

## “Some of Us Are Brave”: Black Women’s Writing

**Professor Gibson**  
**ENG 264 (Spring 2014)**  
**Buckman Hall 309: TR ~ 11am-12:15pm**  
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**Office: 302 Palmer Hall, 901.843.3445**  
**Office Hrs: TR ~ 12:30-1:30pm & 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 fiction (particularly novels) written by black women. It considers how, in 1892, against the muddled sound of neo-American racism and sexism, a voice rang clear from the South: “Only the **BLACK WOMAN** can say when and where I enter, in the quiet, undisputed dignity of my womanhood, without violence and without suing or special patronage, then and there the whole Negro race enters with me.” Taking Anna Julia Cooper’s words as an epistemological consideration, this course surveys how black women negotiated complex racial and gender identities within their literature. Beginning with Phillis Wheatley and ending with contemporary black women’s writing, this course will highlight how the unique intersections of marginalized subjectivities shaped particular lived experiences.

### Required and Supplementary Texts

- Butler: *Kindred*
- Hurston: *Their Eyes Were Watching God*
- Jacobs: *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*
- Larsen: *Passing* (Electronic)
- Morrison: *The Bluest Eye*

- Naylor: *The Women of Brewster Place*
- Walker: *The Color Purple*
- Higginbotham, Fauset, Lorde, Marshall, Wheatley (PDF – Moodle)
- 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

- **Literary Criticisms:** One-page (single-spaced) responses to the longer texts within the course that critically assess an authorial intentionality or literary subtext based upon the student's careful and **complete** reading of the work. Not individually graded.
- **Thematic Essay:** A five-page essay surveying an identifiable theme within the literature covered up to the date of assignment. It is designed to evaluate the student's ability to articulate a sophisticated *reading* of the text(s). Professor will provide selection of literary concepts or prompts from which the student must choose. All essays must be in acceptable MLA format and submitted in hardcopy as well as via Moodle in a MS-Word document.
- **Critical Essays (2):** Student is required to produce two papers of varying lengths. Both must be in acceptable MLA format and submitted in hardcopy as well as via Moodle in a MS Word Document.
  - Critical Essay One: A seven to eight page essay engaging a specific element covered within the course. This paper should be a close reading and/or thematic treatment of a text or multiple texts and should critically examine salient elements within the work. In particular, the essay should highlight how the texts covered within the class speak to a particular theme, trope, motif, symbol, construction, et cetera. Paper length is non-negotiable.
  - Critical Essay Two (Final Paper): A fifteen-page essay exploring a central idea, theme, trope, symbol, motif, construction, 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. Outside research is required (acceptable scholarly texts, articles, and criticisms). Paper length is non-negotiable.
- Consult MLA handbook or <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/01/> for writing/literary assistance.

- **Engagement/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, the text, and the professor in serious dialogue. 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:**
  - Engagement – 10%
  - Literary Criticisms – 10%
  - Thematic Essay – 20%
  - Critical Essay – 25%
  - Final Essay – 35%
- **Professor retains the right to change this syllabus.**

<b>Course Schedule</b>
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**January 9<sup>th</sup>**

*Introductions, Syllabus*

*Locating a Black Women's Literary Tradition*

**January 14<sup>th</sup>**

✘ Higginbotham and Wheatley (Moodle)

**January 16<sup>th</sup>**

✘ Jacobs

**January 21<sup>st</sup>**

✘ Jacobs

**January 23<sup>rd</sup>**

✘ Jacobs

**January 28<sup>th</sup>**

✘ Jacobs

**January 30<sup>th</sup>**

✘ Jacobs

✘ **Literary Criticism (1)**

**February 4<sup>th</sup>**

✘ Fauset (Moodle)

✘ Larsen

**February 6<sup>th</sup>**

✘ Larsen

✘ **Literary Criticism (2)**

**February 11<sup>th</sup>**

✘ Hurston

✘ **Thematic Essay**

**February 13<sup>th</sup>**

✘ Hurston

**February 18<sup>th</sup>**

✘ Hurston

✘ **Literary Criticism (3)**

**February 20<sup>th</sup>**

✘ Marshall / Lorde (Moodle)

**February 25<sup>th</sup>**

✘ Sanchez / Giovanni (Moodle)

**February 27<sup>th</sup>**

✘ Morrison

**March 4<sup>th</sup>**

✘ Morrison

**March 6<sup>th</sup>**

✘ Morrison

✘ **Literary Criticism (4)**

**March 8-16<sup>th</sup> – *Spring Recess***

**March 18<sup>th</sup>**

✘ Naylor

**March 20<sup>th</sup>**

✘ Naylor

**March 25<sup>th</sup>**

✘ Naylor

**March 27<sup>th</sup>**

✘ Walker

✘ **Critical Essay (One)**

**April 1<sup>st</sup>**

✘ Walker

**April 3<sup>rd</sup>**

✘ Walker

**April 8<sup>th</sup>**

✘ Butler

**April 10<sup>th</sup>**

✘ Butler

**April 15<sup>th</sup>**

✘ Butler

**April 17<sup>th</sup>**

✘ Butler

✘ **Literary Criticism (5)**

**April 22<sup>nd</sup>**

✘ **Final Essay Discussion**

**April 24<sup>th</sup>**

✘ **Course Discussion and Evaluations**

**April 27<sup>th</sup>**

✘ ***Final Essay Due***