

# ENG 241: INTRODUCTION TO AFRICAN AMERICAN LITERATURE

CRN 22050

**MEETINGS** T/Th 4:15-5:45pm  
Via Zoom (link on Canvas)

**DR. FAITH BARTER**  
fbarter@uoregon.edu

**TA:**  
Rosa Inocencio Smith  
ris@uoregon.edu

## BEST WAY TO REACH ME



**Email:** fbarter@uoregon.edu or email through Canvas (allow 48 hrs for responses)

**Office Hours:** T/Th 12:00pm-1:30pm via Zoom. Sign up at <https://dr-barter.youcanbook.me/>

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is a survey of literature by African American authors from the late 1700s up to the Harlem Renaissance (early 20th century). Working chronologically, we will read texts from a range of genres and styles including fiction, non-fiction essays, journalism, speeches, poetry, drama, and law. We may occasionally also discuss art, visual culture, and music. Our work with these various forms of cultural production will consider the historical and material conditions that African American writers and artists have been working within and against, as well as the far-reaching and varied forms of expression that they have invented and innovated. As we read, watch, and listen, we will think deeply about how our course materials relate to one another and how we can use our coursework to build a working understanding of an African American literary tradition. We will spend some time questioning how our course materials confirm or defy ideas about not only literature, but also about race, gender, sexuality, class, and ability. Some of the questions we will ask throughout the quarter include: Who gets to write literature? Who decides which literature we should study? How has the African American literary tradition shaped these questions?

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

01

Arrive at a deeper historical, cultural, and literary understanding of the African American literary tradition and African American cultural production

03

Develop critical thinking and argumentation skills through the practice of close reading and regular, rigorous writing practice

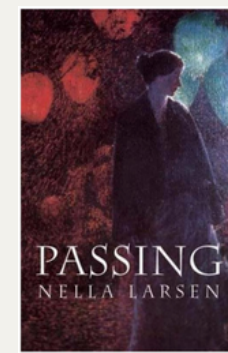
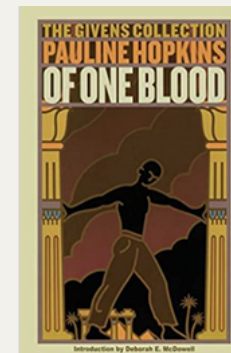
02

Build skills to read texts with deeper reading comprehension and awareness of literary conventions

04

Identify other places in which to use the skills and the knowledge you acquire from the class—other coursework, daily life, personal reading, etc.

## COURSE TEXTS

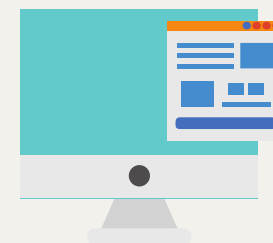


These two books are the only books you are required to purchase and are listed on our Canvas site. They have been ordered via The Duck Store, but you are free to buy different editions or use other vendors. All other required readings will be posted to our course Canvas page.

**Please note:** we will be reading and collaboratively annotating (marking up) most of our readings in PDFs via Canvas. If you have a hard time reading on screens or prefer hard copies, you are welcome to print those readings or buy your own copies from any vendor. You will still be required to annotate the readings in Canvas.



## REQUIRED TECH



Computer/Tablet



Internet Access  
for Zoom and  
Canvas



Suggested:  
Headphones

## ACCESSIBILITY

The Accessible Education Center (uoaec@uoregon.edu) handles requests for accommodation of disabilities. I and the University want this class to be an inclusive learning environment. Please notify me as soon as possible if aspects of the course are creating barriers to your participation or if you need to share an accommodations letter from the AEC.

## STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

Take handwritten notes during Zoom sessions and while you read for class

Take care of your emotional, physical, and mental health

Seek help with concepts during class meetings, in office hours, or via Canvas

Put important dates in your calendar and keep track of your assignments & submissions

## COURSE FORMAT

We will have class meetings during the scheduled time as live, synchronous Zoom sessions. Our class meetings will be a combination of large group discussion, small group activities, and structured "practice time" and "writing time" for upcoming assignments. There is no attendance policy, but it will be difficult for you to do well in the course if you are not attending class regularly. Zoom sessions will not be recorded. There will, however, be a class "Notes" file that you can consult if you miss a class session.

## ASSIGNMENTS

### ASSIGNMENT 1

#### READING ANNOTATIONS (8 TOTAL)

Instead of using discussion boards or reading quizzes, we will work together to annotate our course readings. You will be responsible for submitting a total of 8 reading annotation assignments (instructions & rubric on Canvas).

### NOTE-TAKING

In order to make our class content accessible, you will be responsible for acting as a note-taker **once** this term. You and the fellow note-takers for that day will attend class, take notes, and combine your notes into a Google slide to share with the class.

### ASSIGNMENT 2

### ASSIGNMENT 3

#### MIDTERM

In Week 4, you will complete a take-home guided close reading assignment as a midterm exam.

### RESEARCH LOG

In Week 8, you will submit a log documenting your research in a database of 19th-century African American newspapers

### ASSIGNMENT 4

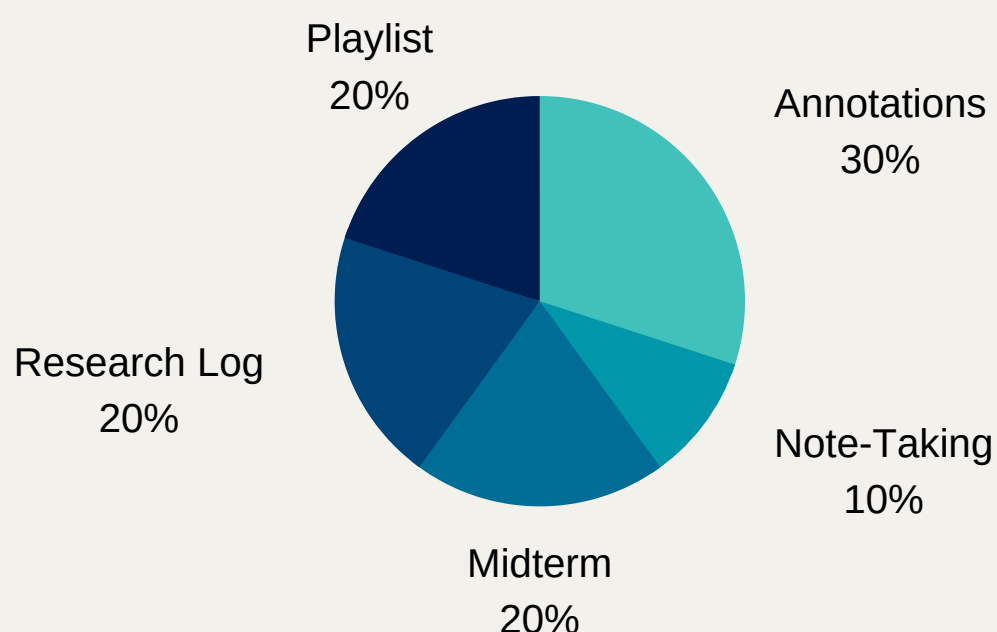
### ASSIGNMENT 5

#### FINAL PLAYLIST

For your final project, you will assemble a playlist of music by Black artists to accompany a range of our course materials. As part of your playlist, you will include a 5-page paper making the case for the songs you have chosen.

Full assignment details and rubrics are on Canvas

## GRADING



AVERAGE	GRADE
93-100%	A
90-92%	A-
87-89%	B+
83-86%	B
80-82%	B-
77-79%	C+
73-76%	C
70-72%	C-
67-69%	D+
63-66%	D
60-62%	D-
0-59%	F

## COURSE POLICIES

### THE STATE OF THE WORLD

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge upfront that this academic term poses specific challenges, some of which we may not even yet anticipate. Our immediate context includes Covid, ongoing state-sanctioned anti-Black violence, and a particularly divisive transfer of power in our federal government. This context means that we may be meeting and working through conditions that encompass physical and mental stress or crisis, economic crisis, family and childcare responsibilities, unstable or chaotic living conditions, and more. These conditions are likely to be in flux, and they will require all of us to extend compassion, grace, and flexibility to each other. Please know that I want you to succeed in this class, but I also want you to stay as safe, healthy, and secure as you possibly can. I am working hard to make the class space accommodating, flexible, and generous while maintaining the rigor and content coverage that you need and deserve, and/but I will modify and adjust as needed. If you find that you need additional support, please reach out to me. I will never ask you to divulge more information than you are comfortable sharing, but I will do whatever I can to lead with generosity and flexibility.

### CONTENT



This course will examine texts that document, describe, and grapple with issues of racial and sexual violence. The material may be graphic, and class discussions will frequently take up issues that many people consider controversial. Please consider whether this content will be disturbing or triggering to a degree that will interfere with your learning in the course. If so, I will be happy to help you select an alternative course.

### LANGUAGE

The functionality and integrity of our classroom space, even and maybe especially on Zoom, depend on the care we give to our language. We should strive for generosity with each other, allowing for the possibility of mistakes and disagreement but remaining accountable for our own language. Mindful of the ways that language itself can do harm, there are a few important bright-line rules. First, respect is mandatory; hate speech is prohibited. Second, absolutely no one in this course will use the N-word, even if it appears in a text we are reading. You need not pretend like you don't see it; instead, merely say "N" or express it in writing as "N\*\*\*\*\*." For a more thorough discussion of why I have adopted this policy in every classroom, please refer to Dr. Koritha Mitchell's excellent podcast on the subject: <https://soundcloud.com/c19podcast/nword>. Finally, please take some time to read "Writing About Slavery," the document curated by Dr. Gabrielle Foreman and available on the Canvas site. We will discuss this document in class. I encourage you to adopt its practices wherever possible.

### ZOOM BEST PRACTICES

I recognize that none of us expected to be in each other's homes for class. You may see a cat in my space, and please do not worry if you have children, housemates, family members, or pets who make a cameo in yours. You can help make Zoom less awkward for all of us by leaving your camera on whenever possible. I know you may need to turn it off sometimes, but having cameras on goes a long way in establishing trust and engagement. Please leave your microphone on mute when you are not speaking. You are welcome to use the chat function in Zoom to participate in class discussion in addition to turning on your microphone to speak.

### MESSAGING ME

Whether emailing me or messaging me through Canvas, please allow 48 hours for responses. Please consult the syllabus and the Canvas site for information contained there *before* contacting me. I do not respond to emails over the weekend. Treat emails as professional communications. You may address me as Dr. Barter or Professor Barter. I frequently communicate through Canvas announcements. Make sure you check your UO email and Canvas dashboard every day.

### PARTICIPATION

I do not have an attendance or participation policy this term. However, I will ask you to complete a self-evaluation of your participation at the end of the quarter. In instances of sustained and excellent in-class participation, I may apply bonus points to your final grade at my discretion.

### DUE DATES & EXTENSIONS

Assignments are due by the date/time listed in the syllabus. I know that sometimes things happen that interfere with your ability to complete assignments. You have 7 days of "credit" to use at your discretion, no questions asked, to submit an assignment after it is due. To use your credit, simply email me to let me know that you're using x days of credit. Otherwise, late assignments will be penalized 10% for each day that they are late; assignments will not be accepted more than one week past the due date except with prior permission in extreme circumstances. Check Canvas for more details on this "credit account" policy.

### ACADEMIC HONESTY

Academic dishonesty in any form undermines your integrity, mine, and that of this course. If you have particular questions or concerns about an issue of academic honesty, please contact me. I take very seriously our shared obligation to academic integrity, and all of your work in this class--including informal writing and annotations--should be entirely your own.

Check Canvas for more details and for extra credit opportunities/policies.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

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**JAN. 5** **Week 1 - Introductions**  
Before class: read syllabus and Canvas site  
After class: check Canvas to see which date you're assigned to be a note-taker & put it in your calendar. Message your group via Canvas to get in touch..

**JAN. 7** **Week 1 - Phillis Wheatley**  
Before class:

- Watch video in Week 1 module and read poems in Week 1 Module
- Read "Writing About Slavery"

**JAN. 12** **Week 2 - Fiction of the Haitian Revolution\***  
Before class:

- Watch video on the Haitian Revolution in Week 2 module
- Read (& annotate) "Theresa, a Haytien Tale"

**JAN. 14** **Week 2 - Fiction of the Haitian Revolution\***  
Before class:

- Watch close reading video in Week 2 module
- Watch video on the gothic and Victor Séjour in Week 2 module
- Read (& annotate) Victor Séjour, "The Mulatto"

**JAN. 19** **Week 3 - Early Black Autobiography\***  
Before class:

- Read (& annotate), Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (excerpts)

**JAN. 21** **Week 3 - Early Black Autobiography\***  
Before class:

- Read (& annotate), Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (excerpts)

**JAN. 26** **Week 4 - Black Periodical Culture in the 19th-c.\***  
Before class:

- Read (& annotate) Martin Delany's essays on astronomy

**JAN. 28** **Week 4 - Reconstruction\***  
Before class:

- Watch Reconstruction video on Canvas
- Read Mississippi Black Codes
- Read (& annotate) Frances Harper, "We Are All Bound Up Together"

After class:

- Midterm due by 8:00pm, Jan. 29!

As noted above, all class meetings will take place over Zoom.

Zoom meetings will NOT be recorded.

Consult the Class Notes Link on Canvas to see notes for any class that you miss.

Make sure you start working on your research logs - they're due in just a few weeks!

**FEB. 2** **Week 5 - The Dawn of Jim Crow\***  
Before class:

- Read (& annotate) excerpts from *A Red Record* (Ida B. Wells) and *Souls of Black Folk* (W.E.B. DuBois)

**FEB. 4** **Week 5 - Of One Blood\***  
Before class:

- Read Chapters 1-7, *Of One Blood* (annotate portion on Canvas)

**FEB. 9** **Week 6 - Of One Blood\***  
Before class:

- Read Chapters 8-10, *Of One Blood* (annotate portion on Canvas)

**FEB. 11** **Week 6 - Of One Blood\***  
Before class:

- Read Chapters 11-16, *Of One Blood* (annotate portion on Canvas)

**FEB. 16** **Week 7 - Of One Blood\***  
Before class:

- Read Chapters 17-the end *Of One Blood* (annotate portion on Canvas)

**FEB. 18** **Week 7 - Harlem Renaissance Essays\***  
Before class:

- Watch Harlem Renaissance video on Canvas
- Read (& annotate) Harlem Renaissance essays on Canvas

**FEB. 23** **Week 8 - Harlem Renaissance Poetry\***  
Before class:

- Read (& annotate) selected Harlem Renaissance poems on Canvas

**FEB. 25** **Week 8 - Harlem Renaissance Jazz**  
Before class: No reading assignment!  
After class:

- Research Log due by 8:00pm on Feb. 26!

How many days are left in your 7-day extension credit? Use them wisely!

## COURSE SCHEDULE CONTINUED

Start working on the playlist for your final!

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**MAR. 2** Week 9 - Passing\*  
Before class:  
• Read Part One of *Passing* (annotate portion on Canvas)

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**MAR. 4** Week 9 - Passing\*  
Before class:  
• Read Part Two of *Passing* (annotate portion on Canvas)

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**MAR. 9** Week 10 - Passing\*  
Before class:  
• Read Part Three of *Passing* (annotate portion on Canvas)

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**MAR. 11** Week 10 - Reflections and Wrap-up  
Before class: Complete your participation self-evaluation on Canvas



\*\*\*Final playlist: Due Mar. 15 at 11:59pm\*\*\*

Check Canvas site for assignment details and rubric

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## IMPORTANT DUE DATES

**ANNOTATIONS** FLEXIBLE! You are responsible for keeping track, but you must submit 8 total. If you submit more than 8, I will only count your 8 highest scores. Make sure to check the calendar frequently to see how many remaining eligible annotations there are.

**NOTE-TAKING** It depends!! You are assigned to groups on Canvas. You must work with your group to take and assemble notes on your assigned day. You must submit your combined notes to Canvas within 48 hours of class ending. Make sure to check Canvas for assignment instructions and your assigned note-taking day. Email me ASAP if you need to change your date.

**MIDTERM** You will have all week to complete it in Week 4. It will be due by **8:00pm on Friday, Jan. 29**. It should take no more than a few hours to complete.

**RESEARCH LOG** Due by **8:00pm on Friday, Feb. 26**.

**FINAL PLAYLIST** Due by **11:59pm on Monday, Mar. 15**

\*\*\*NOTE: In order for me to submit grades on time, if you plan to use any of the days in your "credit account," know that all finals and other outstanding assignments **MUST** be submitted to me by 11:59pm on March 20. \*\*\*



Artwork by William Henry Johnson, ca. 1939-1940

[Image is a modernist-style painting depicting a Black man and woman drinking wine at a cafe. Her arm is around him, and they are seated close together.]

Please reach out if you have any questions or concerns.

I am so excited to read and learn with you this term!