ENG 241 Introduction to African American Literature
Winter 2012, CRN 22461; MWF 2-2:50, 240C McKenzie
Professor Thorsson
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Office Hours: M/W 10am-11:30am, 521 PLC

Course Description
This course is a survey of writings by African American authors of the 19th and 20th centuries. 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.

Required Books (available at the UO Bookstore and the Knight Library reserves desk)
- Ralph Ellison, Invisible Man, Vintage Edition

Additional readings are posted on Blackboard.

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/or 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 print, stapled, correct citation and quotation including works cited). Consult the MLA Handbook if you are uncertain of correct MLA 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 make arrangements to meet with the instructor soon. Please request that the Counselor for Students with Disabilities send a letter outlining your approved accommodations. Disability Services: disabrv@darkwing.uoregon.edu, 346-1155; http://ds.uoregon.edu/.

The University Student Conduct Code (conduct.uoregon.edu) defines academic misconduct. Students are prohibited from committing or attempting to commit any act that constitutes academic misconduct. Students should properly acknowledge and document all sources of information (e.g. quotations, paraphrases, ideas) and use only the sources and resources authorized by the instructor. If there is any question about whether an act constitutes academic misconduct, it is the student’s obligation to clarify the question with the instructor before committing or attempting to commit the act. Additional information about a common form of academic misconduct, plagiarism, is available at www.libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students.
Grading:
Participation 5%
Close Reading #1 (2-3 pgs) 10%
Close Reading #2 (2-3 pgs) 15%
Close Reading #3 (4-5 pgs) 20%
Symposium Response (2 pgs) 5%
Midterm 20%
Final 25%

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

Week One
M 1/9 Introduction
Phillis Wheatley, “On Being Brought from Africa to America” (1773) (p 219-220)
W 1/11 David Walker, from Appeal in Four Articles (1830) (p 228-238)
F 1/13 Frederick Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, A Slave, Written by Himself (1845) (p 387-421)

Week Two
M 1/16 No Class, Martin Luther King Day
W 1/18 Douglass, Narrative (p 421-440)
F 1/20 Close Reading Handout (Blackboard)

Week Three
M 1/23 Harriet Jacobs, from Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl (1861) (p 280-297)
W 1/25 Jacobs, from Incidents (p 297-315)
F 1/27 Charles Chesnutt, "The Goophered Grapevine" (1899) (p 604-613)
Close Reading #1 Due (2-3 pgs)

Week Four
M 1/30 Anna Julia Cooper, “Womanhood a Vital Element in the Regeneration and Progress of a Race” (1892) (p 636-650)

Week Five
M 2/6 Paul Laurence Dunbar, "We Wear the Mask" (1895) (p 918)
F 2/10 Johnson, Autobiography (p 841-883)

Week Six
M 2/13 Sterling Brown, all poems (1927-1980) (p 1248-1266)
Poetic Meter Handout (Blackboard)
W 2/15 Langston Hughes, “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain” (1926) (p 1311-1314) and all poems (1921-1965) (p 1291-1311)
F 2/17 Zora Neale Hurston, “Characteristics of Negro Expression” (1934) (p 1041-1053) and from *Mules and Men* (1937) (p 1053-1062)  
**Close Reading #2 Due (2-3 pgs)**

**Week Seven**  
M 2/20 Ann Petry, from *The Street* (1946) (p 1504-1516)  
Gwendolyn Brooks, “kitchenette building” (1945) (p 1625)  
W 2/22 Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (1952) (introductions, prologue and chapters 1-2)  
F 2/24 Ellison, *Invisible Man* (chapters 3-9)

**Week Eight**  
W 2/29 Ellison, *Invisible Man* (chapters 19-23)  
Gayl Jones, "Glossary" from *Liberating Voices* (Blackboard)  
F 3/2 10am-4:30pm, Daylong symposium on Place and Displacement in African American Literature – In lieu of class, attend at least one talk and write a 2-page response.

**Week Nine**  
M 3/5 Ellison, *Invisible Man* (chapter 24-epilogue)  
**Response to 3/2 Symposium Due**  
W 3/7 James Baldwin, "Sonny's Blues" (1957) (p 1728-1749)  
**Close Reading #3 Due (4-5 pgs)**

**Week Ten**  
F 3/16 **Final Exam**