

## Survey of African American Literature

**Professor Gibson**  
**ENGL 224 (Fall 2015)**  
**Palmer 211: MWF ~ 12:00-12:50pm**  
**Email: GibsonE@Rhodes.edu**  
**Office: 302 Palmer Hall; 901.843.3445**  
**Office Hrs: MW ~ 10:00-11:00am / 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.**

<b>Course Schedule</b>
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**August 26<sup>th</sup>**

*Introductions, Syllabus and Expectations*

**August 28<sup>th</sup>**

✘ Hammon/Terry/Wheatley (selections)

**August 31<sup>st</sup>**

✘ Equiano

**September 2<sup>nd</sup>**

✘ Walker/Truth

**September 4<sup>th</sup>**

✘ Northrup

*Labor Day Recess – September 7<sup>th</sup>*

**September 9<sup>th</sup>**

✘ Jacobs

**September 11<sup>th</sup>**

✘ Jacobs

**September 14<sup>th</sup>**

✘ Douglass (*Narrative*)

**September 16<sup>th</sup>**

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

✘ **Thematic Essay 1 Assigned**

**September 18<sup>th</sup>**

✘ Washington

**September 21<sup>st</sup>**

✘ Chesnutt (“Goophered”; “Wife”)

**September 23<sup>rd</sup>**

✘ *Thematic Essay 1 Due*

**September 25<sup>th</sup>**

✘ Harper/Cooper (selections/entire)

**September 28<sup>th</sup>**

✘ Wells-Barnett

**September 30<sup>th</sup>**

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

**October 2<sup>nd</sup>**

✘ Johnson (*Autobiography*)

**October 5<sup>th</sup>**

✘ Johnson (*Autobiography*)

**October 7<sup>th</sup>**

✘ Dunbar/Johnson (selections)

**October 9<sup>th</sup>**

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

**October 12<sup>th</sup>**

✘ Larsen

**October 14<sup>th</sup>**

✘ Larsen/Toomer (selections for Toomer)

**October 16<sup>th</sup>**

✘ **Midterm Paper Due**

***Fall Break* – October 20<sup>th</sup>**

**October 21<sup>st</sup>**

✘ Fauset/Hurston (“Sweat”)

**October 23<sup>rd</sup>**

✘ McKay/Hughes/Cullen (selections)

**October 26<sup>th</sup>**

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

**October 28<sup>th</sup>**

- ✘ Wright

**October 30<sup>rd</sup>**

- ✘ Himes/Petry

**November 2<sup>nd</sup>**

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

**November 4<sup>th</sup>**

- ✘ Hansberry

**November 6<sup>th</sup>**

- ✘ Hansberry

**November 9<sup>th</sup>**

- ✘ Malcolm X/King

**November 11<sup>th</sup>**

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

**November 13<sup>th</sup>**

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

**November 16<sup>th</sup>**

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

**November 18<sup>th</sup>**

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

**November 20<sup>th</sup>**

- ✘ Morrison (*Sula*)

**November 23<sup>rd</sup>**

- ✘ Delany/Butler

***Thanksgiving Break – November 29<sup>th</sup>***

**November 30<sup>th</sup>**

✘ Angelou/Shange/Dove (selections)

**December 2<sup>nd</sup>**

✘ Hemphill/Phillips/Whitehead

**December 4<sup>th</sup>**

✘ Trethewey/Danticat

**December 7<sup>th</sup>**

✘ Literature Review

✘ Evaluations

**December 9<sup>th</sup>**

✘ Course Discussion

✘ **Final Paper Due**