**Course Description**
This course is a survey of writings by African American authors. 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.


**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 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 printed, stapled, correct citation and quotation, and a works cited page). Consult the *MLA Handbook* if you are uncertain of correct 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 meet with me soon. Please request that the Accessible Education Center (http://aec.uoregon.edu/) send me a letter outlining your approved accommodations.

The University Student Conduct Code (available at conduct.uoregon.edu) defines academic misconduct. Students are prohibited from committing or attempting to commit any act that constitutes academic misconduct. By way of example, students should not give or receive unauthorized help on assignments or examinations without express permission from the
instructor. Students should acknowledge and document all sources of information (e.g. quotations, paraphrases, ideas). If there is any question about whether an act constitutes academic misconduct, it is the students’ obligation to clarify the question with the instructor before committing or attempting to commit the act.

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

**Grading:**

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<tr>
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<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Close Reading #1 (2-3 pgs)</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Close Reading #2 (2-3 pgs)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Close Reading #3 (4-5 pgs)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Symposium Response (2 pgs)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final</td>
<td>25%</td>
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**Week One**

**M 4/1**

Introduction
Phillis Wheatley, “On Being Brought from Africa to America” (1773) (p 219-220)

**W 4/3**

Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, A Slave, Written by Himself* (1845) (p 387-421)
Assignment Sheet (Blackboard)

**F 4/5**

Douglass, *Narrative* (p 421-440)
Close Reading Handout (Blackboard)

**Week Two**

**M 4/8**

Douglass, *Narrative* (p 440-452)

**W 4/10**

Harriet Jacobs, from *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) (p 280-297)

**F 4/12**

Jacobs, from *Incidents* (p 297-315)
Passive Voice Handout (Blackboard)

**Week Three**

**M 4/15**

Anna Julia Cooper, “Womanhood a Vital Element in the Regeneration and Progress of a Race” (1892) (p 635-650)

**W 4/17**

**Close Reading #1 Due (2-3 pgs)**

**Week Four**

M 4/22  Frances Harper, all poems (1853-1900) (p 494-505)  
Meter Handout (Blackboard)

W 4/24  Paul Laurence Dunbar, all poems (1893-1903) (p 907-918)

F 4/26  In lieu of class, attend as much as possible of symposium “Racial Representations: African American Literature Since 1975” 10am-6pm, Gerlinger Lounge

**Week Five**


W 5/1  Johnson, Autobiography (p 841-883)

F 5/3  Sterling Brown, all poems (1927-1980) (p 1248-1266)  
**Symposium Response Due (2 pages)**

**Week Six**

M 5/6  **Midterm**

W 5/8  Sterling Brown, all poems (1927-1980) (p 1248-1266) (continued)

F 5/10  Zora Neale Hurston, “Characteristics of Negro Expression” (1934) (p 1041-1053) and from Mules and Men (1937) (p 1053-1062)

**Week Seven**

Langston Hughes, all poems (1921-1965) (p 1291-1311)

W 5/15  Langston Hughes, all poems (1921-1965) (p 1291-1311) (continued)

**Close Reading #2 Due (2-3 pgs)**

**Week Eight**

M 5/20  Ann Petry, from The Street (1946) (p 1504-1516)

W 5/22  James Baldwin, "Sonny's Blues" (1957) (p 1728-1749)
F 5/24
Prof. Thorsson away at a conference, no class

Week Nine
M 5/27
Memorial Day, no class

W 5/29

F 5/31
Lucille Clifton, all poems (1972-1993) (p 2031-2035)
Close Reading #3 Due (4-5 pgs)

Week Ten
M 6/3

W 6/5

F 6/7
Final Exam