

Survey of African American Literature

Professor: E.L. Gibson III
ENGL 224 (Fall 2014)
Palmer Hall 211: MWF ~ 12:00-12:50pm
Email: GibsonE@Rhodes.edu
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 Smith (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 27th

Introductions, Syllabus and Expectations

August 29th

✘ Hammon/Terry/Wheatley (selections)

Labor Day Recess – September 1st

September 3rd

✘ Equiano

September 5th

✘ Walker/Truth

September 8th

✘ Northrup

September 10th

✘ Jacobs

September 12th

✘ Jacobs

September 15th

✘ Douglass (*Narrative*)

September 17th

✘ Douglass (*Narrative*; “What to the Slave...”)

✘ **Thematic Essay 1 Assigned**

September 19th

✘ Washington

September 22nd

✘ Chesnutt (“Goophered”; “Wife”)

September 24th

✘ *Thematic Essay 1 Due*

September 26th

✘ Harper/Cooper (selections/entire)

September 29th

✘ Wells-Barnett

October 1st

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

October 3rd

✘ Johnson (*Autobiography*)

October 6th

✘ Johnson (*Autobiography*)

October 8th

✘ Dunbar/Johnson (selections)

October 10th

✘ Du Bois/Locke/Garvey (“Criteria”; “New Negro”; “Africa”)

October 13th

✘ Larsen

October 15th

✘ Larsen/Toomer (selections for Toomer)

October 17th

✘ **Midterm Paper Due**

Fall Break – October 20th

October 22nd

✘ Fauset/Hurston (“Sweat”)

October 24th

✘ McKay/Hughes/Cullen (selections)

October 27th

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

October 29th

- ✘ Wright

October 31st

- ✘ Himes/Petry

November 3rd

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

November 5th

- ✘ Hansberry

November 7th

- ✘ Hansberry

November 10th

- ✘ Malcolm X/King

November 12th

- ✘ Ellison (“Change”; “World and Jug”)
- ✘ **Thematic Essay 3 Assigned**

November 14th

- ✘ Baldwin (“Sonny’s Blues”; “Going to Meet”)

November 17th

- ✘ Lorde/Baraka/Sanchez/Giovanni (selections)

November 19th

- ✘ Morrison (*Sula*)
- ✘ **Thematic Essay 3 Due**

November 21st

- ✘ Morrison (*Sula*)

November 24th

- ✘ Delany/Butler

***Thanksgiving Break* – November 25th – November 30th**

December 1st

- ✘ Angelou/Shange/Dove (selections)

December 3rd

- ✘ Hemphill/Phillips/Whitehead

December 5th

- ✘ Trethewey/Danticat

December 8th

- ✘ Literature Review
- ✘ Evaluations

December 10th

- ✘ Course Discussion
- ✘ **Final Paper Due**