

Survey of African American Literature

Professor: E.L. Gibson III
ENGL 265 - 01 (Fall 2012)
Clough Hall 304: MWF ~ 9:00-9:50am
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Office Hrs: MW ~ 1:30-2:45 / By Appointment

Teaching Philosophy

- Pedagogical Creed: *I am convinced that the act of learning can be likened to that of travel. And if the student is in the same position at the end of the semester as where he/she began at the beginning, then either 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! To Read, Write and Think – Critically!*

Course Description

- This is a **READING INTENSIVE** course that seeks to highlight important concepts and themes within African American literature. This course will survey the African American literary tradition from the 1600s to the present, with a particular focus on how the musings of African Americans capture, engage and critique the American narrative. Authors may include: Phillis Wheatley, Charles Chesnutt, Claude McKay, Zora Neale Hurston, Ralph Ellison, Toni Morrison, et cetera. The course will also examine popular literary movements such as the New Negro Harlem Renaissance and the Blacks Arts Movement.

Required and Supplementary Texts

- Gates and McKay, eds. *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*
- Joseph 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 Essays:** These writings are critical responses to the readings assigned for that week. They should be approximately two-three pages in length and should incorporate some elements from the readings. This is not busy work and should be taken seriously as it aids in the development of a critical lens. They will not be graded; however, will be regarded as ‘A’ acceptable, or ‘I’ incomplete. All essays must be in acceptable MLA format. Reflects **15%** of the student’s overall grade.
- **Annotated Bibliographies/Abstracts:** Reflects **10%** of the student’s overall grade.
- **Research Papers:** Each student is required to produce two research papers of varying lengths. These papers serve as both the midterm and the final examinations. Both papers must be in acceptable MLA format. Consult MLA handbook or <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/01/> for assistance.
 - Midterm Paper: A paper (6-8 pages) engaging a specific element covered within the first half of the course. This paper should be a close reading and 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. Student must submit electronic and tangible copies. Reflects **25%** of the student’s overall grade.
 - Final Paper: A paper (10-12 pages) exploring a piece of writing or movement within the African American literary tradition. 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. Outside sources are required and originality is demanded. Paper length is non-negotiable. Student must submit electronic and tangible copies. Reflects **35%** of the student’s overall grade.
- **Participation:** 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 their colleagues and professor in a serious dialogue over the text. After one week of unexcused absences, a letter grade will be dropped; anything in excess of two weeks of unexcused absences may result in a withdrawal or failing of the course. Reflects **15%** of the student’s overall grade. <http://www.rhodes.edu/collegehandbook/10372.asp>
- **Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism:** All work submitted in this course should be original to the student and to the class. There is no tolerance of recycled or

plagiarized work, and such an act will subject the student to sanction, failure and possible expulsion. <http://www.rhodes.edu/studenthandbook/2175.asp#DisVio>

- **Late Assignments:** Not accepted.
- **Grading:** A (90 -100%), B (80-89%), C (70-79%), D (60-69%)
- **Professor retains the right to change this syllabus.**

Course Schedule

- ❖ **Thematic Essays (Submitted during class)**
- ❖ **Annotated Bibliography/Abstract due October 3rd / October 5th**
- ❖ **Midterm Paper due October 12th**
- ❖ **Annotated Bibliography/Abstract due December 5th**
- ❖ **Final Exam Paper due December 10th**

August 22nd

Introductions, Syllabus and Expectations

August 24th

- ✘ **Intro:** The Literature of Slavery and Freedom (151-162)
- ✘ Hammon/Smith/Terry/Equiano/Wheatley (162-225)

August 27th

- ✘ Walker/Horton/Truth/Stewart/Delany (227-278)

August 29th

- ✘ Jacobs/Brown/Garnet (279-352)

August 31st (TE)

- ✘ Douglass (385-483)

September 3rd ~ Labor Day Recess

September 5th

- ✘ Whitfield/Harper/Wilson (483-540)

September 7th (TE)

- ✘ **Intro:** Literature of the Reconstruction to the New Negro Renaissance (541-569)
- ✘ Grimké/Washington (570-602)

September 10th

- ✘ Chesnutt (602-635)

September 12th

- ✘ Cooper/Hopkins/Wells-Barnett (635-686)

September 14th (TE)

- ✘ Du Bois (686-766)

September 17th

- ✘ Johnson (791-905)

September 19th

- ✘ Dunbar (905-928)
- ✘ Dunbar-Nelson/Braithwaite/Johnson (936-951)

September 21st (TE)

- ✘ **Intro:** Harlem Renaissance (953-962)
- ✘ Du Bois (766-784)
- ✘ Schomburg/Grimké/Spencer/Fauset/Locke/Johnson/Garvey/McKay (962-1019)

September 24th

- ✘ Larsen (1085-1167)

September 26th

- ✘ Toomer (1168-1219)
- ✘ Brown/Bennett (1248-1269)

September 28th (TE)

- ✘ Hughes/Cullen (1288-1351)

October 1st

- ✘ Hurston (1041-1085)

Film

- ✘ *The Great Debaters*

October 3rd

- ✘ **Annotated Bibliography**

Film

- ✘ *The Great Debaters*

October 5th

- ✘ **Abstract**

Film

- ✘ *The Great Debaters*

October 8th

- ✘ **Intro:** Realism, Naturalism, Modernism (1355-1368)

✘ Tolson (1368-1381)

October 10th

✘ West (1382-1399)

October 12th ~ Midterm Paper Due

✘ Paper/Mid-Course Discussion

October 13th-16th ~ Fall Recess

October 17th

✘ Wright (1399-1487)

October 19th (TE)

✘ Himes/Petry/Hayden (1487-1534)

October 22nd

✘ Ellison (1535-1617)

October 24th

✘ Walker/Brooks (1617-1696)

October 26th (TE)

✘ Baldwin (1696-1761)

October 29th

✘ Hansberry (1768-1830)

October 31st

✘ **Intro:** The Black Arts Era (1831-1850)

✘ Evans/Fuller (1850-1859)

November 2nd (TE)

✘ Malcolm/Williams/King (1859-1908)

November 5th

✘ Knight/Gayle/Lorde/Baraka/Sanchez (1908-1967)

November 7th

✘ Bullins (1968-2006)

November 9th (TE)

✘ Bullins (1968-2006)

November 12th

✘ Cleaver/Spellman/Jordan/Clifton/Cortez/Neal (2006-2050)

November 14th

- ✘ Reed (2051-2070)
- ✘ Bambara/Karenga/Madhubuti/Giovanni/McPherson (2075-2117)

November 16th (TE)

- ✘ **Intro:** Literature Since 1975 (2127-2139)
- ✘ Murray/Angelou/Marshall (2139-2195)

November 19th

- ✘ Final Paper Discussion

November 20th-25th ~ Thanksgiving Recess

November 26th

- ✘ Morrison (2210-2285)

November 28th

- ✘ Gaines/Major (2322-2353)
- ✘ Wideman/Delany (2376-2411)

November 30th

- ✘ Walker (2425-2457)
- ✘ Butler (2515-2529)
- ✘ Shange/Jones (2553-2566)

December 3rd

- ✘ Kincaid (2566-2576)
- ✘ Dove (2611-2623)
- ✘ Hemphill/Phillips (2644-2662)

December 5th ~ Last Day of Class

- ✘ Danticat/Whitehead (2662-2694)
- ✘ Course Discussion
- ✘ **Annotated Bibliography/Abstract**

December 10th ~ Final Paper Due