

ENG 241 Introduction to African American Literature, Winter 2014, CRN 23369

T/Th 12-1:20pm, 30 PAC

Professor Thorsson, thorsson@uoregon.edu

Office Hours: T/TH 10-11:30am January 14-March 13 and by appointment in 521 PLC

Course Description

This course is a survey of writings by African American authors. Studying fiction, essays, and poetry, we will 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 will 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):

Gates Jr., Henry Louis 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 reading, 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. I will mark late assignments 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 in office hours 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. Students should acknowledge and document all sources of

information. If there is any question about whether an act constitutes academic misconduct, see me.

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

Grading:

Participation	10%
Close Reading #1 (2-3 pages)	15%
Midterm	15%
Close Reading #2 (4-5 pages)	30%
Event Response (2 pages)	10%
Final	20%

Week One

T 1/7 Introduction
Phillis Wheatley, "On Being Brought from Africa to America" (1773) (p 219-220)

Th 1/9 **No Class - Make-up session February 19th (see below)**

Week Two

T 1/14 Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, A Slave, Written by Himself* (1845) (p 387-421)
Assignment Sheet (Blackboard)

Th 1/16 Douglass, *Narrative* (p 421-452)
Close Reading Handout (Blackboard)

Week Three

T 1/21 Harriet Jacobs, from *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) (p 280-315)
Passive Voice Handout (Blackboard)

Th 1/23 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" from *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) (p 699-708)
Close Reading #1 Due (2-3 pgs)

Week Four

T 1/28 Guided Tour of Kara Walker Exhibit
Meet curator Jessi DiTillio in the lobby of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art on campus at Noon.

Th 1/30 Paul Laurence Dunbar, all poems (1893-1903) (p 907- 927)

Meter Handout (Blackboard)

Week Five

T 2/4

James Weldon Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912) (p 803-841)

Th 2/6

Midterm Exam

Week Six

T 2/11

Johnson, *Autobiography* (p 841-883)

Th 2/13

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

Week Seven

T 2/18

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

W 2/19

5:30-7pm Prof. Arlene Keizer talk in conjunction with Kara Walker exhibit, Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art or PLC 180

Th 2/20

Gwendolyn Brooks, all poems (1945-1981) (p 1625-1649)

Week Eight

T 2/25

Ann Petry, from *The Street* (1946) (p 1504-1516)
Event Response Due (2 pages)

Th 2/27

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

Week Nine

T 3/4

Amiri Baraka, "SOS" (1969), "Black Art" (1969), and "Wailers" (1982) (p 1942-1945)
Sonia Sanchez, "for our lady" (1969) (p 1965)
Jayne Cortez, "How Long Has Trane Been Gone?" (1969) (2036-2038)

Th 3/6

Lucille Clifton, all poems (1972-1993) (p 2032-2035)
June Jordan, "Poem about My Rights" (1980) (p 2019-2021)
Close Reading #2 Due (4-5 pgs)

Week Ten

T 3/11

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

Th 3/13

Final Exam