

ENGL 4380/5380: African/African American Literature

Dr. Lori Leavell
Office: Irby Hall 401
Contact: (501) 450-5118; lleavell@uca.edu
Office Hours: MWF 10-12:50, and by appointment

Spring 2014
MWF 9:00-9:50
CRN#: 27446/27435
Irby Hall 310

COURSE OVERVIEW

“For English majors and minors to satisfy upper-division elective requirements. This is a survey of African and African-American literature from the eighteenth century to the present generally focusing on slave narratives, middle passage and captivity narratives in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and works by such writers as Larson, Petry, Hurston, Bambara, Reed, Baraka, John A. Williams, and August Wilson in this century. Lecture, discussion, writing. Prerequisite: ENGL 2312 or 2313.”

In this particular version of the course, we will focus primarily on African American literature, though Africa will come up again and again—as a place remembered, imagined, and identified in a number of ways. In fact, the very first text we will read, the eighteenth-century best-selling narrative of Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself* (1789), brings to the fore some of the complex questions concerning identity and authorship that we will consider throughout the course. From the eighteenth century, we will proceed largely chronologically. We will give considerable attention to the development of a robust African American literary culture in the nineteenth century before moving on to literature affiliated with the New Negro Movement and Harlem Renaissance as well as the Black Arts Movement. We will conclude with a contemporary memoir. Along the way, several questions will warrant our attention, including the following: What is African American literature? What avenues to reading and authorship were available to African Americans in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries? What is the relationship of aesthetics to politics? What are some of the defining issues and aesthetic concerns of twentieth-century literature? What is the relationship of African American literature to American and transatlantic literary histories?

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- To trace a history of African American writing in the United States, beginning with a transatlantic slave narrative and concluding with a work of contemporary literature.
- To recognize some of the historical, political, and cultural forces relevant to the production of literature and to the development of a print culture among African Americans.
- To think critically about the formation of literary histories.
- To become adept at implementing the principles of literary analysis.
- To hone reading, writing, analytical, and research skills.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- Equiano, Olaudah. *The Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African*. Dover. (1999)
- Wilson, Harriet. *Our Nig*. Vintage. (2011)
- *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, second edition. (2004)
- Ward, Jesmyn. *The Men We Reaped*. Bloomsbury. (2013)
- Selected readings available on Blackboard, indicated with “**BB**” on day-by-day schedule—to be printed and brought to class,

ATTENDANCE, PREPARATION, PARTICIPATION, CIVILITY

Attendance: More than three absences/instances of tardiness is considered excessive. Three absences (for whatever reason) will not alter one’s grade; however, each subsequent absence/tardiness will result in the deduction of five points from point total. Please be aware that seven absences, regardless of the reasons, will result in a grade of WF/F for the course.

Preparation: To prepare for class, read the assigned material, take notes, post to Blackboard, read and respond to your classmates’ discussion questions, and come prepared to contribute thoughtful ideas.

Participation and Civility: This course is discussion-based, its success depending on the contributions of the participants. If a full schedule or personal matters will prevent full participation, please take the course another time. To be counted as present, bring to class the readings to be discussed. A few texts—a combination of secondary works of scholarship and primary sources—have been placed on Blackboard (indicated with “**BB**” on the day-by-day schedule) and must be printed and brought to class. This course expects that participants will extend respect and courtesy to one another and to the literature. In this spirit, please be on time and remain engaged for the duration of the class. Take care to power down and put away all electronic

devices before class begins. Make it a point to voice comments and questions every class while being respectful and considerate of others so that no one person dominates the discussion.

REQUIREMENTS

The course is designed so that each assignment builds on the previous one. Twice a week, you will post to Blackboard questions generated by the readings to be discussed in the upcoming class. You are invited to respond to one another's Blackboard questions at any time, but on three occasions of your choosing, you are required to post a one-page response to another's question. Idea papers provide an opportunity to expand on those questions, and workshops allow you to refine ideas. Halfway into the semester, you will submit an abstract that details the focus of your upcoming short paper and subsequent expanded paper. Reading and talking with one another no doubt will contribute to the development of our ideas, and the structure of the course—discussion-based with several small writing assignments, culminating in a larger research paper—is designed to facilitate that development. **(Graduate Students: Assignment substitutions indicated in bold.)**

Blackboard Questions: On Sundays and Tuesdays by 9 p.m, submit to Blackboard one discussion question provoked by the readings assigned for the following day's class. (You need not post on days for which a Workshop is scheduled or a paper is due—unless a new reading has also been assigned.) These questions will help structure the lecture and discussion. Late submissions will not be accepted.

Blackboard Responses: Three times during the semester, respond to someone else's question in 150-250 words. Responses must appear within 24 hours of the original post. (Once two people have responded to a question, choose a different one.) Print and bring each of your three responses to class.

Five Writing Workshops: Writing workshops provide the opportunity to offer feedback on your classmates' writing and receive feedback on your own. A complete draft of the upcoming paper is required for admittance to the workshops, and participation is assessed according to quality of offered feedback. To receive credit for the workshop, arrive on time with a full draft, participate for the duration of class, and submit paperwork from the workshop (the commented-upon draft and worksheet) on the day the finished assignment is due.

Three Idea Papers (2 pages): These short papers provide the opportunity to develop ideas generated from the course readings, discussion, and Blackboard posts. Late Idea Papers will not be accepted.

Abstract (1-2 pages): The abstract should articulate the basic questions that your short paper will address, preview how your argument will unfold, and situate your argument among critical conversations.

Short Paper (4-5 pages): This paper should follow through on the argument described in the abstract. Incorporate 2-4 secondary sources. Late papers are marked down half of a letter grade for each day they are late. **(Graduate students: Prepare a short paper 7-8 pages in length, and incorporate 4-5 secondary sources.)**

Expanded Paper (8-10 pages): This paper will build on the short paper. It should demonstrate that feedback on the short paper has been addressed and that additional research has shaped the argument (citing 6-9 total secondary sources). Late papers are marked down half of a letter grade for each day they are late. Submit the short paper with comments along with the expanded paper. **(Graduate students: Prepare expanded papers 12-14 pages in length with 9-11 secondary sources.)**

Two Essay Exams: Successful exams will demonstrate a thorough understanding of the texts, place them within cultural and historical contexts, and incorporate literary and cultural terminology covered in class. **(Graduate students: In lieu of the exams, prepare an annotated bibliography [8 sources] along with an introductory essay of 7-8 pages.)**

POINT DISTRIBUTION: 500 Points Possible

Undergraduate:

Blackboard Questions x 20	= 40
Blackboard Responses x 3	= 30
Workshops x 5	= 25
Idea Papers x 20	= 60
Abstract	= 20
Short Paper	= 75
Expanded Paper	= 100
Exams x 2	= 150

Graduate (* denotes distinction from undergraduate requirement):

Blackboard Questions x 20	= 40
Blackboard Responses x 3	= 30
Workshops x 5	= 25
Idea Papers x 20	= 60
Abstract	= 20
Short Paper	= 75
Expanded Paper	= 100
*Annotated Bibliography + essay	= 100
*Discussion Lead	= 50

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY The University of Central Arkansas affirms its commitment to academic integrity and expects all members of the university community to accept shared responsibility for maintaining academic integrity. Students in this course are subject to the provisions of the university's Academic Integrity Policy, approved by the Board of Trustees as Board Policy No. 709 on February 10, 2010, and published in the Student Handbook. Penalties for academic misconduct in this course may include a failing grade on an assignment, a failing grade in the course, or any other course-related sanction that the instructor determines to be appropriate. Continued enrollment in this course affirms a student's acceptance of this university policy.

THE WRITING CENTER is eager to help you work on your writing at any stage of development. To make an appointment, submit a paper for online tutoring, or to find out about drop-in hours, visit <http://www.uca.edu/writingcenter/appointment.php>. They also offer useful online resources at http://www.uca.edu/writingcenter/online_resources.php. **The Academic Success Center** is also available to help you with all aspects of college work. Please check them out at <http://www.uca.edu/ucollege/asc.php>.

EVALUATIONS Student evaluations of a course and its professor are a crucial element in helping faculty achieve excellence in the classroom and the institution in demonstrating that students are gaining knowledge. Students may evaluate courses they are taking starting on the Monday of the twelfth week of instruction through the end of finals week by logging in to myUCA and clicking on the Evals button on the top right.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES SUMMARY An Emergency Procedures Summary (EPS) for the building in which this class is held will be discussed during the first week of this course. EPS documents for most buildings on campus are available at <http://uca.edu/mysafety/bep/>. Every student should be familiar with emergency procedures for any campus building in which he/she spends time for classes or other purposes.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES If you have questions about the university's academic policies, guidelines regarding sexual harassment, or any other matters, please consult the relevant sections of the UCA Student Handbook. UCA adheres to the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you need an accommodation under this Act due to a disability, contact the UCA Office of Disability Services at 450-3135.

Day-By-Day Syllabus

Monday	Wednesday	Friday
		1/10 Classes Begin
1/13 Wheatley, "Preface," "Letter Sent by Author's Master to the Publisher," "To the Publick," "To the University of Cambridge, in New-England," "On Being Brought from Africa to America," "To Samson Occom" (213-25)	1/15 Wheatley, continued	1/17 (BB) Gundaker's (483-95) "Give Me a Sign"
1/20 MLK Jr. Holiday	1/22 Workshop #1 ; discuss theses and topic sentences	1/24 Idea Paper #1 Due
1/27 Equiano, Note, Preface + (1-49)	1/29 Equiano (50-81)	1/31 Equiano (82-133)
2/3 Equiano (134-84)	2/5 Meet in Library (Torreyson 117); (BB) <i>Freedom's Journal</i>	2/7 Walker, from the <i>Appeal</i> (227-38)
2/10 Workshop #2 and Research Methods	2/12 Idea Paper #2 ; Whitefield, "America," "Yes! Strike Again That Sounding String," and "Self- Reliance" (483-90)	2/14 Whitfield, continued
2/17 (BB) McHenry, "Rereading Literary Legacy"	2/19 Wilson, <i>Our Nig</i> (Preface + 1-39)	2/21 Wilson (40-77)
2/24 Wilson (78-110)	2/26 Wilson (110-40); Review for Midterm	2/28 Midterm Exam
3/3 Chesnutt, "The Goophered Grapevine" (602-12)	3/5 Chesnutt, "The Passing of Grandison" (613-24) and from <i>The Journals</i> (632-35)	3/7 DuBois (692-708)
3/10 Meet in Library (Torreyson 117); Workshop #3 and Research Methods	3/12 Idea Paper #3 ; Hughes, "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," "Mother to Son," "I, Too," "Song for a Dark Girl," "Afro-American Fragment," "Negro Servant," "Ballad of the Landlord" (Begins on 1288)	3/14 Hughes, continued
3/17 Schomburg, "The Negro Digs Up His Past" (962-67)	3/19 Meet in Library (Torreyson 117); Abstracts due; Research Methods	3/21 Hurston, from <i>Mules and Men</i> (1053- 1062)
3/24 Spring Break	3/26 Spring Break	3/28 Spring Break
3/31 Wright, "The Ethics of Living Jim Crow" (1411-19)	4/2 Malcolm X, from <i>The Autobiography</i> (1859-76)	4/4 Workshop #4
4/7 Short Paper Due	4/9 Audre Lorde, "Equinox" and "Poetry Is Not a Luxury" (1919-26)	4/11 Ward, <i>Men We Reaped</i> (1-61)
4/14 Ward (62-162)	4/16 Ward (163-212)	4/18 Ward (213-251)
4/21 Workshop #5	4/23 Final Paper Due/Review	4/25 Study Day

Final Exam: 2-4 pm on Wednesday, April 30