ENG 2705-001: Introduction to African American Literature

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Introduction to African American Literature

English 2705 — Fall, 2010
(Tues/Thurs, 9:30 a.m. — CH 3150)

Instructor: Tim Engles  Instructor’s e-dress: tdengles@eiu.edu
Office: CH 3138  Office hours: 1:45-2:45, Tues & Thurs and by appointment
Course listserv: 2705f2010@lists.eiu.edu

Required Texts:

- *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Harriet Jacobs (1861)
- *The Souls of Black Folk*, W.E.B. DuBois (1903)
- *Passing*, Nella Larsen (1929)
- *The Blacker the Berry*, Wallace Thurman (1929)
- *Bloodchild and Other Stories*, Octavia Butler (1995)

COURSE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

*read the following sections carefully! these words constitute our contract, and I will request your written agreement to them*

Course Objectives and Goals: The two primary goals of this course: (1) to enhance your skills in the art of textual analysis (which are skills that any university student should fully develop), and (2) to introduce you to important African American authors and their literature’s themes, techniques, and subject matter. Topics and ideas that some consider sensitive or off limits may arise in our readings and discussions, so you will need to approach this course with a mature, open mind and a willingness to consider viewpoints expressed from different perspectives. This course will require dedicated daily work, which mainly includes reading and class participation; regular quizzes, which are meant to be easy if you do the reading, which you must do daily to succeed in this course; two formal essays; and two examinations.

Regarding Reading: Again, a primary purpose of this course is to help you develop your skills in the art of textual analysis. Consequently, you must give the readings more than a quick skimming over. Instead of wolfing them down right before class, set aside enough time to read carefully—decide for yourself, before coming to class, what each author is trying to describe and bring to light. Also, to ensure that your final grade reflects your reading effort, I will give frequent “pop” quizzes at the beginning of class on required readings. These quizzes will not be announced and they cannot be made up. Basically, if you try to get by with only doing some of the reading listed on our “Daily Schedule,” you won’t do well at all in this class.
Grades: Your final course grade will be determined in the following way:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exam 1</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>First essay (4-5 pages)</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Essay (6-7 pages)</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation/ quizzes/ attendance</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Regarding Writing: The two exams will be written exams, with questions that ask for short and long essay answers, quotation IDs, and character-matchings. The two formal essays will be graded on how thoughtful, well-developed, and insightful they are. Clean, careful writing counts as well, and essays that have errors and problems in them that distract from the content will be downgraded accordingly. Both writing assignments are to be turned in at the beginning of the class period on the day they are due. Papers are due at the beginning of class on the due date whether the student is in class or not. Late papers will be penalized fifteen points (15%) each day they are late, beginning at the end of the class period of the day on which they are due. Finally, be mindful of the dire consequences of plagiarism, as described below—some previous students have failed this class for plagiarizing other people’s writing.

Missed Quizzes/Exams, and Late Papers: Again, because the answers to unannounced quizzes come up in class after they are taken, quizzes cannot be made up (even if you come to class late). These quizzes are one way to reward those who attend class regularly and on time. At the end of the semester, the average grade on these quizzes will constitute a major portion of your class participation grade (in order to account for the possibility that a day will arise when you must be absent, I will drop your lowest quiz score before figuring the average grade). There will be no make-up exams—students who miss the first exam will substitute a 6-8 page major essay in response to questions written by Dr. Engles. Students who miss the final exam will receive an automatic “Zero” on it, unless arrangements are made ahead of time regarding an essay substitution. Again, papers are due at the beginning of class on the due date whether the student is in class or not. Late papers will be penalized fifteen points each day they are late. You may turn in papers before their due dates if you know you must miss class that day.

Regarding the Writing Center: If you are aware of chronic problems with your writing, I strongly recommend that you make use of the English Department’s Writing Center. Tutoring services there are free, and students are welcome to drop in, or schedule appointments during working hours (Room 3110 of Coleman Hall, http://www.eiu.edu/~writing). While I will pay close attention to each student’s particular writing problems, I may advise some students to seek additional help at the Writing Center.

Writing Center consultants will not proofread your papers; they instead will work with you on a number of important tasks, such as these:

- Understanding and analyzing writing assignments
- Moving past writer’s block
- Brainstorming topics and ideas
- Revising for stronger content and adapting to audience
- Developing focus and thesis statements
- Organizing ideas and support
• Developing evidence, examples, and supporting details
• Revising for stronger development of and work with source materials
• Guiding writers to effectively integrate source materials
• Providing guidance on using citation systems
• Offering assistance on how to effectively and ethically summarize, paraphrase, and quote source materials
• Implementing strategies for strong paragraphing
• Improving cohesion through transitions and organization
• Revising for sentence-level clarity, precision, and emphasis
• Creating sentence variety for emphasis and cohesion
• Offering strategies for efficient and effective proofreading and editing
• Helping students find their own process for proofreading and editing

And of course, if you ever need help with any aspects of an essay, I’m available during my office hours to consider ideas or a rough draft with you.

E-mail activity: Enrollment in this class requires an e-mail account, and you must check it frequently for messages pertaining to the course (that is, several times per week, at least). You already have an EIU account; you’re welcome to use another type of account, but just be sure you use one for this course that you tend to check frequently, and be sure that messages pertaining to this course do not end up in your “Junk Mail” folder. We will use our course listserv (or “e-mail discussion list”) for announcements and for extension of in-class discussion. E-mail is also the quickest, easiest way to reach me if I am not in my office; I welcome any and all e-mailed questions and comments.

Using e-mail is crucial for this course—if you do not send me an e-mail message (tdengles@eiu.edu) by Friday, August 27 at 3:00 p.m., I will assume that you have chosen against fully participating in the course, and I will therefore drop you. In that message, (1) tell me which course you’re in (English 2705); (2) describe yourself in whatever way you choose, including your career aspirations; and (3) write a statement to the effect that you have read and agree (or perhaps in part disagree with, which is fine, if you explain why) with these course policies and requirements. Sending me this message will constitute your “signature” of our course contract, that is, these policies and procedures that you are reading.

Attendance Policy: I will take attendance, and I expect you to attend class every day, on time, and prepared to discuss the material listed for that day on the “Daily Schedule.” If you have more than three absences this semester, your course grade will drop a full letter grade for each absence beyond three.

Classroom Environment: I do not plan to lecture in this class; instead, we should all contribute together to a positive, challenging, interesting learning environment. I expect all of you to participate in class discussions (class participation will be figured into your final grade). The best way to demonstrate that you are an active, engaged, and interested reader is by contributing regularly to class discussions, and by paying close, respectful attention to what everyone else has to say.

As noted above, be aware that sensitive issues sometimes arise within a course on multicultural material, so we must respect the opinions of others—try to respond to ideas, rather than to the
person stating them. In my experience, it's okay for discussions to become "heated," as long as we respect each other. If you have questions, no matter how simple or complicated, go ahead and ask me, either in class or via e-mail—chances are that other students will have the same question.

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), and do not use a computer in class. Also, if you have a cell phone, be sure to silence it ahead of time, and do not check or write text messages during class. If you happen to be expecting an important or emergency call or text, be sure to 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 by the time the period is over.

**Academic Honesty:** I expect you to act honestly and do your own work in this class, and so does Eastern Illinois University. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the English Department’s policy on plagiarism: “Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism—‘The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one’s 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 you are uncertain whether something you have written is an example of plagiarism, just ask me to look it over before you turn it in.
ENGLISH 2705: DAILY SCHEDULE
(this schedule may be subject to change)

T AUG 24 Introduction to the course

R AUG 26 Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, 9-45

F AUG 27 3 p.m. Deadline for sending Dr. Engles (tdengles@eiu.edu) the e-mail that’s described above

T AUG 31 Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, 45-85

R SEP 2 Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, 85-116

T SEP 7 Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, 116-end

R SEP 9 “The Passing of Grandison,” Charles Chesnutt (1899) (emailed short story)

T SEP 14 The Souls of Black Folk (pages TBA)

R SEP 16 The Souls of Black Folk

T SEP 21 Passing

R SEP 23 Passing

T SEP 28 Passing

R SEP 30 Incognegro

T OCT 5 Incognegro

R OCT 7 Incognegro

T OCT 12 Mid-term Exam (Reminder: There are no make-up exams in this course—students who miss this exam will substitute a 6-8 page major essay in response to questions written by Dr. Engles.)

W OCT 13 Semester Mid-term

R OCT 14 Writing workshop & discussion of Paper One topics

T OCT 19 The Autobiography of Malcolm X

R OCT 21 The Autobiography of Malcolm X
T OCT 26  *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*

- Paper One due at the beginning of class

R OCT 28  *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*

T NOV 2  Toni Morrison, “Recitatif” (1983) (emailed short story)

R NOV 4  *Linden Hills*

T NOV 9  *Linden Hills*

R NOV 11  *Linden Hills*

T NOV 16  Writing workshop & discussion of Final Paper

R NOV 18  *Linden Hills*

NOVEMBER 22 - 26: THANKSGIVING BREAK!

T NOV 30  *Linden Hills*

R DEC 2  *Bloodchild*

T DEC 7  No Class – Work on your Final Paper! Dr. Engles will be in his office during our class period, and during his regular office hours, to meet with any students who would like to discuss their papers.

R DEC 9  Last day of class – Final Paper due at the beginning of class

Final Exam: Wednesday, Dec. 15, 8 – 10 a.m. (Reminder: Students who miss the final exam will receive an automatic “zero” unless arrangements are made ahead of time.)