ENG 4905-001: African American Youth Literature

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African American Youth Literature  
MWF 12:00 – 12:50 in CH 3170

TRADE BOOKS

Anthology
The Best of The Brownies' Book [a monthly magazine pub. Jan 1920–Dec 1921]

Picture Books (in chronological order)
1962    The Snowy Day by Ezra Jack Keats
1975    Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People’s Ears by Verna Aardema; illus. Leo & Diane Dillon
1991    Amazing Grace by Mary Hoffman; illus. Caroline Binch
1997    Nappy Hair by Carolivia Herron; illus. Joe Cepeda
1991    Tar Beach by Faith Ringold
2004    The People Could Fly by Virginia Hamilton; illus. Leo and Diane Dillon
         [picture book version of title story from 1985 folklore collection]

Novels (in chronological order)
1930    The Secret of the Old Clock by “Carolyn Keene”
1930    Not Without Laughter by Langston Hughes
1958    South Town by Lorenz Graham
1965    North Town by Lorenz Graham
1967    Zeely by Virginia Hamilton
1976    Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry by Mildred Taylor
1995    The Watsons Go to Birmingham~1963 by Christopher Paul Curtis
1995    From the Notebooks of Melanin Sun by Jacqueline Woodson
1999    Monster by Walter Dean Myers
2003    The First Part Last by Angela Johnson
2004    Locomotion by Jacqueline Woodson

SECONDARY SOURCES
*Asst. Handouts, plus Readings on E-reserve and on the Web
Course Goals

- to read enough works of twentieth century African American youth literature that each of us has a basis for coming to some conclusions about its traditions and innovations

- to appreciate the craftsmanship and creativity that contribute to the literary and artistic quality of individual works of African American youth literature

- to identify the thematic concerns explored in African American youth literature and compare the treatment of similar themes in works by various writers and illustrators

- to become better informed about the literary-historical contexts in which African American youth literature was produced, and to use that information to analyze choices made by writers and artists working within these complex rhetorical situations

- to compare the goals and strategies of various producers of African American youth literature, considering what they want to say, to whom, and how they went about it

- to identify issues that recur in discussions of African American youth literature and to re-consider our own beliefs in relation to what others have said about these issues

- to consider how class, gender, sexuality, region, religion and other aspects of identity or environment complicate what it means to be “African American,” and to take into account the multiple or hybrid identities of characters, authors, artists, readers, and critics

- to improve our ability to talk and think about race (including whiteness)

- to improve our ability to evaluate works of African American youth literature

- To find ways to make use of information and ideas developed in the course of this class to contribute to our growth as students, professionals, and citizens
Tentative Schedule of Readings & Assignments:
African American Youth Literature

Week 1
M  Introductions
W  Begin Secret of the Old Clock (through page 154, if possible)
F  Continue Secret; focus on portrayal of Jeff Tucker (138-154)
    Annotate “Critical Race Theory” handout

Week 2
M  Read “Introduction” + “Preface” to The Best of the Brownies’ Book (10-22)
    plus the facsimile of the April 1921 issue of the magazine (begins page 299);
    Write a response (at least 250 words) to one item in this issue
W  Read pieces in The Best of the Brownies’ Book assigned to your group
    Write a response in which you describe & analyze the rhetoric of this feature
F  Read “Afterword” to The Best of the Brownies’ Book (335-347)
    plus “Books and the Negro Child,” an essay by Langston Hughes (*e-reserve);
    optional (required for graduate students) Read “Race, Refinement & Radicalism”
    by Violet Harris (*e-reserve) and Write a Response [Grad: create a handout]

Week 3
M  Labor Day ~ no class meeting
W  Read the stories from The Best of the Brownies’ Book assigned to your group plus
    “The Story-Telling Contest” by Julian Elihu Bagley (BBB 170); Write a
    Response; optional (required for graduate students) Read “Once Upon a Time in
    Aframerica” by Fern Kory (*e-reserve) and Write a Response [Grad: handout]
F  Bring South Town, North Town, and Not Without Laughter: In class, you will
    Choose one of these Books or another pre-1965 novel with African American
    characters, and Form a Reading Group

Week 4
M  Read self-selected pre-1965 novel; Response Due
W  Meet in the Ballenger Teacher Center in Booth Library
    You may want to bring your Panther Card or some change for Xerographing
    Continue Reading; Response Due
F  Finish Reading; Annotate Research

Week 5
M  Log—with introductory essay—DUE (should contain all informal writing to date)
W  Draft/Outline/Plan of Review Essay DUE
F  Begin Zeely by Virginia Hamilton (1-67); Response Due today or Monday

Week 6 ~ individual conference appointments available this week
M  Finish Zeely (68-127)
W  Read The People Could Fly (picture book); Response Due
F  Read The Snowy Day and Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People’s Ears (picture books)
    Review Essay DUE
Week 7
M Re-view *Snowy Day* and *Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People’s Ears*
W TBA
F Read (*e-reserve) “The Black Experience in Children’s Books” by Walter Dean Myers & “What Has Happened to the ‘All-White’ World of Children’s Books?” by Rudine Sims Bishop; Response or Annotated Bishop essay Due

Week 8
M Read *Amazing Grace, Tar Beach,* and *Nappy Hair* (picture books)
W Read (*e-reserve) “Insiders, Outsiders, and the Question of Authenticity” by Nina Mikkelsen; Response Due
F *Fall Break ~ no class meeting*

Week 9
M **Meet in Ballenger Teacher Center** to Choose an Illustrator & Picture Book; Form a Reading Group and Locate Research Sources
W Read and Respond to self-selected Picture Book
F Continue work with Reading Group

Week 10
M Collaborative or Individual Response to Illustrator Project DUE
W Begin *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* or *The Watsons Go to Birmingham;* Response Due
F TBA

Week 11
M Continue reading your Historical Fiction (*Roll* or *Watsons*)
W Finish Reading Historical Fiction; Annotated Research Due
F Begin *From the Notebooks of Melanin Sun* or *Locomotion;* Response Due

Week 12
M Finish *Notebooks* or *Locomotion;* Annotated Reviews Due
W Begin *Monster* (or *The First Part Last, if you’ve already read Monster*); Response Due today or Friday
F Continue *Monster* (or *First*)

Week 13
M Finish *Monster* (or *First*); Response Due
W **Meet in Ballenger Teacher Center** to choose an Author & Novel and Form a Reading Group for the Author Project; *Log II* DUE
F Begin reading self-selected novel; Response Due

*Thanksgiving Break*
Week 14
M  Continue self-selected Novel: Response Due today or Wednesday
W  *Meet in Ballenger Teacher Center to Locate Research sources:
    Continue Reading self-selected Novel
F  Annotated Research Due

Week 15
*Grad. Students will prepare handouts of remaining critical readings for class
M  Group Presentations
W  Group Presentations
F  Group Presentations

Finals Week
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Event</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Final Exam on Tuesday December 12 from 10:15-12:15</td>
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Grades
Your course grade will be based on the percentage you earn of the 1000 points possible (1200 for graduate students).

Note: I will adjust these point values if we add, cancel or revise any of these assignments. Also note that your Review Essay can be revised for a higher grade or for submission to the Electronic Writing Portfolio. Revisions are due before Thanksgiving Break.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Log I (see syllabus for due date)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review Essay</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log II (includes participation and attendance)</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Presentation: Author Project</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Selected Reading Responses: Author Project</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam Essay (undergrads)</td>
<td>150</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Paper/Presentation (grads)</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
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Grades are not curved.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>91% (910 points) and above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>81 - 90% (810 - 909 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>71 - 80% (710 - 809 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>61 - 70% (610 - 709 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>609 points and below</td>
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Note: This is a “writing-intensive” course, which means that you can revise one paper to submit to the Electronic Writing Portfolio. The Review Essay is the obvious candidate.
Brief descriptions of the major assignments . . .

Review Essay ~ You will write informal responses plus a formal review of the book you select to read as part of our pre-1965 novel unit. The informal responses will become part of your “log” (see below). You will have a chance to meet with me to discuss a draft of this paper. After I return the finished essay to you with comments and a score, you may revise it for a new grade. Revised essays are due before Thanksgiving Break.

Log ~ You will turn in a variety of short writing assignments during the course of the semester. I will (usually) collect this writing, respond to what you’ve written, and return it to you at our next class meeting. If appropriate, I’ll mark it with a check, check plus, or check minus. Keep these together in a two-pocket folder, in chronological order: note each on the Log Contents sheet (coming soon). I’ll collect this folder twice during the semester and give your log a score based first on completeness (there will be substantial deductions for missing assignments) and then on the quality of the effort that you put into grappling with texts and developing your ideas over the course of the semester.

**Note:** you have the option of making additions—“second thoughts” or responses to my comments—before turning these back in. However, both the original and the new-and-improved version should be turned in. (You can staple the old one to the new one.) I need to see the original copy with my comments so I can identify the additions, which you can write on the original—in the margins or on a separate sheet—or add to an electronic version in a different font or color.

**One more thing:** The only informal writings that do not belong in your log are the responses you write as part of the Author Project. These will receive a separate score. Nothing that has already received a score should be included.

Group Project ~ You will write individual responses to your own book and to reliable information you uncover about its author, critical reception, etc. You will have several class periods in which to meet with the rest of your group, compare notes, and draw conclusions. Finally, you will collaborate on a presentation to share information and observations about this author’s work with the class. You will receive an individual score for your written responses and share the group’s score for the oral presentation.

Final Exam ~ This will be an essay written during the two-hour final exam period. Your essay will focus on three works that you read for this class. You will have a choice of texts, a choice of topics, and a choice of forms in which to write. (For example, you might write a unit plan rationale or a critical essay focusing on a technique or theme.) Your essay should show awareness of the secondary works available to you on e-reserves and as handouts, and support your points with details from the novels and picture books we have read. Open book. You may bring one double-sided pages of notes to the exam.

*Graduate Students taking this course for graduate credit will do several extra critical readings, create a handout for the class based on one of them, and turn in a formal research paper—and prepare an English Conference presentation—in lieu of the final.
RESPONSIBILITIES AND POLICIES

1.) Keep in touch! Late work will be penalized substantially unless we come to an understanding before the due date. If you are experiencing temporary difficulties, please contact me as soon as possible so we can work something out together. FYI: No revisions or late work will be accepted during the last 2 weeks of classes.

2.) Attendance counts. Participation too. If you have more than three (3) un-excused absences, you will lose 50-100 points off your second Log score.

3.) Plagiarism is the act of taking someone else’s words or ideas and presenting them as your own, without giving oral or written credit to the author. This is a serious academic offense, which could result in a failing grade for the plagiarized assignment or this course, and might incur other university penalties as well. At the very least, any work with problematic citations will have to be revised before it can receive a grade. The tutors in the Writing Center (down the hall in 3110) can answer questions about when and how to quote, paraphrase, summarize and properly cite your sources. Drop in or call (581-5929) to make an appointment to work with a tutor at any point in the writing process. The Writing Center is open Monday through Thursday 9 am – 3 & 6 – 9 pm. plus Fridays from 9 am – 1 pm.

4.) Formal essays should be double-spaced and typed/printed. Use MLA-style documentation for citations. (See www.eiu.edu/~childlit for more information.)

5.) Students with documented disabilities should contact the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) so we can work out appropriate accommodations.

6.) You must complete all major assignments to pass this course.
Electronic Reserves are available through Booth Library. (Start at “Reserves" on their home page.) Look for ENG 4905. Our password isfk4905. “Rotate View” if necessary.


Other Essays and Resources Available On-line
“Children’s Books by and about People of Color Published in the United States.” Cooperative Children’s Book Center. <http://www.education.wisc.edu/ccbc/books/pcstats.htm>

Pre-1965 African American Youth Lit.  
Kory, English 4905

**From the brief descriptions of assignments** – You will write informal responses plus a formal review of the book you select to read as part of our pre-1965 novel unit. The informal responses will become part of your “log.” You will have a chance to meet with me to discuss a draft of this paper before you turn it in. After I return the essay to you with comments and a score, you may revise it for a new grade. Revised essays are due before Thanksgiving Break.

**Revised Schedule of Readings and Assignments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 4</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>Read self-selected pre-1965 novel; Response Due</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Continue Reading; Response Due</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|        | F | **Meet in the Ballenger Teacher Center in Booth Library**  
   You may want to bring your Panther Card or some change for Xeroxing  
   Finish Reading (no response due, but you’ll want to mark passages & make notes) |
| Week 5 | M | Annotate Xeroxed Research Materials + “The All-White World of Children’s Books” (1965) by Nancy Larrick; Response DUE |
|        | W | Discovery Draft/Outline/Plan for Review Essay DUE |
|        | F | Log—with short reflective “Introduction”—DUE |

| Week 6 | M | Full Draft Review Essay DUE |
|        | W | Read The People Could Fly (picture book) |
|        | F | Read The Snowy Day and Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People’s Ears (picture books)  
   **Review Essay DUE** |

**NOTE:** You will need to designate an **audience, form and vehicle** for your essay.  
Your **audience** might be teachers, parents, public or school librarians, scholars, students, booksellers or publishers.

Your **vehicle** is the means by which you will reach this particular audience: if possible, you will name a specific magazine or journal; if not, you will describe an appropriate (but fictitious) website or specialized edition of your book or . . .

Some of the **forms** in which you might fulfill this assignment include introductory essay, review essay, journal article, proposal, rationale, teacher’s guide.

**Here are some possibilities.** You could write an introductory essay for an edition of your book aimed directly at young readers or at college students taking courses in relevant disciplines (African American Studies, English, Education, History…) OR you could write a “teacher’s guide” to your book or a “rationale” for teaching it at a specific level to meet specified educational goals. OR you could write a review essay aimed at librarians or teachers or for an audience of people interested in children’s literature in general or in multicultural literature more specifically. OR you could write a proposal to a publisher advising re-issuing your book for a specified market or a report advising against it. OR, if you have an interesting “reading” of your book, you could write a thesis-driven critical essay for a journal focused on American literature or African American literature or Children’s literature. OR you could write an article for general interest magazine with a core audience of African American teens or adults. Your choices should reflect your own interests or goals and should be appropriate to your book.
### Sign-up Sheet: pre-1965 African American Youth Lit

**1930 Not Without Laughter by Hughes**
- Kristy Van Amerongen
- Kelly Glynn
- Andy Werhane
- Courtney Krzywon
- Sarah Grant

**1958 South Town by Lorenz Graham**
- Ashlee Geiss
- Kristin Ungar
- Kelly Luka
- Mallory H.
- Laura Biehl
- Annie Muchna

**1965 North Town by Lorenz Graham**
- Lyndsey Herring
- Sarah Jaworksi
- Tara Huntley
- Maggie Locke
- Kris Jones

**Fiction by white authors** (female char.)
- Florence Crannell Means
  - 1938 *Shuttered Windows*
  - Amy Lee
- Marguerite de Angeli
  - 1946 *Bright April*
  - Conny Melvin?
- Dorothy Sterling
  - 1959 *Mary Jane*
  - Conny Melvin?

**Fiction by Arna Bontemps**
- Fiction
  - 1932 *Popo and Fifina* (+Hughes)
  - Katie Drummond
- 1937 *The Sad-Faced Boy*
  - Fern Kory

**Poetry by Bontemps & Hughes**
- 1932 *Dream Keeper* (Hughes)
  - Ashley Gordon
- 1941 *Golden Slippers* (Bontemps)

**Fiction by Jesse Jackson (male char.)**
- 1945 *Call Me Charley*
  - Julie Templin
- 1947 *Anchor Man*
  - Jeremy Duda
- 1958 *Charlie Starts from Scratch*
  - April Karpus

**Non-Fiction by Bontemps & Hughes**
- 1948 *Story of the Negro* (Bontemps)
  - Sean Hopkins
- 1951 *Chariot in the Sky:....Jubilee Singers*
- 1952 First Book of Negroes +
- 1954 First Book of Rhythms (Hughes)
- 1954 Famous American Negroes
- 1958 Famous Negro Heroes of America