

ENGL 4380: SURVEY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN LITERATURE

Class Meetings: T, TH 2:40 – 3:55 T, TH

Instructor: Dr. Isiah Lavender, III

Office: 401 Irby Hall

Office Hours: MW 9 – 12:00; T 12:30-2:30 and by appointment

Phone, E-mail, & Facebook: (501) 450-5118; lavender@uca.edu

Required Texts:

The Norton Anthology of African American Literature. 2nd edition. Eds. Gates & McKay.

Course Description: This course will offer an introductory overview of the African American literary canon beginning with the vernacular tradition. We'll then work forward chronologically beginning around 1770 and read from a variety of genres. All major periods from the era of slavery up to the present will be covered. For obvious reasons we will not be able to treat any of these periods in depth; our goal, rather, will be to ensure that we establish historical, cultural, and interpretive frameworks which will enable students to continue to teach themselves about African American literature and culture after taking this class.

Expectations: My expectations are very high, and you should demand the same from me, and especially from one another: if you come to class prepared to fully engage with the material, you should expect the same from everyone in the room. In a seminar, every absence or withheld participation is palpable; I therefore expect regular attendance, consistent preparation, and active participation. Finally, I expect all of us to have fun because learning should be and can be fun. For my part, I will try to cultivate a lively discussion for each class.

Responsibilities and Behavior: Remember that you only have time for the activity that you put first, and by signing up for this course you are agreeing to put this class first during the specified time period. While I am always willing to work with a student in the event of a legitimate emergency such as the death of an immediate family member or a student's own emergency hospitalization, you should schedule dental appointments, elective surgery, court appearances, family celebrations, work, and any other non-emergency activity outside of class time. Keep a written record of your absences/tardies so that you know your precise status as I will be doing so.

It is your responsibility either to resolve potential conflicts well in advance of an exam in the exam's favor or to drop the course; never presume upon me to solve your conflict for you. Each absence after **four** absences lowers your final grade for the class by ten points. Absences are not excused or unexcused, so use your absences wisely. Any rare exceptions to this policy will be determined on a case-by-case basis; it is your responsibility to contact me immediately to inquire about an exception if such a situation occurs. If you have **four** consecutive absences, you will be dropped from the class. You paid your money to take your chances. If you miss class, you will get behind as well as miss important discussions which further understanding of the works being examined. You need to be here. Arriving to class late—after the official start time or after me—means you will have to work *twice as hard to receive half a point for the day's discussion*. As we are all adults here, and this is a university campus, it should be understood that respect for the instructor, fellow students, and the material itself is required. This means, **DO NOT COME TO CLASS LATE. DO NOT LEAVE CLASS EARLY. TURN ALL CELL PHONES OR ANY OTHER GADGETS THAT MAKE NOISE 'OFF' AT THE DOOR AND PLACE THEM OUT OF SIGHT.** Do not work on other assignments for other classes. Do not converse with others randomly during the lecture. Do not sleep (this is not nap-time). Do not **CHEAT**. **ANY BEHAVIOR** that inhibits the ability of students to learn **WILL NOT BE TOLERATED** and could result in **BEING DISMISSED FROM THE CLASS—PERMANENTLY**. Disruptive Behavior should not be a part of the classroom environment. You will get a warning for the first infraction of this rule. The first warning will be penalized as an absence; in addition to forfeiting all credit on any graded assignment that day. The second instance will result in your being dropped from the class.

Academic Misconduct: Avoid even the appearance of possible impropriety during an exam or quiz; leave books and notebooks closed and out of sight; do not let your eyes stray to another's paper; do not leave the room while the exam is in progress; speak only to the instructor or the exam proctor. A grade of zero will be assigned to any quiz or exam the integrity of which has been opened to question in any way.

Late work: Outside work is due at the start of the specified period; I **DO NOT ACCEPT** late work. I am not interested in excuses. Only a *death* in your immediate family or an *emergency room visit* documented by a health official allows for a time extension on your work. It is your responsibility to inform me immediately when such a situation occurs and to provide physical proof such as a funeral program.

GRADING: Students will be required to write weekly reaction questions, 5 reader responses of 2 -3 pages, a bibliographic project, a research paper of 8-10 pages, 5 Big Big Quizzes, and a final. All formal writing assignments must be typed in a **12 point Times New Roman font and also be double-spaced with 1-inch margins**. In addition, **all essays and responses must have titles**. Any assignment that does not meet these specific requirements **in addition to length obligations** will receive an X grade and no feedback; an X grade garners zero credit at the end of the semester unless you redo it to my satisfaction. You and you alone are responsible for the condition and submission of your assignments. **DO NOT** rely on spell check alone. **PROOFREAD** your papers and save them. However, I encourage you to seek me out and discuss your ideas or lack thereof and to bring drafts to me. Keep all graded assignments easily available for consultation until after the final grade has been recorded, both so that you may compute your average at any point in the semester, and so that any dispute over the final grade's computation may be efficiently resolved. There are **100 points** for the semester.

Participation – This class is discussion oriented which makes your energetic participation essential in having a successful and productive semester. Thus, it is your obligation to read and prepare the assigned readings for class. I strongly encourage you to express your pleasure in as well as your frustration with the readings because this will stimulate and inspire discussion in the classroom. The classroom is where our ideas and interpretations are exchanged, argued over, meditated on, and talked over in a fruitful manner. Participation is an important aspect of this course. As such, attendance becomes crucial. Silent people receive zero points for each class that they are silent. **½ point per class**

Reader Responses – Ideally, these response papers will be a kind of diary where you contemplate issues, ideas, questions raised by the assigned readings and discussion. This affords me an opportunity to eavesdrop on “HOW” you are processing and engaging the material. Likewise, these response papers serve as a way for you to organize your developing thoughts, and recognize relationships between texts and ideas that you have about texts. Keep in mind that reading only succeeds if you gain “meaning,” and the meaning(s) that you gain are transmitted in your interpretations. One possible way to do this assignment would be to provide an answer to one of your weekly reaction questions. You could possibly write more than one response on a particular reading, but it would be best to spread them out over the course of the semester. What you cannot do is turn in a response on a particular reading after we are finished with it. This means any response written on a particular day must coincide with the assigned reading. Each response should be **no less than a two full pages and no more than three. (4 points each)**

Bibliographic Project – This annotated bibliography functions to present a survey of the literature on an issue, author, or text of your own choosing. Basically, an annotated bibliography presents your review of the secondary writings on a particular writer or work. The bibliography presents your overview of articles, books, etc. that you have read and outlines the major points of these works as well as, and crucially, the significant contribution it makes to an argument or idea of your own. While you will pay attention to (1) outline the articles main focus, you must also (2) demonstrate how that critical piece ties into a topic at issue in this course, and briefly (3) relate it to an issue/idea of concern to you. Generally, annotations run about a paragraph and can be thought of as a mini book or article review. This is by all accounts a research assignment, and as such it serves the purpose of getting you involved in the technical aspects of literary studies. As well, and more directly, it commences the process that will allow you to produce an informed research paper. The 5 double spaced pages of bibliography should provide you with enough critical voices (8-10) to incorporate into your final essay and toward which you will direct your discussion. This project is due **Thursday, April 7, 2010**. The Annotated Bibliography is worth **11 points**.

Research Paper – The research paper provides critical discussion of the themes outlined in the course description and ideas considered and pursued in the reader response journals. You will be asked to posit an argument that can be engagingly sustained for **8 to 10 pages**. This is not an easy task. The idea here is that you will build to this point using your previous assignments as steps in the process. The questions that you might address are quite open: “What issues raised by the work, or critical to the author, have not been discussed?” The key to the argument is to view it as “problem solving.” What is the problem you see, the question you have. The essay then proceeds to answer that question, to present your claims, and the critical warrants for them. This essay will, of course, require extrinsic analysis—using information outside of the text to discuss a narrative message and/or theme. For this research paper you will have two very helpful tools at hand: your collective reader responses, which will hopefully highlight specific texts and moments upon which you can focus and the annotated bibliography, which contains your research to date. This paper is due on **Thursday, April 21, 2010**. This paper is worth **20 points**.

Plagiarism -- the act of passing off the ideas or words of another as your own without crediting the source -- is not acceptable and will be severely penalized, meaning an F for the course. Of course, you can use outside sources in as long as you cite them properly using MLA style. Please do not hesitate to ask whether something should be cited if you are unsure.

Big Big Quizzes – Each major section of the anthology will be followed by a BBQ to test your content knowledge of the period in African American literature as well as your ability to think. **(5 points each)**

Final – The final exam will be a short paragraph/essay test worth **9 points**.

Grade Scale: A 91 and above; B 90-80; C 79-70; D 69-60; F 59 and Below

Participation: 28 classes x ½ point - 14 points

Reader Responses: 5 responses x 4 points – 20 points

Bibliographic Project: 11

Research Paper: 20 points

BBQ: 5 x 5 points – 25 points

Final: 10 points

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.

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 the instructor determines to be appropriate. Continued enrollment in this course affirms a student's acceptance of this university policy.

THIS SYLLABUS IS A TENTATIVE OUTLINE—IT IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

CLASS SCHEDULE:

1/13: Course Intro: Personal Intros

The Vernacular Tradition:

1/18: SPIRITUALS pp 12-15; GOSPEL 21-23; SECULAR RHYMES 29, 38, 40-41

1/20: THE BLUES pp 51-52, 57-58; JAZZ 66; RHYTHM AND BLUES 71, 75; HIP HOP 88, 91

1/25: SERMONS AND PRAYERS: pp. 107-127

1/27: **BBQ #1 (Big Big Quiz)**

THE LITERATURE OF SLAVERY AND FREEDOM

2/1: Venture Smith 168-185; Olaudah Equiano 187-213; Phillis Wheatley 219; David Walker 227-238

2/3: Sojourner Truth: 245-246; Martin R. Delany 255-265; Harriet Jacobs 279-288; Victor Sejour 352-364

2/8: Frederick Douglass: 395-404; 421-440; Harriet E. Wilson: 521-540

2/10: **BBQ #2**

LITERATURE OF THE RECONSTRUCTION TO THE NEW NEGRO

2/15: Booker T. Washington: 570-580; 594-601; Ida B. Wells-Barnett 675-685; W.E.B. DuBois 692-707

2/17: Charles W. Chesnutt: 613-631; Pauline E. Hopkins 651-661; Sutton E. Griggs 929-935

2/22: James Weldon Johnson 794-795, 800-801; Paul Laurence Dunbar: 918, 922; Dunbar Nelson: 937, 940

2/24: **BBQ #3**

HARLEM RENAISSANCE

3/1: Angelina Weld Grimke 969-970; Anne Spencer: 972; Alain Locke: 984-992; Marcus Garvey 997-1002

3/3: McKay 1003-1010; Zora Neale Hurston 1030-1040; Jean Toomer 1186-1191; George Schuyler 1220-1223

3/8: Gwendolyn Bennett 1266-1268; Langston Hughes 1288-1292, 1308-1310, 1311-1315; Countee Cullen: 1341
3/10: **BBQ #4**

REALISM, NATURALISM, MODERNISM

3/15: Richard Wright 1411-1418; 1471-1477;
3/17: Robert Hayden 1516-1534

Spring Break: Tue 3/22 and Th 3/24

3/29: Ralph Ellison 1555-1565, 1538-1548, 1599-1610
3/31: James Baldwin 1699-1704; 1713-1727, 1750-1760

4/5: Margaret Walker 1617-1622; Gwendolyn Brooks 1625, 1638; Bob Kaufman 1761-1767
4/7: **BBQ #5; bibliographic project due**

THE BLACK ARTS ERA

4/12: Mari Evans 1850-1851; Audre Lorde 1919-1925; Sonia Sanchez 1963-1967; Nikki Giovanni 2096-2100
4/14: Martin Luther King Jr. 1895-1907; Addison Gayle Jr. 1911-1918

4/19: Amiri Baraka 1937-1945; Haki R. Madhubuti: 2090-2095

LITERATURE SINCE 1975

4/21: Maya Angelou 2155-2157; Paule Marshall 2167-2181; Alice Walker: 2437-2442; **paper due**

4/26: Yusef Komunyakaa 2529-2533; Charles Johnson 2542-2552
4/28: Octavia Butler 2515-2528; David Bradley 2577-2583; Walter Mosley 2624-2634

Finals Week 5/1—5/5

Final Exam Date, Time, and Location: **TBA**