

Fall 2008/English 245/CRN 11904
Introduction to African American Literature
Tuesdays and Thursdays 2-3:20pm; 175 LIL
Professor Tolentino
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Phone: 346-0061
Office hours: TTR 12-1:30pm and by appointment, 444 PLC

Course Description

This introductory course explores how the concept of migration has shaped African American writing from the Depression to the contemporary period. Through short stories, speeches, novels, poetry, and essays by African American writers, we will study how “movement” is used to depict ideas about history, community, progress, and personal development.

Books

The Norton Anthology of African American Literature (2004)
Sherley Anne Williams, Dessa Rose (1986)

Books can be purchased at the University of Oregon Bookstore or checked out from Knight Library Course Reserves.

Evaluation

- Preparation and Participation grade: (10%)

Please bring the assigned readings to class and be prepared to discuss them. I will occasionally check during class to see if you have your texts and notes. Also, you may be asked to offer a brief summary of or response to the assigned readings during class discussions.

- Midterm in class on Tuesday, Oct. 28 (20%)

- Peer editing workshops (10%) Thursday, Oct. 23; Thursday, Nov. 20. Bring a complete draft of your paper to class. You will be exchanging papers with another student and offering constructive comments and suggestions for their revisions.

- Two papers, 3-4 pages due Monday, Oct. 27 and Monday, Nov. 24 by 5pm, 444 PLC (50%)

Topics will be provided at least one week before the due date. If you want to explore a different topic, please write a detailed paragraph on your proposed topic and consult with me at least 3 days before the due date. Papers that have not been spellchecked/proofread or that are submitted late will automatically be marked down one letter grade. No papers will be accepted more than one week after the due date. Please attach your draft and the completed peer editing worksheet to your final paper.

- In-class assignments on Tuesday, Dec. 2 and Thursday, Dec. 4 (10%)

- Attendance Policy: After a second unexcused absence, your grade will be lowered by 1/3 of a letter for each absence. (C+ becomes C). You are no longer eligible for a grade if you miss more than four classes. Frequent tardiness to class or leaving before class is over will lower your grade.

If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please make an appointment to meet with me soon.

Week 1

T 9/30 Introduction

TR 10/2 Urban Realism

Ann Petry, “Like a Winding Sheet”; “The Street.” 1496-1504; 1504-1516.

Week 2

T 10/7 Social Protest and Folk History

Richard Wright, "The Ethics of Living Jim Crow: An Autobiographical Sketch." 1411-1419.
Margaret Walker, "For My People." 1619-1620.

TR 10/9 Black Modernism

Chester Himes, "To What Red Hell." 1488-1496.
Ralph Ellison, "Prologue to Invisible Man." 1548-1555.

Week 3

T 10/14 Race, Gender, and Visibility

Gwendolyn Brooks, Maud Martha. 1649-1696.

Recommended:

Gwendolyn Brooks, "kitchenette building," "a song in the front yard"; "Sadie and Maud"; "the vacant lot"; Maxie Allen"; "We Real Cool"; "Malcolm X." 1625-27; 1632; 1638; 1640.

TR 10/16

No class – Professor Tolentino at American Studies Association conference

Week 4 Jazz and the Blues

T 10/21

Bob Kaufman, "Walking Parker Home." 1762-1763.
James Baldwin, "Sonny's Blues." 1728-1749.
Michael S. Harper, "Dear John, Dear Coltrane." 2071-2072.

TR 10/23

Peer editing workshop (Bring a complete draft of your paper to class)

Paper due Mon October 27 by 5pm, 444 PLC (Please slide your paper under the door)

Week 5

T 10/28

Midterm

TR 10/30 Black Unity, Black Authenticity

Malcolm X, "Message to the Grass Roots" (Nov. 10, 1963; Please listen to the audio clip on Blackboard before class)

Film screening and discussion:

Street Fight (dir. Marshall Curry, 2005; 83 min)

Week 6

T 11/4 Black Arts Movement

"The Black Arts Era, 1960-1975." 1831-1850
Mari Evans, "Status Symbol." 1851.
Etheridge Knight, "The Idea of Ancestry." 1908-1909.
Sonia Sanchez, "Summer Words of a Sistuh Addict." 1966.

T 11/4 Black Arts Movement (Continued from previous page)
Haki Madhubuti, "Introduction (to Think Black); a poem to complement other poems." 2094-96.
Nikki Giovanni, "Beautiful Black Men"; Nikki-Rosa. 2097-8.
Amiri Baraka, "SOS"; "Black Art"; "The Revolutionary Theatre." 1942; 1943-44; 1960-1963.

TR 11/6 Black Arts Movement
Film and discussion: Dutchman (dir. Anthony Harvey, 1992; 55 min)

Recommended:
Amiri Baraka, Dutchman. 1946-1960;

Week 7 NeoSlave Narratives
T 11/11
Sherley Anne Williams, Dessa Rose (Please read the entire book)

TR 11/13
Sherley Anne Williams, Dessa Rose

Week 8
T 11/18
Sherley Anne Williams, Dessa Rose

TR 11/20
Peer editing workshop (Bring a complete draft of your paper to class)

Paper 2 due Monday, Nov. 24 by 5pm; 444 PLC

Week 9
T 11/25 NeoSlave Narratives in Contemporary Art
"Literature Since 1975." 2127-39.
In class film and discussion: Art 21: Kara Walker

TR 11/27
No Class - Thanksgiving Break

Week 10
T 12/2 Black Bodies
Lucille Clifton, "homage to my hips." 2033.
Essex Hemphill, "Conditions." 2645-48.
Octavia Butler, "Bloodchild." 2516-2529.

In-class assignment

TR 12/4 The Personal and the Political in a Global Context
Paule Marshall, "The Making of a Writer From the Poets in the Kitchen." 2189-2195.
June Jordan, "Poem About My Rights." 2019-2021.
Michelle Cliff, "Within the Veil." 2505-2508.

In-class assignment