Spring 1-15-2008

ENG 2009G-001

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Finding Our Place

This course examines how ordinary people respond to various forms of pressure from “above,” as they try to find a place for themselves in an unwelcoming world. We will take up a range of topics, including: systems of bondage; notions of property, identity, and belonging; forms of homelessness; distinctiveness and disability; iron manacles and those that are 'mind-forged.' In addition to reading and discussing a variety of autobiographies and two novels, you will write two short papers and two examinations.

Andrews, Six Women Slave Narratives
Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers’ Project 1936-1938
Douglass, Narrative of the Life of... an American Slave
Jacobs, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl
Hayslip, When Heaven and Earth Changed Places
Hurston, Their Eyes Were Watching God
Williams, Nobody Nowhere
Wright, Native Son

Schedule

January
7, 9, 11 Introductory; Douglass, Narrative.
14, 16, 18 Douglass, cont’d;
(21), 23, 25 Jacobs, Incidents.
28, 30, Feb. 1 Born in Slavery: Voices and Faces from the Collection

February
4, 6, 8 Hurston, Their Eyes Were Watching God.
11, 13 Hurston, cont’d.
18, 20, 22 Wright, Native Son
25, 27, 29 Wright, cont’d.

March
3, 5, 7 Review; midterm examination; background to American war in Vietnam
17, 19, 21 Hayslip, When Heaven and Earth Changed Places.
24, 26, 28 Hayslip, cont’d.

April 2, 4 View Dark Days.
7, 9, 11 Williams, Nobody Nowhere.
14, 16, 18 Williams, cont’d.
21, 23, 25 Final projects.

Evaluation
Your final grade will reflect an average of your performance on four pieces of work:
  Short paper (3-5 pages), due February 4: 25
  Midterm examination: 25 points
  Short paper (3-5 pages), due April 25
  Final examination