

Fall 8-15-2008

ENG 2705-001: African American Literature

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2705-001

Michael Loudon
English 2705.001
TR 0930-1045 Coleman 3160
Fall 2008

Office: CH3361 (314D) Office Hours:
TR 3:30-4:30; W 10:30-11:30 & 2-3;
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African American Literature

Description: This course provides an overview of African-American literature, using selected representative texts of fiction, poetry and drama. We shall begin with a brief consideration of the oral tradition and slave narratives, then we shall move rapidly to the reading of several modern and contemporary authors. While I shall introduce primary literary concerns and suggest issues of thematic consequence, class discussions will determine the direction of our analytical focus from text to text. Finally, one central course objective will be to discover and to define the patterns that constitute the development of a cohesive literary tradition that is rich in cultural heritage and diverse in literary innovation. The course format will be lecture and discussion.

Prerequisite and Electronic Writing Portfolio Submissions: Students must have completed English 1002G or its equivalent before enrolling in ENG 2705, a "writing intensive" course. Sophomores and juniors may elect to submit an essay from ENG 2705 to their Electronic Writing Portfolio (EWP). **This means that you may need to submit an essay from this course for your EWP.** If so, you must inform me no later than the last week of class—EWP submissions are not accepted after completion of the course, and **you are responsible** for consulting the web site of Center for Academic Support and Achievement for instructions. See <http://www.eiu/~assess> for more information.

Requirements: These are: two six-to-eight-page essays (40%); a midterm essay examination (15%); a final essay examination (25%); and, active preparation and participation in the course—including exercises, reading quizzes (20%).

Required texts:

James Baldwin, *Go Tell it on the Mountain*
Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*
H. L. Gates, Jr., ed., *The Norton Anthology of African-American Literature* (2nd ed.) [**Check to see that the audio CD is there.**]
Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*
Handouts as distributed in class

Please note: The study of African American literature *is the study of American literature and culture from the point of view of African American writers giving voice to African American experiences in the context of American culture and history in light of the enslavement, struggles and achievements of those Americans of African descent.* Our discussions must be frank and honest—if we are to make use of this literature beyond class or race privilege and beyond a checkbox of "the cultural diversity" or "multicultural education" requirements. To that end, my hope is for vigorous debate and discussion but always in the spirit of respect, discovery, equality and intellectual growth for us all. Such responsibility begins in hearing and reading the texts. Such work means, fundamentally, becoming a different person in that growth. Such responsible growth suggests commitment to each other.

General Policies:

Grading Standards: I shall follow the EIU English Department Guidelines, distributed in class. In all cases, I shall use a plus and minus system to distinguish, say, a high *B* from a low one.

Attendance: I do take roll, and I evaluate attendance only indirectly in the context of your participation in the course.

Conferences: These are at your request unless I ask to see you. Please ask for help as soon as you feel you need it; please don't wait until the last couple of weeks of class.

Submission of work: Essays should be typed, double-spaced, on one side of the paper only, titled and indicate the following: name, date, and course and section number. Exercises and quizzes must be legible.

Late Essays: For each day that the essay is late, the letter grade will fall by one full grade: an *A* essay due on Thursday will be an *F* by the next Thursday. If there are particular difficulties, please see me.

Plagiarism: The English Department Policy

Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism--"The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and the representation of them as one's own original work" (*Random House Dictionary of the English Language*)--has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of a grade of *F* for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office.

If I discover an act of plagiarism, I shall exercise the right to the fullest extent possible. (See <http://www.eiu/~judicial/code.html> for more information.)

Information 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.

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Fall 2008

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African American Literature: Course Syllabus

August

- T 26: Course introduction
R 28: African American literature and the literary canon ("Preface")
The Vernacular Tradition (3-94)
(All page numbers are from *The Norton Anthology*...unless otherwise noted. Read the introductory prose and scan the songs.
Throughout the course, read all prefaces to historical sections and head notes to the individual authors that we're reading.)

September

- T 2: Premises and Contexts for the Study of African American Literature (handout); continue reading and scanning "The Vernacular Tradition"
R 4: (continued)

T 9: The Construction of Culture: Making a Life within Enslavement
R 11: **Slavery and Freedom** (151-162)
Frederick Douglass, *Narrative*... (387-452)

T 16: (continued)
R 18: (continued)

T 23: Legacies--Sojourner Truth (245-255) and William Wells Brown (315-325) *Essay #1 assigned*
R 25: **Reconstruction** (541-554)
Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery* (570-602)

T 30: W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (686-766; Chapters 1, 3, 5, 6, 10 and 14 for class discussion)

October

- R 2: (continued)

T 7: **Harlem Renaissance** (953-962)
W. E. B. Du Bois, "Criteria of Negro Art" (777-784);
Schomburg (962-967); Locke (983-993); Garvey (995-1003)
R 9: McKay (1003-1010, especially "Africa" and "America");
Schuyler (1220-1223); Hughes (1288-1291; 1311-1314)
Take-home midterm examination assigned

T 14: Zora Neale Hurston, (1019-1022; 1041-1053)
Their Eyes Were Watching God
R 16: (continued) **Take-home midterm examination DUE**

T 21: Jean Toomer, *Cane* (1168-1219)
R 23: (continued) **Essay #1 DUE**

- T 28: Hughes (1291-1311); Countee Cullen (1339-1351, especially "Heritage"); Brown (1248-1266)
 R 30: video *Lightin' Hopkins*; Blues (30; 45; 48-63); *Audio Companion-Disc #1*: 11-18; *Audio Companion-Disc #2*: 24; Essay #2 assigned

November

- T 4: **Realism, Naturalism, Modernism** (1355-1368)
 Richard Wright (1399-1410); from *Black Boy* (1471-1487)
 R 6: Robert Hayden (1516-1534, especially 1525-1528)

 T 11: Gwendolyn Brooks (1623-1649, especially 1633-1638)
 R 13: Ralph Ellison (1535-1548; 1570-1578)
 Ellison, *Invisible Man*

 T 18: (continued)
 R 20: (continued)

Thanksgiving Recess

December

- T 2: James Baldwin (1696-1713, especially "Stranger in the Village") and "Sonny's Blues" (1728-1749)
 R 4: James Baldwin, *Go Tell it on the Mountain*

 T 9: (continued)
 R 11: **Black Arts Movement** (1831-1850)
 Martin Luther King, Jr., "I Have a Dream" and Malcolm X, "The Ballot or the Bullet," *Audio Companion-Disc #2*: 22-23

Read all selections below, but see especially:

Larry Neal (2038-2050), "The Black Arts Movement"
 Maulana Karenga, (2086-2090), "Black Art: Mute Matter Given Force and Function"

Group presentations TBA on:

Mari Evans (1850-1852), "I Am a Black Woman" (1851)
 Etheridge Knight (1908-1911), all three poems

Hoyt Fuller (1852-1859), "Towards a Black Aesthetic"
 Addison Gayle, Jr. (1911-1918), "The Black Aesthetic"

Audre Lorde (1919-1926), especially "Poetry Is Not a Luxury"
 Amiri Baraka (1937-1946), "Black Art" and "Wailers" (1943-46)
 Sonia Sanchez (1963-1967), from *A Blues Book for Blue Black Magical Women* (1966-1967)

Michael Harper (2070-2075), all poems
 Haki Madhubuti (2090-2096), all poems

Essay #2 DUE

Final examination: Thursday, December 18, 8:00-10:00 am