Ethnic American Literature: Africa in America

This course surveys literature by writers of African descent in the United States from the early national period to today with a focus on social and cultural contexts. The semester will be split between African-American literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries with attention paid to a range of genres—including the slave narrative, poetry, drama, the essay and hip hop—as well as a range of historical contexts—such as slavery, Reconstruction, the Harlem Renaissance, Civil Rights and the Black Arts movement. Throughout the course, we will seek to understand the texts we read as “African American,” however we agree to define the term; we will also examine the relationship between minority literature and the literary canon.

Student Learning Outcomes:
- Analyze the development of African-American literature from the early national period to the present within a larger social, historical and cultural context.
- Closely read and write critically in order to explore literature.
- Demonstrate presentation skills and the ability to lead class discussion.
- Produce an academic research paper that effectively synthesizes sources into a coherent argument and illustrates appropriate documentation skills.

Text: The Norton Anthology of African American Literature (2nd edition)
All other materials available through Blackboard

Grading: The following is a rough formula to show that I will give more weight to some assignments than to others. I grade using the letter, not the number, system.

Exams=35% (midterm=15%, final=20%); Essays=35% (essay 1=15%, essay 2=20%); Journals=10%; Participation=10%; Presentation=5%; Black History Month assignment=5%

Particulars:
- Participation: Students’ alert presence in the classroom, though required, does not guarantee a good participation grade. Students participate by keeping up with all of the assigned readings, taking notes during lecture and discussion, responding to questions posed by myself and their classmates and by asking their own questions about our readings. Those students who have extreme difficulty speaking in front of a group should make an appointment with me early in the semester to discuss alternatives. The completion of short writing assignments, such as the free-write with which most classes will begin and the annotated bibliography, as well as attendance for the full class meeting will also be factored into the participation grade.
- Black History Month assignment: Students must attend a Black History Month event in Feb. and write a reflection about a relationship they see between our course and/or readings and the event.
- Journaling: Each week, students must post to the Blackboard journal twice on one author: once before we meet to discuss that author and once after we have met on that author to reflect on how their reading was affected by the class meeting. The first journal is due no later than 9:30 a.m. on Tuesday or Thursday, depending on the author to whom students want to respond, and the second journal entry, which revisits and reflects on the text after our class meeting, is due no later than 11:59 p.m. on Friday. Each entry need be no longer than a paragraph and must demonstrate
critical thinking about the material. The instructor may bring students’ journals into class to facilitate discussion.

- **Presentation:** Once during the semester, students working in small groups will present for about 15 minutes on the historical/cultural context for the day’s assigned reading as well as situate the text in the context they build around it. Creative approaches are encouraged. Groups are advised to meet with the instructor prior to the date of their presentation.

- **Essays:** Students will write two essays—one close-reading essay of five to seven pages, the other a research essay of eight to ten pages. Although the first essay will not require outside sources, both essays must include a Works Cited page and will be evaluated according to content (i.e., strength of the thesis statement, organization) and grammar. Both essays will be submitted electronically to Blackboard via SafeAssign—a program that scans work for plagiarism.

- **Exams:** A midterm and final exam will test students on the course material using a combination of identifications, short answer questions and essays.

**Policies:**

*Late work:* Extensions will be granted, no questions asked, if the request is made at least 48 hours before the paper’s due date. Papers arriving after the due date (or extension date) will be down-graded 1/3 of a grade for each elapsed calendar day. For example, an A paper would become an A- if handed in after it is due. (Structure the time allotted for writing in a way that allows for mishaps, such as glitches with technology.)

*Plagiarism:* Students are expected to follow the Academic Honor Code strictly: [http://studentaffairs.tamucc.edu/TAMUCC_student_handbook.pdf](http://studentaffairs.tamucc.edu/TAMUCC_student_handbook.pdf)

Academic misconduct will result in an F on the assignment in question or—in serious cases—expulsion from this class; further, a letter will go into the student’s file reporting the incident.

*E-mail Etiquette:* Review the document posted on our Blackboard site.

*Controversial Subject Matter:* We will read and discuss topics in class that some might find offensive or controversial, such as racism, sexism and homophobia. Our purpose is to understand the ideas of the assigned authors in their cultural contexts and how they may continue beyond the period in which they were expressed. Students should listen to the instructor and to one another in a respectful manner but are free to disagree, respectfully, with the views expressed in class.

*Notice to Students with Disabilities:* The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall 116. If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom, or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance.

*Academic Advising:* It is imperative that all students visit regularly with an academic adviser. Each college within the university has an academic advising center, staffed by full-time, professional advisers to assist students with course selection, degree plans, and other academic matters. To find out how to contact the right adviser, go to: [http://www.tamucc.edu/academics/advising.php](http://www.tamucc.edu/academics/advising.php). Students who have yet to declare a major are advised by the Academic Advising Transition Center. For more information, go to: [http://www.tamucc.edu/~aac](http://www.tamucc.edu/~aac)

*Reminder to English Majors:* As part of the English undergraduate capstone course (ENGL 4351), all English majors are required to submit a portfolio of writings in different discourse genres that they have
completed for their college classes. To help you prepare for this assignment, you should keep a copy of all essays, research papers, literary analyses, creative and report writing, etc., so that you will have an ample selection from which to choose when the portfolio comes due.

Grade Appeal Process: As stated in University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, and University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. These documents are accessible through the University Rules Web site at http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Office of Student Affairs.

Writing Center: Students are encouraged to take advantage of the services offered by the Writing Center in the Center for Academic Student Achievement (Glasscock Center, Room 112). http://casa.tamucc.edu/wc.php or the Stone Writing Center at Del Mar College, 101 Baldwin Blvd., http://dmc122011.delmar.edu/swc/index.php

University Counseling Center: Confidential counseling services are available by calling (361) 825-2703. http://counseling.tamucc.edu/

Thurs, Jan 24: Introductions

The Literature of Slavery and Freedom, 1746–1865

Tues, Jan 29: Equiano

Thurs, Jan 31: Wheatley

Tues, Feb 5: David Walker

Thurs, Feb 7: Douglass

Tues, Feb 12: Delany

Thurs, Feb 14: William Wells Brown

Tues, Feb 19: Harriet Jacobs

Thurs, Feb 21: Harriet Wilson; Essay 1 due

Literature of the Reconstruction to the Negro Renaissance, 1865–1919

Tues, Feb 26: Booker T Washington

Thurs, Feb 28: DuBois

Tues, March 5: Hopkins; Black History Month Assignment due
Thurs, March 7: James Weldon Johnson

Tues, March 12: Midterm review

Thurs, March 14: **MIDTERM**

Tues, March 19: NO CLASS (Spring Break)

Thurs, March 21: NO CLASS (Spring Break)

**Harlem Renaissance**

Tues, March 26: Garvey, Locke

Thurs, March 28: Hurston

Tues, April 1: Larsen

Thurs, April 4: Hughes

Tues, April 8: Library research session

Thurs, April 11: Writing Workshop; **Annotated Bibliography due**

**Realism, Naturalism, Modernism, 1940-1960**

Tues, April 15: Wright; **Essay 2 due**

Thurs, April 18: Ellison

Tues, April 22: Hansberry

**The Black Arts Era, 1960-1975**

Thurs, April 25: Malcolm X, MLK Jr.

Tues, April 29: Baraka, Giovanni

**Literature Since 1975**

Thurs, May 2: Danticat, Shange, Morrison’s “Unspeakable Things Unspoken”

Tues, May 7: Grandmaster Flash, Biggy Smalls of The Notorious B.I.G.

**FINAL**