English 4351.001: 20th and 21st-Century Literature and Writing
Literature of Passing

Class Meeting Time: MW: 5:30-6:45
Classroom: OCNR 222
Instructor: Kevin Concannon
Office: FC 282
Office Hours: M: 10-11:00, TTH 10-12
Office Phone: 825-3874
Email: kevin.concannon@tamucc.edu
Semester: Fall 2016

Course Description: This course is designed to review and draw upon your previous experiences in the English program. Part of this review will include the assembling of a portfolio which includes samples of your previous work at this university. You will also be required to do an independent project that will develop an issue related to the class topic.
The focus of this course will be on the act of passing as it relates to the construction of race or gender. The term has been used to refer to works that explore the issue of racial passing, most commonly the experiences of individuals “defined” by the US legal system as African American who “pass” for Caucasian. Texts which present this experience, including those who reverse it through the practice of “Blackface,” challenge our perspectives on essentialist identity, and by doing so complicate how we see and understand difference. Since gender and race are also intertwined with constructions of family, nation and class, this class will complicate representations of individuals seen as choosing to pass by exploring the socio-economic demands placed on them to be seen differently.

Taking one of the popular novels of the Harlem Renaissance as a starting point, we will explore this more conventional representation of passing. As the course continues we will expand our understanding by looking at gender passing as well as passing across other races. To this end, we will consider how the uncertainties posed in these texts highlight neoliberal constructions of identity and citizenship.

**Required Texts:**

Everett, Percival. *Erasure*
Hwang, David Henry. *M. Butterfly*
Johnson, Mat. *Incognegro*
Larsen, Nella. *Passing*
Rankine, Claudia. *Citizen*
Row, Jess. *Your Face in Mine*

**Course Requirements:**

5 Short Analytical Essays: 5 points each (25 points total)
Capstone Portfolio: 15 points
Research Portfolio: 10 points
Research Presentation: 10 points
Research Essay: 30 points
Class Participation and Class Work: 10 points

1. Short Analytical Essays: The essays should be 2-3 pages in length and must use the MLA format. You should keep your use of secondary sources to a minimum (or not at all).

2. Capstone Portfolio: This assignment will be graded on its completeness, and the quality and pertinence of the reflective letter/essay. Please use the final page of this syllabus as your cover sheet.

3. Research Portfolio: You will be required to turn in pre-writing exercises for your research essay, including a description of your proposal (which will include a discussion of the purpose and direction of your proposal) and an annotate bibliography. These items will be graded on their completeness and quality.

4. Research Presentation: Within a larger group of three or four students, you will present your research to the class at the end of the semester. When presenting your material, you want to keep in mind ways to keep the audience engaged whether through handouts, a short video presentation, or by asking questions. We will discuss the presentation format in more detail near the end of the semester.
5. Research Essay: This project represents the culmination of what you have learned during your years as an English major. You will want to research a topic related to the issues of passing, citizenship or identity, and to prepare a formal essay that integrates social, historical, and/or political readings with cultural and literary analysis. Papers must contain a minimum of 12-15 outside sources and must use the MLA format. Sources must include scholarly journal articles or books and may include carefully selected web sites. Papers should be approximately 12-15 pages in length. A rough draft of this essay must be peer reviewed by at least two classmates.

6. Class Participation: You are expected to come to class having read the assigned material and to be prepared to discuss it. You are allowed to miss two classes without penalty. For every class you miss after that two points will be deducted from your final grade.

7. Class Work: There will be occasional in-class or Blackboard assignments. These assignments cannot be turned in late or made up.

Course Evaluation:

90-100: A  
80-89: B  
70-79: C  
60-69: D  
59 or below: F

Student Learning Outcomes:

1) apply professional standards in argumentation, research and documentation  
2) evaluate various uses of genre  
3) create an independent research project by applying the skills of literary and cultural analysis

Course Objectives:

1) Explore course readings and issues with your peers in open and engaged discussions;  
2) Expand and share your knowledge of literature, contexts and genres in relation to our thematic focus  
3) Organize and reflect upon a portfolio of your college writings in four different discourse genres  
4) Engage in sustained research that you will use to develop your own individual project.

Technology in the Classroom:

You may use computers and e-readers in this class. If their use becomes disruptive to others in the class, however, you will be asked to turn them off.

Late Assignments:

Please contact me by e-mail if an emergency arises and you cannot attend class. I will not accept late assignments unless you have made previous arrangements (or if it states in the syllabus that a late assignment will not be accepted). An “Incomplete” will be given at my discretion only and must involve exceptional circumstances. To qualify for consideration, you must have satisfactorily completed two-thirds of the course requirements.
**Academic Integrity/Plagiarism:**

University students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to penalty includes all forms of cheating, such as illicit possession of examinations or examination materials, falsification, forgery, complicity or plagiarism (plagiarism is the presentation of the work of another as one’s own work). In this class, academic misconduct or complicity in an act of academic misconduct on an assignment or test will result in a failing grade.

**Dropping a Class:**

I hope you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. Please consult with me before you decide to drop to be sure it is the best thing to do. Should dropping the course be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop the course by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation will not automatically result in your being dropped from the class.

**Classroom/professional behavior:**

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi has a diverse student population that represents the population of the state. Our goal is to provide you with a high quality educational experience that is free from repression. You are responsible for following the rules of the University, city, state and federal government. We expect that you will behave in a manner that is dignified, respectful and courteous to all people, regardless of sex, ethnic/racial origin, religious background, sexual orientation or disability. Behaviors that infringe on the rights of another individual will not be tolerated.

**Grade Appeal Process:**

Students who feel that they have not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in this class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, http://cla.tamucc.edu/about/student-resources.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean’s Office.

**Disabilities Accommodations:**

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.
Statement of Academic Continuity

In the event of an unforeseen adverse event, such as a major hurricane and classes could not be held on the campus of Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, this course would continue through the use of Blackboard and/or email. In addition, the syllabus and class activities may be modified to allow continuation of the course. Ideally, University facilities (i.e. emails, web sites and Blackboard) will be operational within two days of the closing of the physical campus. However, students need to make certain that the course instructor has a primary and a secondary means of contacting each student.

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 at (361) 825-5816.

Academic Advising:

The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. Degree plans are prepared in the CLA Academic Advising Center. The University uses an online Degree Audit System. Any amendment must be approved by the Department Chair and the Office of the Dean. All courses and requirements specified in the final degree plan audit must be completed before a degree will be granted. The CLA Academic Advising Office is located in Driftwood #203. For more information please call 361-825-3466.
# Course Schedule

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reading Assignment Due</th>
<th>Writing Assignment Due</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Passing Literature</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>W 8-24</td>
<td>Introduction to Course</td>
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<tr>
<td>M 8-29</td>
<td>Ginsberg, “Introduction to Passing” (handout)</td>
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<tr>
<td>W 8-31</td>
<td>Begin reading Larsen (Part I)</td>
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<td>M 9-5 (holiday)</td>
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<tr>
<td>W 9-7</td>
<td>Finish reading Larsen</td>
<td>Short Essay #1 due</td>
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<td>M 9-12</td>
<td>Read Chester Himes “Dirty Deceivers” and “The Ghost of Rufus Jones” (handouts)</td>
<td>Genre Quiz</td>
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<tr>
<td>W 9-14</td>
<td>Read Langston Hughes “Who’s Passing for Who?” And “Spanish Blood” (handouts)</td>
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<td><strong>Contemporary Representations of Identity</strong></td>
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<td>M 9-19</td>
<td>Begin reading Rankine’s <em>Citizen</em></td>
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<td>W 9-21</td>
<td>Continue <em>Citizen</em></td>
<td>Short Essay #2 due</td>
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<td>M 9-26</td>
<td>Finish <em>Citizen</em></td>
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<td><strong>Re-Presenting History</strong></td>
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<td>W 9-28</td>
<td>Begin <em>Incognegro</em></td>
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<td>M 10-3</td>
<td>Finish <em>Incognegro</em></td>
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<td><strong>Writing and Identity</strong></td>
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<td>W 10-5</td>
<td>Begin <em>Erasure</em></td>
<td>Short Essay #3 due</td>
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<td>M 10-10</td>
<td>Continue <em>Erasure</em></td>
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<td>W 10-12</td>
<td>Continue <em>Erasure</em></td>
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<td>M 10-17</td>
<td>Finish <em>Erasure</em></td>
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<td><strong>Performing Gender</strong></td>
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<td>W 10-19</td>
<td>Begin <em>M. Butterfly</em></td>
<td>Short Essay #4 due</td>
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<tr>
<td>M 10-24</td>
<td>Finish <em>M. Butterfly</em></td>
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<td><strong>Neoliberal Constructions of Identity</strong></td>
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<td>W 10-26</td>
<td><em>Your Face in Mine</em> (I. 1-7)</td>
<td>Research Proposal due</td>
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<td>M 10-31</td>
<td><em>Your Face in Mine</em> (I. 8-20)</td>
<td>Bibliography due</td>
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W 11-2  
M 11-7  
W 11-9  

Your Face in Mine (I. 21-24)  
Your Face in Mine (II. 1-9)  
Your Face in Mine (II. 10-end)  

Short Essay #5 due

Presentations

M 11-14  
W 11-16  
M 11-22 (Blackboard Assignment-no class)  
W 11-24 (Reading Day-no class)  
M 11-28  
W 11-30

Capstone Portfolio due

Peer Review

M 12-5  
M 12-12

Research Draft  
Research Essay due

References:


Howells, William Dean. An Imperative Duty


CAPSTONE PORTFOLIO

Throughout the semester we have discussed fiction and non-fiction genres (novels, memoirs, autobiographies, short stories, oral histories, and diaries). In addition, you have worked in different genres (literary analysis, descriptive narrative, and research project). Your task for this assignment is to choose four pieces you have created over the course of your career as an English major and write a critical reflection of them. Your portfolio is due on Monday, November 15. Whatever portfolio binding you use, make it simple and flat (so when stacked the portfolios won’t topple over).

Your portfolio must contain:

1) Four writings that you have done for classes in college. Clean copies (without teacher commentary/grade) are preferred. The pieces should display or exemplify a different discourse genre (drama, poetry, prose fiction, non-fiction etc.). One of the four pieces must be a literary analysis. Each submission should come from a different course.

2) Introductory essay or letter, approximately three pages long, in which you discuss and analyze your use and understanding of genre as illustrated by the pieces in your portfolio. Your discussion might include characteristics and purposes of each genre, and how choice of genres depends upon context, purpose, and audience. Note: the bulk of your portfolio grade in this class will be based on this essay.

3) Data sheet—please submit this page with the information below filled out.

Academic genres may include, but are not restricted to
Fiction: short story, poem, novel chapter, scene from a script
Nonfiction: biography, autobiography, argument, research paper, analysis, report, proposal, letter memorandum, editorial, printout from a PowerPoint created for an oral presentation.

Name: __________________________________________
Class (circle one)   First-year     Sophomore     Junior      Senior

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<th>Short Title</th>
<th>Genre-type</th>
<th>Course/Level</th>
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