

Bergen Community College
Division of English
Department of Composition and Literature
Instructor Name
Instructor Email
Office Phone
Office Location
Office Hours:

LIT 215-001: The Black Literary Voice in America
Fall 2009
Wednesday 6:10 – 9:00pm, C321

Course Description

This course is a study of major African-American authors. The course provides a literary, historical, and sociological survey of the African-American experience. Students read works by such authors as Wheatley, Douglass, Ellison, Hurston, Baldwin, Malcolm X, Morrison, and Walker. Prerequisite: WRT101.

Student Learning Objectives:

As a result of meeting the requirements of this course, you will be able to:

1. Identify and discuss the themes and styles that characterize Black literature.
2. Recognize the emergence of themes and identity through the works of Black writers.
3. Identify and discuss how the literature of Black-American writers fits into a larger history and context of American Literature.
4. Apply appropriate theoretical lenses to critically and analytically read works of literature produced by Black writers.
5. Produce a properly formatted written evaluation of selected works of Black American literature; and demonstrate competency in both research methodologies and literary analysis.

Course Requirements:

1. A midterm essay examination—topics will be announced.
2. A short oral presentation on the subject of your research paper.
3. A research paper of 7-10 pages, complete with internal documentation and a Works Cited page presented in correct MLA form, on a topic selected by you in consultation with me.
4. Periodic critical responses—2-3 page text analyses.
5. Quizzes, as needed.
6. Active participation in all course activities.

Sample Required Texts:

Anokye, Akua Duku and Jacqueline Brice-Finch. *Get It Together: Readings about African American Life*. New York: Pearson Longman, 2003.
Gilyard, Keith and Anissa Wardi. *African American Literature*. New York: Pearson Longman, 2004.
Tomasino, Anna. *Music and Culture*. New York: Pearson Longman, 2005.

Evaluation

You will write two brief critical responses (3-4 pages) for two of the major texts under study; and your responses will be due upon completion of the unit—the class immediately following. There will also be a midterm essay exam, intermittent quizzes, and a term paper.

Response papers: 30%

Participation and Quizzes: 20%

Midterm Exam: 25%

Term Paper: 25%

Written assignments must be formatted according to MLA standards. You will find citation guides on our library's website. Please note that you will also be expected to produce a documented term paper with secondary sources; and you may find appropriate—relevant—resources in our library. You are encouraged to schedule an appointment with one of our reference librarians if you did not attend an instructional seminar in your writing class.

BCC's Writing Center is located in L125, and you are encouraged to work with our faculty and professional writing tutors. Please note that the center is indeed a tutoring center—you are not to drop off your paper for proofreading as this is not a function of the center.

Attendance Policy

Your presence is vital to our classroom community, so regular attendance is required. You will be permitted *two absences* after which your grade will be negatively affected. You are expected to come to class every morning prepared to discuss assigned texts and to produce written responses both in class and at home.

A note on plagiarism: please give credit where credit is due! Honesty is expected of you. It is expected that the work you hand in will always be your own, and that you will never copy sentences, phrases, paragraphs, or whole essays from any other person's work, for that is plagiarism. If you are ever unclear about how to cite another person or author's ideas, come see me or consult the staff in the writing center.

A note on deadlines: no late papers will be accepted, and you are not permitted to submit papers electronically—via email.

Sample Class Schedule/Reading List (subject to change depending upon class progress):

9/9 • Overview of course, syllabus, and major assignments

~Chapter 1: The Middle Passage, Mourning, and Survival~

9/14 • Preface to Text and Introduction to Chapter 1 xxi-5

Monday • from “The Interesting Narrative” by Olaudah Equiano 6-19

• “A Death Song” by Paul Lawrence Dunbar 62-63

• “What is Race?” by Ralph Bunche [GIT] 8-12

9/16 • “Middle Passage” by Robert Hayden 19-24

Wednesday • “From African to African American” by Geneva Smitherman [GIT] 43-46
• from Middle Passage by Charles Johnson 40-44
• from Black Thunder (Gabriel’s Revolt: VA, 1800) by Arna Bontemps 64-71

~Chapter 2: The Influence of the Spirituals~

9/21 • Introduction to Chapter 2 117-121

Monday • from “The Subject of My Call to Preach Renewed” by Jarena Lee [GIT] 321-326
• “Black Churches and Segregation” by Frederick Douglass [GIT] 327-329

9/23 • Four Spirituals 122-127

Wednesday • “An Ante-Bellum Sermon” by Paul Lawrence Dunbar 158-161
• “O Black and Unknown Bards” by James Weldon Johnson 162-164

~Chapter 3: The South as Literary Landscape~

9/28 • Introduction to Chapter 3 237-240

Monday • from “Narrative of the Life...” by Frederick Douglass 241-259
• “Southern Song” by Margaret Walker 260-261

9/30 • from Their Eyes Were Watching God by Zora Neale Hurston 306-311

Wednesday • from Gather Together in My Name by Maya Angelou 319-327
• “Strange Fruit” by Billie Holiday 327
• “The Ethics of Living Jim Crow” by Richard Wright [GIT] 12-16

~Chapter 4: Folklore and Literature~

10/5 • Introduction to Chapter 4 331-336

Monday • “John Henry” (Anonymous) 378-381
• “The Birth of John Henry” by Melvin B. Tolson 382-383
• from John Henry Days by Colson Whitehead 383-388

10/7 • “The Goophered Grapevine” by Charles Chestnutt 338-350

Wednesday • from Baby of the Family by Tina McElroy Ansa 427-449

~Chapter 5: Expressions of Blues and Jazz~

10/12 • Introduction to Chapter 5 451-454

Monday • “Primitive Blues and Primitive Jazz” by Amiri Baraka [GIT] 56-59
• “The Jazz Impulse...” by Craig Werner [MC] 119-128
• “Nas and His Father Olu Dara...” by Toure [MC] 27-31
• “Jazz Is My Religion” by Ted Joans 506

10/14 • Seven Poems by Lanston Hughes 458-463

Wednesday • “His Horn” by Bob Kaufman 507-508
• “a/coltrane/poem” by Sonia Sanchez 514-518
• “Elegy for Thelonious” & “February in Sydney” by Yusef Komunyakaa 547-549

~Chapter 6: Stories of Migration~

10/19 • Introduction to Chapter 6 561-565

Monday • The Sport of the Gods by Paul Lawrence Dunbar 565-656

10/21 • The Sport of the Gods by Paul Lawrence Dunbar (continued) 565-656
Wednesday

~Chapter 7: Urban Landscapes~

10/26 • Introduction to Chapter 7 695-698

Monday • “From the Inside Looking Out” by Lieutenant Arthur Doyle [GIT] 168-173
• from Makes Me Wanna Holler by Nathan McCall 699-713

10/28 • from Brothers and Keepers by John Edgar Wideman 713-722

Wednesday • “City Night Storm” by Eugene B. Redmond 722-723

- Two Poems by Rita Dove 743-745
- “South Central L.A. Deathtrip 1982” by Wanda Coleman 752-757

~Chapter 8: A Strand of Social Protest~

11/2 • Introduction to Chapter 8 795-798

Monday • A Raisin in the Sun by Lorraine Hansberry 840-929

11/4 • A Raisin in the Sun by Lorraine Hansberry (continued) 840-929

Wednesday • view parts of A Raisin in the Sun (1961 Version) in class

~Chapter 9: Jeremiads~

11/9 • Introduction to Chapter 9 931-936

Monday • “Speech at the Atlanta Exposition” by Booker T. Washington 959-963

- from The Autobiography of W.E.B. Du Bois by W.E.B. Du Bois 987-993
- “I Have a Dream” by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. 1007-1011

11/11 • “Gangsters—Real and Unreal” by Nelson George [MC] 128-143

Wednesday • “Reverse Racism...” by Stanley Fish [GIT] 30-37

- “My Dungeon Shook” by James Baldwin [GIT] 216-219

~Chapter 10: Discourses of Black Nationalism~

11/16 • Introduction to Chapter 10 1037-1041

Monday • “The Conservation of Races” by W.E.B. Du Bois 1087-1097

- “Standing as an African Man” by Haki R. Madhubuti 1136-1139

11/18 • “The Ballot or the Bullet” by Malcolm X 1118-1136

Wednesday

~Chapter 11: Statements of Feminism~

11/23 • Introduction to Chapter 11 1141-1146

Monday • “Womanhood...” by Anna Julia Cooper 1151-1170

- “A Song of Sojourner Truth” by June Jordan 1191-1193

11/30 • “The Myth of the Welfare Queen” by Farai Chideya [GIT] 282-286
Monday • “Black Lesbians” by Jewelle Gomez [GIT] 244-249
• Two Poems by Georgia Douglas Johnson 1177-1178
• “Bad Sistas—Queen Latifah” by Tricia Rose [MC] 152-156

~Chapter 12: The Black Aesthetic~

12/2 • Introduction to Chapter 12 1249-1253
Wednesday • Two Poems by Countee Cullen 1254-1258
• Three Poems by Claude McKay 1258-1260

12/7 • “Hip-Hop Divides” by Kelefa Sanneah [MC] 235-240
Monday • “Bill Cosby and the Politics of Race” by Michael Eric Dyson [GIT] 237-244
• “For My People” by Margaret Walker 1262-1263
• “The Mother” by Gwendolyn Brooks 1263-1264

12/9 • Final Exam Review: discuss course and literary terms list
Monday

12/16 Final Exam