

Coloring the Prize: African American “Prestigious” Fiction

Professor: E.L. Gibson III
ENGL 265-03 (Spring 2013)
Clough Hall 300: MWF ~ 9:00-9:50am
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Office Hrs: MW ~ 12:15-1:30pm / By Appointment

Teaching Philosophy

- Pedagogical Creed: *I am convinced that the act of learning can be likened to that of travel. If the student is in the same position at the end of the semester as where he/she began at the beginning, the professor has failed to lead, the student has failed to follow or the material has failed them both.*
- Student Objective: *To become **SOPHISTICATED READERS** of text, culture and experience!*

Course Description

- This is a **READING INTENSIVE** course that will survey several works of African American fiction distinguished in their meriting of the Pulitzer Prize or the National Book Award. While the course will be dedicated to the literary and thematic particularities of each work, it will also pursue the question as to why these works have risen to national notoriety and public prestige. Through the collective treatment of African American award-winning fiction, this course will encourage the Ellisonian effort “To see America with an awareness of its rich diversity and its almost magical fluidity and freedom...” Authors may include: Ralph Ellison, James Alan McPherson, Gloria Naylor, Alice Walker, Toni Morrison, Edward P. Jones and Jesmyn Ward.

Required and Supplementary Texts

- Ellison: *Invisible Man*
- Jones: *The Known World*
- McPherson: *Elbow Room*
- Morrison: *Beloved*
- Naylor: *The Women of Brewster Place*
- Ward: *Salvage the Bones*

- Walker: *The Color Purple*
- Gibaldi: *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (Supplementary)
 - All required texts are available at Rhodes College Bookstore
 - 901.843.3535
 - Rhodes@bkstr.com

Course Requirements

- **Thematic Essay Exams (2):** There will be two three-page thematic essay exams throughout this course. These exams are designed to evaluate the student's ability to articulate an understanding of how the texts covered within the class speak to a particular theme central to the discourse. Each exam will offer the student a thematic prompt on which the student must write a three to four page critical essay. The exam will be due by the beginning of the class period following the date made available. All essays must be in acceptable MLA format and submitted via Moodle in a MS Word document.
- **Papers (2):** Each student is required to produce two papers of varying lengths. These papers serve as the midterm and the final papers. Both of which must be in acceptable MLA format and submitted via Moodle in a MS Word Document. Consult MLA handbook or <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/01/> for assistance.
 - Critical Essay (Midterm): A four to five page paper engaging a specific element covered within the first half of the course. This paper should be a close reading and/or thematic treatment of a piece or multiple pieces of literature that explores the ways in which the literature fits into the larger American narrative. Paper length is non-negotiable. Paper must be in acceptable MLA format and submitted via Moodle in a MS Word document.
 - Final Essay (Research): A seven-page paper exploring a central idea, theme, trope, symbol, motif, et cetera. This paper should be inspired by one or more of the readings from the course and should effectively make use of an identifiable critical lens. Being a research paper, outside sources are required. Paper length is non-negotiable. Paper must be in acceptable MLA format and submitted via Moodle in a MS Word document.
- **Participation/Quizzes:** Although this course is reading intensive, class sessions rely heavily on classroom discussion. The student is expected to show up for class prepared to engage his/her colleagues and professor in a serious dialogue over the text. After one week of absences, one-third letter grade will be dropped; anything in excess of two weeks of absences may result in a withdrawal or failing

of the course. <http://www.rhodes.edu/collegehandbook/10372.asp> Quizzes will be administered if class appears to not have done the reading.

- **Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism:** All work submitted in this course must be original to the student and to the class. There is no tolerance for recycled or plagiarized work. If the student engages in any act of plagiarism or academic dishonesty, he/she will fail the assignment/class and be reported to the honor council. <http://www.rhodes.edu/studenthandbook/2175.asp#DisVio>
- **Late Assignments:** Not accepted without legitimate and verified excuse.
- **Assignment Weights:**
 - Participation – 10%
 - Thematic Essay Exam 1 – 15%
 - Thematic Essay Exam 2 – 20%
 - Critical Essay – 25%
 - Final Essay – 30%
- **Professor retains the right to change this syllabus.**

Course Schedule

January 9th

Introductions, Syllabus and Expectations

January 11th

✘ *Invisible Man*

January 14th

✘ *Invisible Man*

January 16th

✘ *Invisible Man*

January 18th

✘ *Invisible Man*

January 21st ~ Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Observance

January 23rd

✘ *Invisible Man*

January 25th

✘ *Invisible Man*

January 28th

✘ *Invisible Man*

January 30th

✘ *Invisible Man*

February 4th

✘ *Invisible Man*

✘ *Thematic Essay Exam Available*

February 6th

✘ *Thematic Essay Exam Due*

February 8th

✘ *Elbow Room*

February 11th

✘ *Elbow Room*

February 13th

✘ *Elbow Room*

February 15th

✘ *Elbow Room*

February 18th

✘ *The Women of Brewster Place*

February 20th

✘ *The Women of Brewster Place*

February 22nd

✘ *The Women of Brewster Place*

February 25th

✘ *Critical Essay Due*

February 27th

✘ *The Color Purple*

March 1st

✘ *The Color Purple*

March 4th

✘ *The Color Purple*

March 6th

✘ *The Color Purple*

March 8th

✘ *Beloved*

March 11-17th – Spring Recess

March 18th

✘ *Beloved*

March 20th

✘ *Beloved*

March 22nd

✘ *Beloved*

March 25th

✘ *Beloved*

✘ *Thematic Essay Exam Available*

March 27th

✘ *Thematic Essay Exam Due*

March 29th – Easter Recess

April 1st

✘ *The Known World*

April 3rd

✘ *The Known World*

April 5th

✘ *The Known World*

April 8th

✘ *The Known World*

April 10th

✘ *The Known World*

April 12th

✘ *The Known World*

April 15th

✘ *Salvage the Bones*

April 17th

✘ *Salvage the Bones*

April 19th

✘ *Salvage the Bones*

April 22nd

✘ *Salvage the Bones*

April 24th

✘ *Course Discussion and Evaluations*

April 26th

✘ *Final Paper Due*

✘ *Awards Convocation and URCAS*