African American Authors of the Harlem Renaissance (ENG 360)
Syllabus: Spring 2018

MWF 10-10:50 Gerlinger 301

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Office Hours Spring 2018: Monday 3-5, Friday 11-12

Course Description:
This course will examine the work of three major African American authors: Claude McKay, Zora Neale Hurston, and Langston Hughes. These three did much to set the tone of the flourishing of black literary culture after World War One known as the Harlem Renaissance, producing work as influential as it was controversial for its bold representations of sexuality, urban vice, folk culture, and the secular music of jazz and the blues. This course will set these writers in their historical, intellectual, and cultural contexts, considering aspects including the world socialist movement, ethnography and the revaluation of American folk cultures, modern mass culture, the great migration, and the debates over black representation that took place in the Harlem Renaissance (and have important continuities with similar debates today). We will read a selection of their poetry, novels, short fiction, essays, and personal memoirs.

Learning Outcomes. By the end of the class, you should have:
1. Read literary texts from the Harlem Renaissance across a range of genres with an understanding of the formal conventions which shape them
2. Drawn on relevant historical and cultural information about the Great Migration, radical political movements in the interwar years, and African American intellectual history to situate these literary works within their cultural, political, and historical contexts
3. Performed critical, formal analyses of literary texts, including close readings
4. Employed logic, creativity, and interpretive skills to produce original, persuasive arguments both orally and on the page
5. Written focused, analytical essays in clear, grammatical prose

Course reading:
You must complete all the essential reading listed for each class, and come prepared to discuss it. This is a discussion-based classroom, and I expect everyone to have something to contribute in every session. I encourage you to print out all pdfs accessible online so that you can annotate them with notes from our discussions in class.

Attendance:
At the beginning of each class you should sign the attendance register. You are allowed three unexcused absences. Missing classes beyond this without adequate excuse and documentation (such as a doctor’s note) will result in your overall grade being lowered by 1/3 of a letter grade for each absence. Five such absences results in a failing grade. Please contact me at the earliest opportunity to discuss any unavoidable absences from class.

Classroom Electronic Communications Policy:
In this class, cell phone use and the use of tablet devices is prohibited. All such devices should be stored in your bags or left at home. Laptop computers are permitted, but only for activities related to the content of the class.

Plagiarism:
All written work should be either your own or contain clear references to your sources; one of the hallmarks of good scholarship is being able to use the insights of others while keeping your ideas distinct from theirs. I expect you to abide by university regulations on the proper acknowledgement of source material, and to follow accepted conventions for how to reference scholarship. I advise you to check on the university’s student conduct code (http://policies.uoregon.edu/vol-3-administration-student-affairs/ch-1-conduct/student-conduct-code), especially section v.1, for the detail of university policy on Academic Integrity. I also recommend MLA style for the presentation of your research papers. Information about how to prepare bibliographies and citations in MLA style can be found at the Purdue Online Writing Lab (http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/), and at the Knightcite MLA citation application (http://www.calvin.edu/library/knightcite/).

**Late papers:**
Papers should be submitted in class on the day of the deadline listed. I will deduct 1/3 of a letter grade for each day a paper is late. I will not accept any paper that is more than a week late. Any request for extensions will be carefully considered, but should be made as far in advance of the due date as possible.

**Access Policy:**
The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify me if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation. You are also encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Center in 155 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or uoaec@uoregon.edu.

**Sexual Violence and Survivor Support Statement:**
The 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. An important resource is 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.

Here is a link to the current UO policy on the reporting responsibilities of University employees: https://prevention.uoregon.edu/reportingmemo. Most faculty are what is called student-directed employees. This means that if you tell me about a situation, I am not required to report this information to anyone else unless you request that I do so. I am required to consult with a “confidential employee”—someone with a legal privilege of confidentiality, such as a counseling professional or a crisis center advocate—to ensure that you’re supported in every available way. If you decide to make a report, I and other UO employees will help you to do so. Our goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available to you, have access to the resources you need, and can make an informed decision about how to proceed.

**GRADED WORK**
This is broken into three types. Preparation assignments (the participation grade and quizzes) assess how well you have thought about the assigned reading, and how collaborative you are in talking about it—both with the whole class and in small groups. Take-home assignments will ask you to do research, work on multiple drafts, and hone a written argument. In-class exams will test your ability to demonstrate a good all-round knowledge of the course. They will also test how well you can respond to the language and style as well as the themes of literary texts, as you analyze excerpts from selected works we’ve studied.
Participation 10%
I will reward students who approach discussion in an enthusiastic, informed, and collegial way. Both I and your fellow students will appreciate informed opinions, critical insight, a willingness to take a few risks, and respect for others. I will occasionally set small in-class activities and presentations which will also count towards this grade.

Quizzes and in-class writing 15%
These will be simple questions and exercises designed to test your knowledge of the assigned readings for the day.

Poetry analysis (4-5 pages) 20%
This will give you several poems to analyze. You will choose one and write a short response which carefully considers the style of the piece and the ideas it presents. More details will be given in advance of the due date.

Critical paper (6-7 pages) 30%
This will allow you to write a more complex and lengthy response to one or more texts which you have found particularly interesting, and to use secondary criticism on those texts to sharpen your analysis. You can choose one prompt from several that will be provided two weeks before the due date.

Final 25%
This will give you a series of exam questions to choose from. Sample exam questions will be distributed two weeks ahead of the exam. The exam itself will give you 48 hours to respond to a prompt, and you will be able to submit your paper electronically.

ADDITIONAL CREDIT: On April 26th we will have a visit from Professors Brent Hayes Edwards and Jean-Christophe Cloutier, here to discuss the discovery and publication of a “lost” novel by Claude McKay, Amiable with Big Teeth. Additional credit of a 1/3 grade boost to an assignment of your choice (so B+ to A, for example) will go to those students who attend their talk, “Amiable with Big Teeth and the Paradoxes of the Archive,” and then post a short response to it online. The talk is at 4pm in Knight Browsing Room.

ESSENTIAL READING: please purchase these texts or arrange access for them for the duration of the course. These texts are available at the Duckstore.


Langston Hughes, Poems (Everyman's Library Pocket Poets Series), ed. David Roessel. 1999. 0375405518

Zora Neale Hurston, Their Eyes Were Watching God. Harper Perennial, 2006. 0061120065

Claude McKay, Home to Harlem. Northeastern University Press, 1555530249.

Claude McKay, Selected Poems. Dover Thrift Editions. 0486408760.

IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT YOU BRING THESE BOOKS—AND PRINTOUTS OF INDIVIDUAL STORIES OR POEMS FROM CANVAS—TO CLASS. You should also get into the habit of marking
up your books as you go along: it will help you focus your reactions and ideas for class discussion, and will improve the detail and insight of your written papers.

**Week One: Introductions**

M 4/2: Introductions


F 4/6: Renaissance debates. George Schuyler, “The Negro Art Hokum,” on Canvas; Langston Hughes, “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain”; [http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/g_l/hughes/mountain.htm](http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/g_l/hughes/mountain.htm);


**Week Two:**


**Week Three:**

M 4/16: Langston Hughes, *The Big Sea*, pp.1-71

W 4/18: Langston Hughes, *The Big Sea*, pp.72-144

F 4/20: Langston Hughes, *The Big Sea*, pp.144-219

**Week Four:**

M 4/23: **CLOSE READING EXERCISE DUE**

Langston Hughes, *The Big Sea*, pp.223-272 SPLIT THIS

W 4/25: Langston Hughes, *The Big Sea*, pp.272-335

**THURSDAY 26TH APRIL: EXTRA CREDIT AVAILABLE** for attendance at and reflection on “Amiable with Big Teeth and the Paradoxes of the Archive,” Brent Hayes Edwards and Jean-Christophe Cloutier, Knight Library Browsing Room 4pm.

Week Five:

M 4/30: Claude McKay, *Claude McKay: Selected Poems*, pp. vii-22 (selections from *Songs of Jamaica* and *Constab Ballads*). You might find it helpful to look at the notes to these poems, available on Canvas, which give translations of some dialect words that may be unfamiliar to you.

Please read the poems, but also browse through the whole issues to get a sense of the editorial stance of the magazine and to identify some of the topics on which *The Liberator* took a radical stance.


Week Six:


W 5/9: Claude McKay, *Home to Harlem*, Chapters 1-6

F 5/11: *Home to Harlem*, Chapters 7-11

Week Seven:

M 5/14: *Home to Harlem*, Chapters 12-14

W 5/16: *Home to Harlem*, Chapters 15-20


Week Eight:

M 5/21: CRITICAL PAPER DUE

W 5/23: Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, chapters 7-11


Week Nine:

M 5/28: MEMORIAL DAY: NO CLASS

Week Ten:


F 6/8: Recap and revision.

**T 6/12: TIMED FINAL PAPER DUE, NOON**