

Survey of African American Literature

Professor: E.L. Gibson, III
ENGL 224 (Fall 2013)
Clough Hall 304: MWF ~ 12:00-12:50pm
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Office: 302 Palmer Hall, 901.843.3445
Office Hrs: MW ~ 1:00-2:30pm / 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 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*
- 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 (3):** There will be three five-page thematic essays throughout this course. These essays 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 essay will offer the student a selection of literary concepts or prompts in which the student must choose one and write a five-page critical essay. The student will have one week to complete the essay. 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 papers must be in acceptable MLA format and submitted both via Moodle and hardcopy in a MS-Word Document.

Consult MLA handbook or <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/01/> for assistance.

- Critical Essay (Midterm): A seven-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 critically engages salient elements within the work. Paper length is non-negotiable.
- Final Essay (Research): A ten-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.
- **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 Essays - 35% (10/10/15)
 - Critical Essay – 25%
 - Final Essay – 30%
- **Professor retains the right to change this syllabus.**

Course Schedule

August 21st

Introductions, Syllabus and Expectations

August 23rd

✘ Hammon/Terry/Wheatley (selections)

August 26th

✘ Equiano

August 28th

✘ Walker/Truth

August 30th

✘ Jacobs

Labor Day Recess – September 2nd

September 4th

✘ Jacobs

September 6th

✘ Douglass (387-421)

September 9th

✘ Douglass (421-452)

✘ **Thematic Essay 1 Assigned**

September 11th

✘ Washington (570-602)

September 13th

✘ Chesnutt (604-612; 624-632)

September 16th

✘ *Thematic Essay 1 Due*

September 18th

✘ Harper/Cooper (selections/entire)

September 20th

✘ Wells-Barnett

September 23rd

✘ Du Bois (Souls: Forethought, Ch.'s I, III)

September 25th

✘ Du Bois (Souls: Ch.'s XI, XIII, Afterthought)

September 27th

✘ Johnson (800-843)

September 30th

✘ Johnson (843-883)

October 2nd

✘ Dunbar/Johnson (selections)

October 4th

✘ Du Bois/Locke/Garvey (777-784; 984-993; 997-999)

October 7th

✘ Larsen (1086-1129)

October 9th

✘ Larsen (1129-1167)

October 11th

✘ *Midterm Paper Due*

Fall Break – October 14th

October 16th

✘ Fauset/Johnson/Hurston (976-983 / selections / 1022-1030)

October 18th

✘ McKay/Hughes/Cullen (selections)

October 21st

- ✘ Tolson/Toomer (selections)
- ✘ Film Showing (Evening)
- ✘ **Thematic Essay 2 Assigned**

October 23rd

- ✘ Wright (1436-1470)

October 25th

- ✘ Himes/Petry (1488-1504)

October 28th

- ✘ Walker/Brooks (selections)
- ✘ **Thematic Essay 2 Due**

October 30th

- ✘ Baldwin (1728-1749)

November 1st

- ✘ Hansberry (1771-1796)

November 4th

- ✘ Hansberry (1796-1830)

November 6th

- ✘ Malcolm X/King (1860-1876; 1896-1908)

November 8th

- ✘ Lorde/Sanchez/Giovanni (selections)

November 11th

- ✘ Baraka (1943; 1946-1960)
- ✘ **Thematic Essay 3 Assigned**

November 13th

- ✘ Cleaver (2007-2014)

November 15th

- ✘ Angelou/Marshall (2158-2167; 2189-2195)

November 18th

- ✘ Morrison/Walker (2290-2299; 2430-2437)
- ✘ **Thematic Essay 3 Due**

November 20th

- ✘ Wideman (2379-2386)

November 22nd

- ✘ Butler

November 25th

- ✘ Shange/Dove (selections)

December 2nd

- ✘ Literature Review
- ✘ Evaluations

December 4th

- ✘ Course Discussion
- ✘ **Final Paper Due (Will accept on December 6th)**