. A copy of the report will be sent to the student, who has the right to request a hearing within the Department and/or within the College.

Working Schedule

Wk			Seminar	Assignments
1	T	1/16	I. Writing a Tradition: The Library of the Slave A. Verse of Sympathy, Will, and Spirit Introduction & Lucy Terry, "Bars Fight" (186) Phillis Wheatley (213-226) Jupiter Hammon (162-168)	
	Th	1/18		
2	T	1/23	B. Narrating Paths to Freedom Frederick Douglass (385-411) Frederick Douglass (411-421)	
	Th	1/25		
3	T	1/30	Frederick Douglass (421-452)	Reading Quiz
	Th	2/1	Harriet Jacobs (279-300)	
4	T	2/6	Harriet Jacobs (300-315) C. Pens of Abolition David Walker (227-238) Henry Highland Garnet (345-352)	
	Th	2/8		
5	T	2/13	Sojourner Truth (245-249) Frances E. W. Harper (491-505, 518-521) D. Novel Stories Harriet E. Wilson (521-540)	
	Th	2/15		
6	T	2/20	William Wells Brown (325-345) II. Words of Reconstruction: Literature of Freedom & Progress A. Ruminations on Destiny Booker T. Washington (570-586)	Essay #1 Outline
	Th	2/22		
7	T	2/27	Booker T. Washington (586-602)	
	Th	3/1	W. E. B. DuBois (692-720)	
8	T	3/6	W. E. B. DuBois (720-739)	Essay #1 Due (Mon. 3/5 by Noon)
	Th	3/8	W. E. B. DuBois (739-766)	Reading Quiz

9	T	3/13	-----Spring Break-----	
	Th	3/15		
10	T	3/20	B. Art of Wit, Strength & Beauty Charles W. Chestnutt (602-632)	Reading Quiz
	Th	3/22	Paul Laurence Dunbar (905-927)	
11	T	3/27	James Weldon Johnson (791-793, 794-795, 800-802)	
	Th	3/29	James Weldon Johnson (883-905) W.E.B. DuBois (777-784)	
12	T	4/3	III. Harlem Renaissance A. The State of Things Alain Locke (983-993) Marcus Garvey (995-1003)	Reading Quiz
	Th	4/5	B. Conscious Art by Black Women Grimke, Spencer, Johnson, Bennett (968-974, 993-995, 1266-1269)	
13	T	4/10	Nella Larsen (1085-1123)	
	Th	4/12	Nella Larsen (1123-1143)	
14	T	4/17	Nella Larsen (1143-1167)	Reading Quiz
	Th	4/19	Zora Neale Hurston (1019-1041)	
15	T	4/24	E. Poetic Excellence Claude McKay (1003-1010) Countee Cullen (1339-1351)	Essay #2 Outline
	Th	4/26	Sterling A. Brown (1248-1269)	
16	T	5/1	Langston Hughes (1288-1297)	
	Th	5/3	Langston Hughes (1297-1314)	Essay #2 Due (Friday 5/4 by noon)