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ENG 2705G-001: African American and Africana Literatures

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Eastern Illinois University

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Literatures of the African Diaspora

English 2705G – Fall, 2022

Coleman 3170 – TR 3:30–4:45

Professor

Tim Engles

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Coleman 3831

Office Hours: TR 12:30 to 2:00; you can also schedule a Zoom appointment here, MWF 2:00 to 4:00: <https://calendly.com/timengles/30min>

Books (from Textbook Rental Service)

Kyle Baker, *Nat Turner* (2005)

Nella Larsen, *The Complete Fiction of Nella Larsen*

Langston Hughes, *The Ways of White Folks* (1934)

Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959)

Jamaica Kincaid, *A Small Place* (1988)

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2008)

Natasha Brown, *Assembly* (2021)

Kiley Reid, *Such a Fun Age* (2019)

COURSE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Read the following sections carefully!

You are responsible for everything written here.

The term "African diaspora" refers to diverse peoples and cultures of African origin that have dispersed throughout the world; it also indicates consciousness of shared origins, interests and struggles. We will read a range of literature written by widely dispersed authors of African descent, making as we go connections and distinctions among the creative works' themes, formal devices, political outlooks, and more. The concept of diaspora will enable consideration of continuities and connections within the African world experience, without compromising the uniqueness and historical specificity of each culture.

Also, keep in mind that this is a literature course, **which means a lot of regular reading**. I will expect you to come to class having carefully read each day's reading assignment, and to bring it with you to class. I've chosen materials that previous students have enjoyed, but if you're not a fan of reading literature, you should consider taking another course.

For the record, here's the EIU catalog description of our course:

ENG 2705G - African American and Africana Literatures. (3-0-3) F. An introduction to African American and Africana literatures in their sociocultural and historical contexts, with emphasis on such writers as Achebe, Hurston, Hughes, Wright, Ellison, Baldwin, Baraka, Morrison, Walker, Wilson. Prerequisites & Notes: ENG 1001G/1091G. Credit will not be granted for both ENG 2705G and ENG 2705. WI Credits: 3

Learning Objectives

Our goals include the refinement of your skills in the following areas:

- ✓ **Reading and understanding** the perspectives, conventions, and techniques represented by a diverse collection of texts that represent traditions and historical eras wrought by the African Diaspora.
- ✓ **Analyzing** texts and literary conventions through different reading experiences in formal and informal written assignments.
- ✓ **Developing** your writing skills to demonstrate an understanding of literary conventions and techniques in formal written assignments.
- ✓ **Reading critically** by questioning and evaluating what you read. Understanding the distinction between "opinion" and "reasoned argument" depends on your mastery of critical reading skills, which will enable you to discern and emulate the successful argumentative strategies of other writers. In order to be a better reader, you have to participate in what you are reading, actively deciphering the scenario that the author presents, rather than passively absorbing strings of words. Regular reading quizzes will help to boost your skills in this area.
- ✓ **Reflecting** on the relation of a text's meanings to yourself as a racialized individual, and improving your ability to think and speak productively about race within the ongoing context of a white supremacist social order.
- ✓ **Comparing** the apparent goals of the producers of Africana literatures, the varied audiences their works are designed to address, and the strategies used by authors and publishers to impact their audiences and achieve their goals

- ✓ **Considering** how class, gender, sexuality, region, religion, and other aspects of identity or environment complicate what it means to be of “African descent,” and how that is reflected in creative texts.
- ✓ **Listening and responding** thoughtfully to ideas and perspectives presented by your professor and your classmates.

Attendance & Class Participation

You are expected to attend our class meetings as scheduled, and to participate regularly in our in-person and online discussions. When you must miss class, you are responsible for any missed material; remember that handouts provided in class will also be available in D2L.

Note that because graded assignments rely so heavily on our discussions, **chronic absence can severely impact your final grade, and what you get from our course.** It is your responsibility to initiate plans for any make-up work and to complete it promptly, and in such cases, to provide documentation that justifies your absence. For example, if your illness is treated by EIU Health and Counseling Services, you can request such documentation.

Regarding tardiness: This is a small class, so late arrivals are disruptive—if for some bizarre reason you wish to get on my bad side, you can easily do so by developing the habit of arriving late for class. **If you will not be able to arrive on time for our course because of other commitments, you should drop it and take another section.**

Also, in the interests of keeping everyone in class undistracted and focused, ***please do not read outside materials or eat food in class (drinking beverages is okay). Also be sure to silence your phone ahead of time, and do not text or otherwise use your phone during class.*** If you happen to be expecting an important or emergency call or text, that’s okay—just let me know before class begins. Finally, please refrain from “packing up” during the last few minutes of class; I will signal when the discussion is finished, and I promise to end each session by 4:45.

Notice below that **participation** will factor heavily in your final grade. In our course, participation includes not only paying attention/being alert, but also speaking thoughtfully in class and/or posting well in D2L discussion forums. Since I recognize that not all students are comfortable with speaking in class, students who do not speak much are welcome to write more in the forums. I will not assign a grade to each of your online posts, but I will be closely watching our forums, and sometimes participating in them.

A Note About Email

Enrollment in this class requires use of your EIU email account, and you must check it

frequently for messages pertaining to the course. Email is the quickest, easiest way to reach me, and I welcome any and all emailed questions—I always respond within 24 hours, and usually much sooner: tdengles@eiu.edu

Grades, Assignments & Late Penalties

All grades are on a 100-point scale (90-100 = A, 80-89 += B, etc.), and your final grade will work in the following way.

2 short essays	20%
Final essay	30%
Final exam	25%
Participation/quizzes	25%

Late assignments will be penalized fifteen points for each day they are late. You will be submitting most assignments in a D2L Dropbox, and I cannot read and grade assignments that are not submitted in Word format. **You are responsible for making sure that you've submitted your assignment correctly, and in Word format (and NOT as a One Drive link, nor a PDF, nor in Apple "Pages" format). Submitting an assignment in a format other than Word will result in the usual late penalties.**

EIU's (free!) Writing Center

If you are aware of chronic problems with your writing, I strongly recommend that you make use of our Writing Center's free services. I will pay close attention to each student's particular writing problems, and I may advise some of you to seek additional help at the Writing Center. One-on-one sessions provide help with any aspect of writing, including brainstorming, organization, development, sentence structure, documentation, and grammar. Students may drop in to schedule appointments during working hours in 3110 Coleman Hall, or [do so online here](#), or by calling 217.581.5929.

General Grading Rubric

We will assess a sample student essay along with the rubric specifically used for grading English course assignments. More generally, your assignments in this course will be graded in the following terms:

- ✓ **A grade of A** indicates work that is truly outstanding in every way. In addition to completely and promptly following the guidelines for the assignment, work that receives an A grade provides a depth of analysis that adds substantive insight to the conversation surrounding its topic. This level of work engages deeply with the themes, issues and ideas involved in a particular text and often links those themes, issues and ideas to the larger ones that arise in our course. A-level work

is rare, and it should be noted that merely writing MORE than what was assigned does not in itself merit a grade of A.

- ✓ **A grade of B** indicates that, in addition to completing the assignment on time and completely, you have provided a depth of insight and analysis that shows deep thought about the assignment and its implications, active engagement with the topic at hand, and careful thought about it, all expressed in clear, cogent and insightful writing. In other words, B-level work does more than simply complete the assignment; it engages deeply with the assignment.
- ✓ **A grade of C** indicates that you have completed the assignment as required in an adequate, satisfactory and punctual manner. All necessary components of the assignment are present and completed according to what was required. The writing is clear and grammatically correct. In other words, merely doing the assignment adequately and on time merits a grade of C.
- ✓ **A grade of D** indicates that the work does not meet the requirements of the assignment in some major ways. In other words, work might be given a D if it does not engage adequately with the assigned topics and issues. Note that a grade of D may be given to work that partially completes the assignment, but is incomplete.
- ✓ **A grade of F** indicates that the assignment is either extremely incomplete or that it does nothing to engage with the assigned topic.

A Note About Reading

Since one skill you will be developing in this course is the art of textual analysis, you must give our readings and viewings more than a quick skimming over. Instead of wolfing them down and rushing to complete them, set aside enough time on a regular basis to read and view carefully. Consider taking notes as you read, and then decide for yourself what each author is trying to describe and bring to light.

Respect for Diversity

It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. I have also worked to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, and culture.

I encourage and would appreciate any suggestions you might have—please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other

students or student groups. In addition, if any of our class meetings conflict with your religious events, please let me know so that we can make arrangements for you.

Also, all people have the right to be addressed and referred to in accordance with their personal identity. In this class, we will have the chance to indicate the name that we prefer to be called and, if we choose, to identify pronouns with which we would like to be addressed. I will do my best to address and refer to all students accordingly and to support all of you in doing so as well.

Academic Integrity

We will work under the Academic Integrity policy followed by all Eastern Illinois University students. Plagiarism and cheating are not tolerated, and the consequences are severe. For any concerns you might have in this area, see EIU's [Code of Conduct](#). If you have questions about whether any particular method you want to use might violate this code, be sure to ask me about it.

For Students with Disabilities

If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the [Office of Student Disability Services](#) (581-6583) as soon as possible. Also, of course, let me know about it and about what I can do to help accommodate your needs.

Student Well-being

EIU is committed to supporting and advancing the mental health and well-being of our students. Students may experience stressors that can impact both their academic experience and their personal mental health and well-being. These may include academic pressure and challenges associated with relationships, anxiety, depression, alcohol or other drugs, identities, and finances.

If you are experiencing concerns, seeking help is a courageous thing to do, for yourself and for those who care about you. Here is a list of available campus resources to assist with student well-being:

- ✓ [EIU Counseling Clinic](#): Human Services Building, 1st floor; 217-581-3413; for after-hours urgent support, call 1-866-567-2400. The Counseling Clinic offers individual and group counseling, emergency services, and resources.
- ✓ [Online Mental Health Screening](#): online, private screening tool for depression, anxiety, eating disorders, and alcohol and substance misuse.

- ✓ EIU Health Clinic: Human Services Building, 1st floor; 217-581-3013. The Health Clinic services include lab work, pharmacy, and women's health and men's health programs.
- ✓ Health Education Resource Center (HERC): 2201 Blair Hall; 217-581-7786. The HERC offers health programming in the areas of alcohol, tobacco and other drug prevention and education, flu and cold prevention and education, nutritional analysis and education, and sexual health education, in addition to other health-related topics.
- ✓ Center for Gender and Sexual Diversity (GSD): Stevenson Hall, lower level; 217-581-7117. The GSD Center provides services such as the Trans*formation Station, a large library full of books and movies, year-round programming, and a comprehensive Safe Zone Training program.
- ✓ EIU Campus Food Pantry: 1347 McAfee. The EIU Campus Food Pantry is a means to support students and the campus community by alleviating barriers to consistent, adequate, and healthful food. Anyone with a Panther Card can visit the pantry two times per month.
- ✓ Student Legal Service: MLK Jr University Union Room 2420; 217-581-6054. Student Legal Service can assist with off-campus housing issues, traffic violations, misdemeanor criminal offenses, municipal ordinance violations, and expungement.
- ✓ Financial Aid and Scholarships: Student Services Building East Wing; 217-581-6405, Fax: 217-581-6422, finaid@eiu.edu. The Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships provides information and guidance to secure the necessary financial resources to meet educational goals and financial obligations to the university.

EIU's Student Success Center

Students struggling to achieve their academic goals are encouraged to contact the Student Success Center (www.eiu.edu/~success) for assistance with time management, test taking, note taking, avoiding procrastination, setting goals, and other academic skills. The Student Success Center provides individualized consultations. For an appointment, call 217-581-6696, or go to McAfee Gym, Room 1301.

A Reminder for ELA Students

Students seeking Teacher Certification in English Language Arts should request that each of their English Department professors complete the "Application for English Department Approval to Student Teach" before the end of the semester. You can do so by emailing them with your request and a link to this online form: <https://www.eiu.edu/english/machform/view.php?id=19831>.

Technical Support

For technical support with D2L, you can contact the ITS Help Desk at 217-581-4357 or itshelp@eiu.edu or CATS Training Services for Students at 217-581-8358.

Literatures of the African Diaspora Daily Schedule

This schedule is not set in stone; any changes will be announced well in advance. BE SURE to bring the readings to class if a reading assignment is listed for that day; students who show up without a copy of the day's reading assignment may be marked absent.

T AUG 23 Introduction to the course; Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, "[Bury Me in a Free Land](#)" (1845); in-class viewing: Jan and John Halgis, "[Bury Me in a Free Land](#)"

R AUG 25 Download from D2L, print, read carefully and bring to class: Heather Andrea Williams, "[The Atlantic Slave Trade](#)"; in-class viewing: Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche, "[The Danger of a Single Story](#)"

F AUG 26 By 11:59 p.m., post your first response and one or more to a classmate in the [D2L "Introductions" Forum](#); note that today is also the last day you can add a course to your schedule

T AUG 30 Read for today: half of Kyle Baker, *Nat Turner*

R SEP 1 Finish *Nat Turner*

F SEP 2 Last day you can drop a course with no grade; also the last day you can withdraw from all classes with full tuition and fees refund

T SEP 6 In D2L, print out, read carefully and bring to class Charles Chesnutt, "The Passing of Grandison" (1899)

R SEP 8 D2L reading: Charles Chesnutt, "The Wife of His Youth" (1898) and Nella Larsen, "Sanctuary" (1930), in *The Complete Fiction of Nella Larsen*, 19-28

T SEP 13 D2L reading: Poems by Claude McKay

- No in-person class today; we will work with these poems on D2L because Dr. Engles will be traveling -- *details coming soon...*

R SEP 15 D2L reading: Countee Cullen, "Heritage" (1922); Nella Larsen, *Passing* (1929), 163-206

M SEP 19 Last day you can withdraw from all classes with 50% tuition and fees refund

T SEP 20 *Passing*, 207-59

R SEP 22 Finish *Passing*

T SEP 27 Langston Hughes, "Home" (33-49) and "Poor Little Black Fellow" (133-159), in *The Ways of White Folks* (1934); Discussion of Paper 1 Topics

R SEP 29 D2L reading: Sarah-Jane (Saje) Mathieu, "The African American Great Migration Reconsidered"; also Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959), Act 1

T OCT 4 *A Raisin in the Sun*, Act 2

R OCT 6 Finish *A Raisin in the Sun*; **Paper 1 Due in D2L Dropbox by midnight**

F OCT 7 **Fall Break – No Classes**

T OCT 11 D2L Reading: Austin Clark, "Galaxie" (2013); also watch Mighty Sparrow, "Capitalism Gone Mad" (1983) while reading these lyrics

R OCT 13 Half of Jamaica Kincaid, *A Small Place* (1988)

T OCT 18 Finish *A Small Place*

R OCT 20 D2L Reading: Review before class the Pecha Kucha Guidelines; in-class—discussion of this project

T OCT 25 "Imitation" and "The Thing Around Your Neck," in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2008)

R OCT 27 No class – find and read an outside work for your Pecha Kucha

T NOV 1 No class – polish up your Pecha Kucha; **Pecha Kucha due in D2L Dropbox by midnight**

R NOV 3 D2L reading: Sample student essay; in-class discussion of Final Paper

T NOV 8 D2L reading: Andrea Levy, "Loose Change" (2014)

R NOV 10 D2L reading: Meta Davis Cumberbatch, "A Child of Nature (Negro of the Caribbean)" (date unknown); also read half of Natasha Brown, *Assembly*

T NOV 15 Finish *Assembly*; **Paper 2 Due in D2L Dropbox by midnight**

R NOV 17 Kiley Reid, *Such a Fun Age*, 1-56

NOVEMBER 21 – 25 Thanksgiving Break!

T NOV 29 *Such a Fun Age*, 57-149

R DEC 1 *Such a Fun Age*, 150-205

T DEC 7 Finish *Such a Fun Age*

R DEC 8 **Final Paper due in D2L Dropbox by midnight**; discussion of Final Exam

Our Final Exam Period: Tuesday, December 13, 2:45-4:45 pm