ENG 241 Introduction to African American Literature, Spring 2018, CRN 32013
M/W 10-11:20am, 195 Anstett
Professor Thorsson (thorsson@uoregon.edu)
Office Hours: M/W 12-1:30pm, 521 PLC

Course Description
This course is a survey of writings by African American authors. Studying fiction, essays, and poetry, we will read representative texts to consider whether there are specific formal and thematic elements that characterize an African American literary tradition. We will consider how 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 look for relationships between these works and other art forms such as music and visual arts. This means that as we read each text closely, we may also listen closely to a relevant speech, poetry reading, or piece of music. This class requires substantial reading and writing and vigorous participation.

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 texts with comprehension and with an understanding of their conventions;
2. draw on relevant information to situate texts within their cultural, political, and historical contexts; and
3. use logic, creativity, and interpretive skills to write analyses of literature in clear, correct prose with correct citation.

Required Texts
There is one required text for this course: the Norton Anthology of African American Literature, third edition, volumes one and two (2014), edited by Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Valerie Smith. The Norton Anthology of African American Literature is available at the UO Bookstore and at the Knight Library reserves desk. Handouts marked with an asterisk on the schedule below are in the files section of the Canvas website for our class.

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 your work in class including 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 will miss more than two classes due to a university obligation (such as athletics) or due to religious observation, please see me as soon as possible in office hours with relevant documentation if applicable. If you miss class for any reason, 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 in the files section of the Canvas website for this class. 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.

The Writing Associates Program offers free peer tutoring for students in 100- and 200-level English and Composition classes. Writing Associates are advanced English majors trained to tutor writing. They are available to help students with any aspect of their writing for this course. To make an appointment with a Writing Associate, go to https://writingassociates.uoregon.edu.

If you anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please meet with me soon. Please request that the Accessible Education Center (aec.uoregon.edu) send me a letter outlining your approved accommodations.

UO's Student Conduct Code (dos.uoregon.edu/conduct) defines academic misconduct. Students may not commit or attempt 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 experience gender-based violence (intimate partner violence, attempted or completed sexual assault, harassment, coercion, stalking, etc.), know that you are not alone. UO has staff trained to support survivors in navigating campus life including accessing health and counseling services, academic and housing accommodations, legal protective orders, and other help. If you tell me about harassment or assault, I am not required to report this information to anyone unless you request that I do so. My goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available and that you 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 or 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:**

- Participation 10%
- Close Reading #1 (2-3 pages) 20%
- Close Reading #2 (3-4 pages) 25%
- Event Response (2-3 pages) 15%
- Close Reading #3 (4-5 pages) 30%
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week One</th>
<th>M 4/2</th>
<th>Phillis Wheatley, &quot;On Being Brought from Africa to America&quot; (1773) (Volume 1, pages 143-144) Syllabus*</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>W 4/4</td>
<td>Frederick Douglass, <em>Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself</em> (1845) (Vol 1, p 330-362) Assignment Sheet*</td>
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<th>Week Two</th>
<th>M 4/9</th>
<th>Frederick Douglass, <em>Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself</em> (1845) (Vol 1, p 362-393) Close Reading Handout*</th>
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<td>W 4/11</td>
<td>Frances Harper, all poems (1853-1900) (Vol 1, p 448-459) Meter Handout*</td>
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<th>Week Three</th>
<th>M 4/16</th>
<th>No class</th>
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<tr>
<th>Week Four</th>
<th>M 4/23</th>
<th>Paul Laurence Dunbar, all poems (1893-1903) (Vol 1, p 896-915)</th>
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<td>W 4/25</td>
<td>Claude McKay, all poems (1917-1922) (Vol 1, p 1004-1007) Close Reading #1 Due (2-3 pages)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week Five</th>
<th>M 4/30</th>
<th>Nella Larsen, <em>Passing</em> (1929) (Vol 1, p 1080-1110)</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>W 5/2</td>
<td>Nella Larsen, <em>Passing</em> (1929) (Vol 1, p 1110-1141)</td>
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<th>Week Six</th>
<th>M 5/7</th>
<th>Gwendolyn Brooks, all poems (1945-1960) (Vol 2, p 326-343)</th>
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<tr>
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<td>W 5/9</td>
<td>Gwendolyn Brooks, all poems (1945-1960) (Vol 2, p 326-343) Close Reading #2 Due (3-4 pages)</td>
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**Week Seven**  
M 5/14  James Baldwin, "Sonny's Blues" (1957) (Vol 2, p 413-435)

W 5/16  Larry Neal, "The Black Arts Movement" (1968) (Vol 2, p 784-787)  
        Jayne Cortez, "How Long Has Trane Been Gone" (1969) (Vol 2, p 771-773)

**Week Eight**  
M 5/21  Toni Cade Bambara, "Gorilla, My Love" (1972) (Vol 2, p 842-846)  
        Alice Walker, "Everyday Use" (1973) (Vol 2, p 1188-1194)


**Week Nine**  
M 5/28  Memorial Day – No Class

        **Close Reading #3 Due (4-5 pages)**

**Week Ten**  
        **Last day to turn in Event Response (2-3 pages)**