

ENG 2050 Semester syllabus

Course information

Title: English 2050, African-American Literature

Credit: Three semester credit hours

Course Description: Focuses on the oral and written African-American literary tradition in a variety of genres from the 18th century to the present.

Prerequisites:

Offering Unit: Department of English, College of Liberal Arts

ENGLISH 2050 AFRICAN-AMERICAN LITERATURE Fall 2012

Information about the course: African-American Literature is a course which fits the purpose and intent of the Wright State Core, because it promotes “active, conscientious, educated citizens of a diverse world.” The class satisfies Element IV Arts/Humanities because it promotes the skills needed for analyzing and appreciating the arts. The class provides students with an understanding of poetry, drama, fiction, and prose by African Americans from the 18th to the present; the course also addresses the linkages between African American literature and cultural traditions in the African diaspora, including Africa, the Caribbean, and other parts of the world.

The course enables students to do the following as a part of the Wright Core at WSU for Element IV (Arts/Humanities):

- a. Critically analyze significant creative, literary, philosophical or religious works
- b. Understand and discuss the complex blend of imaginative vision, socio-cultural context, ethical values, and aesthetic judgment in creative, philosophical or religious works
- c. Recognize, evaluate and respond to creative, philosophical or religious works
- d. Develop appropriate and ethical applications of knowledge in the humanities or the arts

The texts required for the class connect with the above outcomes by examining themes of identity, community, migration from West Africa to the Caribbean, the United States, and

other parts of the word, and liberation within the context of the African American literary tradition.

ENG 2050 also meets outcomes for IW courses in the WrightCore. Course writing will:

- Demonstrate student understanding of course content,
- be appropriate for the audience and purpose of a particular writing task,
- Demonstrate the degree of mastery of disciplinary writing conventions appropriate to the course (including documentation conventions), and
- Show competency in standard edited American English.

Students will write approximately 2000 words with formal and informal assignments being required. Revision will also be incorporated because it emphasizes writing as a process.

Required Text:

***The Prentice Hall Anthology of African American Literature*, edited by Rochelle Smith and Sharon L. Jones (Upper Saddle River New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2000)**

The following book is recommended: *MLA Handbook for Writers or Research Papers* (seventh edition)

Reading Assignments and Topics for Discussion/Lecture

Dates

8/27 Introduction to the Course,

8/29 Overview of oral tradition in African-American literature, African American literature of the Colonial Period (1700s): biographical information and poetry/letter by Phillis Wheatley, pp. 19-23

8/31 Antebellum Period in African-American Literature: pp. 37-40, biographical information and Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of A Slave Girl* (slave narrative) , pp. 44-48

9/3 Labor Day

9/5 biographical information and William Wells Brown's *The Escape or A Leap for Freedom* (play), pp. 48-83

9/7 Brown, *The Escape or a Leap for Freedom*, Continued Discussion

9/10 Antebellum Period in African-American Literature: Documentary: *Traces of the Trade*;

9/12 Reconstruction Period in African-American Literature: pp. 114-117, sermon by Rev. Henry McNeal Turner, pp. 154-155,

9/14 biographical information and poetry by Paul Laurence Dunbar, pp. 155-161, paper 1 due

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9/17 Harlem Renaissance Period in African American Literature: pp. 163-167, biographical information and W.E.B. Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk* (autobiography/history), pp. 168-181

9/19 biographical information and Booker T. Washington's *Up From Slavery* (autobiography), pp. 181-189

9/21 Documentary about Harlem Renaissance (*I'll Make Me A World*), Harlem Renaissance Period in African-American Literature

9/24 biographical information and Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (novel), pp. 301-369

9/26 Zora Neale Huston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (novel), pp. 369-403

9/28 Film Version of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

10/1 Harlem Renaissance Period in African-American Literature: poetry by Langston Hughes, biographical information and pp. 444-447

10/3 biographical information and Alain Locke, (*The New Negro* (prose), pp. 421-430

10/5 The Protest Period in African-American Literature: pp. 468-472, biographical information and poetry by Gwendolyn Brooks, pp. 570-575, paper 2

10/8 documentary

10/10 Black Aesthetics Movement in African-American Literature: pp. 658-662, and biographical information and Malcolm X (*The Autobiography of Malcolm X*), pp. 665-675

10/12 *Malcolm X* (movie)

10/15 *Malcolm X* (movie)

10/17 *Malcolm X* (movie)

10/19 Discussion of film

10/22 biographical information and Martin Luther King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail," pp. 678-689

10/24 Black Aesthetics Movement in African-American Literature: biographical information and poetry by Sonia Sanchez and biographical information and poetry by Nikki Giovanni, pp. 690-693

10/26 Library orientation for research paper

10/29 Neo-Realism Period in African American Literature: pp. 742-746, Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (fiction), pp 798-802

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10/31 *The Color Purple* (movie)

11/2 *The Color Purple* (movie)

11/5 *The Color Purple* (movie)

11/7 Discussion of movie

11/9 Neo-Realism Movement: Group work activity (analysis of literary texts and presentations);
paper 3 due/ Research paper

11/12 Veteran's Day

11/14biographical information and August Wilson's *The Piano Lesson* (play), pp. 838-898

11/16 Continued discussion of *The Piano Lesson*

11/19 Continued discussion of *The Piano Lesson*, paper 3 due

11/21 Thanksgiving

11/23 Thanksgiving

11/26 *The Piano Lesson* (film)

11/28 *The Piano Lesson* (film)

11/30 Discussion of film

12/3 Neo-Realism Movement in African-American Literature: pp. 1066-1071, Toni Morrison's
Nobel Peace Prize Speech

12/5 Neo-Realism Movement: analysis of Cultural Gallery (from textbook) in relationship to
African American literature

12/7 Prep for final exam, evaluations

12/10-12/14 Final Exam : in-class essay exam (paper 4)

The final exam will take place on the date and time scheduled by the registrar's office.

Course Requirements:

Essays 1 and 2 (400-500 words each) literary analysis on required readings for the class in which students trace the development of a theme, image, narrative technique, setting, character, or symbolism in a literary text 2 @30%: **60%**

Essay 3 (800-900 words research paper) a revision and expansion of Essay 1 or Essay 2 which focuses on how the interpretation of the literary text expands upon and/or differs from that of

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literary criticism in at least five secondary sources from peer-reviewed journals and/or academic or university press books) **20 %**

Essay 4 (400-500 words) literary analysis comparing three or more texts read in the class)

All essays must incorporate MLA style documentation; all essays with the exception of the final exam should be typed and double-spaced with one inch margins on top, bottom, left, and right margins. **10%**

Participation **10%** (Group work activities, informal writing assignments, participation in class discussion)

Attendance Policy: This MWF course will have 41 meetings. Class attendance is vital to increasing your understanding of the material and the skills required for ENG 2050.

1-2 absences no penalty

3-4 overall course grade lowered by one letter grade

5 or more overall course grade is an F

Additional policies:

Academic honesty remains a vital part of the educational experience. Academic dishonesty would be defined as plagiarizing, turning in another person's work as your own, and having copied another person's answers. There are university penalties for such behavior, and please consult the student handbook for more information.