

ENG 360 African American Writers 1870-1920, CRN 36901

Spring 2015, T/Th 12-1:20pm, Fenton 117

Professor Thorsson, thorsson@uoregon.edu

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

Course Description

In this course, we will study African American writing from a period the writer Charles Chesnutt called "Post-Bellum, Pre-Harlem." As Chesnutt's phrase suggests, some scholars think of this as a low point in African American history, a kind of gap between the ante-bellum era and the Harlem Renaissance. Historians refer to this period as "the Nadir" because of its intense racial repression and violence. The years 1870-1920 were, however, among the most fruitful for African American literary production, rivaling the Harlem Renaissance in scope, significance, and influence in the African American literary tradition. In this course you will engage in literary study, scholarly discussion, and analytical writing about literature. This course requires substantial reading and writing and vigorous participation. 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.

Goals:

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. To that end, you will:

1. read literary and cultural texts with comprehension and with an understanding of their conventions;
2. draw on relevant cultural and/or historical information to situate texts within their cultural, political, and historical contexts;
3. perform critical, formal analyses of literary and other cultural texts;
4. write focused analyses of literature in clear, grammatical prose;
5. employ logic, creativity, and interpretive skills to produce original, persuasive arguments;
6. employ primary and/or secondary sources, with proper acknowledgment and citation.

Required Readings - at the UO Bookstore and on reserve at Knight Library or on Blackboard

- Frances E. W. Harper, *Iola Leroy, Or, Shadows Uplifted* (1892), Dover Edition
- Frances E. W. Harper, selected poems (1854-1901)*
- Sutton Griggs, *Imperium in Imperio* (1899), Modern Library Classics Edition
- Charles Chesnutt, *The Conjure Stories* (1887-1900), Norton Critical Edition
- W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), Norton Critical Edition
- Paul Laurence Dunbar, *The Sport of the Gods and Other Essential Writings* (1890-1902), Modern Library Classics Edition
- Close Reading Handout*
- Poetic Meter Handout*
- Assignment Sheet*

*Available on ENG 360 Blackboard site.

Course Requirements and Policies

Reading, participation, and attendance are mandatory. Bring the assigned readings to class in hard copy 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 (B becomes B-) 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.

We will discuss each assignment in detail as it approaches. Please print and consult the assignment sheet posted on Blackboard. 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, including 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. I do not accept late assignments more than one week after the due date.

If you 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 (see conduct.uoregon.edu) defines academic misconduct. Students may not commit 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.

UO is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence and gender-based stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or experiences gender-based violence (intimate partner violence, attempted or completed sexual assault, harassment, coercion, stalking, etc.), know that you are not alone. UO has staff members trained to support survivors in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more. Please be aware that all UO employees are required reporters. This means that if you tell me about a situation involving harassment, bias, or assault, I may have to report the information to my supervisor or the Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity. Although I have to report the situation, you will still have options about how your case will be handled, including whether or not you wish to pursue a formal complaint. Our goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available to you and have access to the resources you need. If you wish to speak to someone confidentially, you can call 541-346-SAFE, UO's 24-hour hotline, to be connected to a confidential counselor to discuss your options. You can also visit the SAFE website at safe.uoregon.edu.

In this class, we are studying literature of the United States in its historical and political contexts. This means that we will read about and discuss racial and sexual violence. There are incidents of

both in our readings, some of which include explicit language and graphic sexual acts, both consensual and not. If you wish to select another class to take instead of this one, I will be happy to meet with you in office hours to help you select a suitable course.

Grading:

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| Participation | 10% |
| Close Reading Exercise (3-4 pages) | 20% |
| Secondary Source Exercise (3-4 pages) | 20% |
| Paper Proposal (2-3 pages) | 10% |
| Final Paper (7-10 pages) | 40% |

Week One

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| T 3/31 | Introduction Syllabus* |
| Th 4/2 | Frances E. W. Harper, <i>Iola Leroy, Or, Shadows Uplifted</i> (1892), Introduction and Chapters I-IX |

Week Two

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| T 4/7 | Frances E. W. Harper, <i>Iola Leroy, Or, Shadows Uplifted</i> (1892), Chapters X-XXI Close Reading Handout* |
| Th 4/9 | Frances E. W. Harper, <i>Iola Leroy, Or, Shadows Uplifted</i> (1892), Chapter XXII- Note Assignment Sheet* |

Week Three

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| T 4/14 | Frances E. W. Harper, introduction by Maryemma Graham and selected poems (1854-1901)* Poetic Meter Handout* |
| Th 4/16 | Frances E. W. Harper, introduction by Maryemma Graham and selected poems (1854-1901)* (continued) |

Week Four

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| T 4/21 | Sutton Griggs, <i>Imperium in Imperio</i> (1899), Preface, Introduction, pages 3-95 |
| Th 4/23 | Sutton Griggs, <i>Imperium in Imperio</i> (1899), pages 96-177 Close Reading Exercise Due |

Week Five

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| T 4/28 | Charles Chesnutt, <i>The Conjure Woman and Other Tales</i> (1899), pages vii-xxx and 1-50 |
| Th 4/30 | Charles Chesnutt, <i>The Conjure Woman and Other Tales</i> (1899), pages 50-102 |

Week Six

T 5/5 Charles Chesnutt, *The Conjure Woman and Other Tales* (1899), pages 102-144

Th 5/7 W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), pages vii-xlii and 1-33

Week Seven

T 5/12 W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), pages 34-104

Th 5/14 W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), pages 105-164

Secondary Source Exercise Due**Week Eight**

T 5/19 Paul Laurence Dunbar, *The Sport of the Gods and Other Essential Writings* (1890-1902), General Introduction, Chronology, pages 3-50

Th 5/21 Paul Laurence Dunbar, *The Sport of the Gods and Other Essential Writings* (1890-1902), pages 51-88

Week Nine

T 5/26 Paul Laurence Dunbar, *The Sport of the Gods and Other Essential Writings* (1890-1902), pages 297-356

Th 5/28 Paper proposal workshop
Paper Proposal Due – bring 2 copies to class

Week Ten

T 6/2 Paul Laurence Dunbar, *The Sport of the Gods and Other Essential Writings* (1890-1902), pages 357-433

Th 6/4 Conclusion

Exam Week

T 6/9 **Final Paper Due**

Slide your paper under the door of Prof. Thorsson's office (521 PLC) **by 5pm**. If you would like your paper back with comments, attach a self-addressed stamped envelope when you turn it in.