

SAN BERNARDINO VALLEY COLLEGE

Last updated: 9/30/00

**I. CATALOG DESCRIPTION:**

Department Information:

Division: Humanities  
Department: English  
Course ID: ENGL 065  
Course Title: African American Literature  
Units: 3  
Lecture: 3  
Prerequisite: NONE

Course Description:

A survey of some of the most important works written by African-Americans in the genres of poetry, drama, the short story, the novel and the essay. This non-transfer course is taught simultaneously with ENGL 165, a transfer-level course, but with different assignments.

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**II. NUMBER OF TIMES COURSE MAY BE TAKEN FOR CREDIT: One**

**III. EXPECTED OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS:**

- A. Identify distinctive characteristics of different literary genres.
- B. Determine interpretations and responses for a work.
- C. Analyze possible outcomes in a work.
- D. Compare two pieces of literature.
- E. Recognize the influence of historical and social issues in works of fiction, drama, poetry, and the essay.
- F. Recognize the meaning and role of ethnic expressions and dialect in fiction folktales, poetry, and drama.
- G. Compose a new ending, a change of scene, imagined interviews, or sequels to a work.

**IV. CONTENT:**

- A Pioneer Writers: 1760-1830
  1. Poetry (Include Phyllis Wheatley, Jupiter Hammon.)
    - a) Poetic forms-traditional 18<sup>th</sup> century elegies, blank verse

- b) Meter- iambic pentameter couplet
    - c) Diction
    - d) Themes
  - 2. Autobiography (Include Gustavas Vassa.)
- B. Freedom Fighters: 1830-1865
  - 1. Folk Poetry
    - a) Spirituals
    - b) Work songs
    - c) Rural blues
    - d) Folk sermon
  - 2. Fiction
    - a) Character: Slave heroes (Include Clotelle by William Wells Brown.)
    - b) Plot
- C. Accommodation and Protest: 1850-1910
  - 1. Poetry
    - a) Dialect (Include Paul Lawrence Dunbar and James Campbell.)
    - b) Lyrical (Include William Stanley Brathwite.)
  - 2. Essays and Speeches (Include David Walker and Booker T. Washington).
    - a) Arguments from analogy
    - b) Arguments from authority
    - c) Arguments from consequence
- D. The New Negro Renaissance and Beyond: 1910-1954
  - 1. Poetry
    - a) Jazz rhythms (Langston Hughes)
    - b) Lyrical (Include Jean Toomer and Countee Cullen.)
    - c) Imagery (Include Melvin Tolson.)
    - d) Folk Idiom (Include Sterling Brown)
    - e) Theme (Include Claude McKay).
  - 2. Fiction
    - a) Folk Tales: Satire and Irony (Include Zora Neale Hurston.)
    - b) Naturalistic Tradition (Include Richard Wright and Ann Petry.)
  - 3. Debate (Include Alain Locke and W.E.B. DuBois.)
  - 4. Drama
    - a) Theme
    - b) Plot
    - c) Costumes and Gestures
    - d) Settings

Suggested Play: Plumes by Georgia Douglas Johnson
- A. Integration versus Black Nationalism 1954 to ca. 1970
  - 1. Poetry: Black Aesthetic
    - a) Use of black music
    - b) Use of black speech
  - 2. Fiction
    - a) Theme: Search for cultural identity
    - b) Black Arts Movement and the Cultural Revolution

3. Drama: Black Arts Theater

- a) Theme
- b) Audience

Suggested Playwrights: Ed Bullins and Amiri Baraka

**V. METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:**

- A. Lecture
- B. Class and group discussion
- C. Journals
- D. Videotapes/films
- E. Small group exercises

**VI. TYPICAL ASSIGNMENTS:**

A. BIOGRAPHY:

- 1. Autobiography of Frederick Douglas: Douglas says to his former master: "I intend to make of you as a weapon with which to assail slavery". How did Douglas Keep his promise? Respond in a 150-200 word paragraph.
- 2. Read Chapter 1 of this autobiography : Describe Douglas' childhood on the plantation in a 150-200 word paragraph.

B. ELEMENTS OF FICTION:

- 1. "The Man Who Was Almost A Man" (Richard Wright): Assume you are Dave. Write a letter to your parents from your new home in Chicago. What will you tell them?
- 2. "Like A Winding Sheet" (Ann Petry): In your journal write a paragraph about your reaction to the end of the story.

C. POETRY:

- 1. "Willie" (Maya Angelou): Why do you think Willie uses metaphors that refer to nature and children to describe himself?
- 2. Identify three metaphors in this poem. Discuss their effectiveness.

D. DRAMA:

- 1. Rewrite the ending of the play Plumes (Georgia Johnson).
- 2. Even though Emmerline has no lines in the play, how does the audience learn about her? Is this technique successful?

**VII. EVALUATION**

A. Methods of Evaluation

- 1. Objective and subjective tests to evaluate students' grasp of material.  
Typical test questions:
  - a. What are the components of folk art in African American literature?
  - b. Name three characteristics of neoclassical verse.
  - c. Booker T. Washington relied on concrete images in his speeches.  
Explain the meaning of "Cast down your bucket where you are."
- 2. Journal entries-Students will record responses to assigned readings as well as self selected readings from the textbook. For example, Langston Hughes' poem "Mother to Son" gives encouragement to a child to keep trying in spite of the obstacles he or she will face. What is your reaction

to the advice in the poem? Under what circumstances might a mother give this kind of advice?

B. Frequency of Evaluation

1. At least 5 quizzes
2. End of term evaluation of student journal

**VIII. TYPICAL TEXTS:**

- A. Davis, A. (Ed.). The New Cavalcade. Washington, D.C. Howard University Press, 1992.
- B. Hill, P. (Ed.) Call And Response. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1997
- C. Reed, I. African American Literature. New York: Harper Collins College, 1996.

**IX. OTHER SUPPLIES REQUIRED:** None.