

I. CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

- A. Department Information:
Division: Humanities and Social Science
Department: English
Course ID: ENGL 165
Course Title: African-American Literature
Units: 3
Lecture: 3 Hours
Prerequisite: ENGL 101
- B. Catalog and Schedule 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 transfer course is taught simultaneously with ENGL 065, a non-transfer course. Assignments differ for the two courses although the students participate in the same lectures.

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

III. EXPECTED OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS:

- Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:
- A. Identify distinctive characteristics of different literary genres.
 - B. Explain the relationship of characterization, plot, tone, and setting to theme in works of drama and fiction. Analyze themes for relevance to contemporary social issues.
 - C. Identify and evaluate the effectiveness of literary devices used in poetry, drama, and fiction, including elements of verse, meter, allusions, imagery and figures of speech.
 - D. Discuss the effectiveness of ethnic expressions reflected in dialect and folktales.
 - E. Analyze historical narratives or essays which trace the evolution of cultural traits and values from Africa to America and from the rural South to the Urban North.
 - F. Compare cultural nationalism and social protest themes in works of prose by African American writers.
 - G. Analyze the problem of identity in African American fiction.

IV. COURSE CONTENT:

- A. Pioneer Writers: 1760-1830
1. Poetry (include Phyllis Wheatley and Jupiter Hammon)
 - a) Poetic forms- traditional 18th 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 Clotel 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 Brathwaite)
 - 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: Protest (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
 - e) Suggested Play: Plumes by Georgia Douglas Johnson
- E. 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 Black Cultural Revolution
 - 3. Drama: Black Arts Theater
 - a) Theme
 - b) Audience
 - c) Suggested Playwrights: Ed Bullins and Amiri Baraka

V. METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:

- A. Lecture
- B. Discussion
- C. Readings in the text will be supplemented through:
 - 1. Lecture and the concepts will be applied to specific novels, short stories, plays and poetry.
 - 2. Students will be asked to discuss readings and apply the concepts to specific works of literature.
- D. Audio-visuals: video tapes and recordings of authors' works will be used to present students with authors' performances of their works versus interpretations of these works.

VI. TYPICAL ASSIGNMENTS:

- A. BIOGRAPHY: Compare and contrast the autobiography of Elizabeth Keckley (Behind The Scenes) and Booker T. Washington (Up from Slavery). Are they conscious of a certain audience?

B. FICTION:

1. Analyze Ann Petry's narrative technique in her novel The Street. Consider her use of description, dialogue, interior monologue, and dream states.
2. James Baldwin's style and structure achieve a rare unity by presenting details which parallel the fantasies and spiritual anguish of his characters in Go Tell It on the Mountain. Give examples.

C. POETRY

1. Analyze the imagery, tone and poetical devices in Countee Cullen's poem "Yet Do I Marvel".
2. Both "Southern Mansion" and "The Return" by Arna Bontemps suggest the shadow of the past on the present. How do the poems differ in mood, feeling and intention?

D. DRAMA

1. Is Purlie Victorious by Ossie Davis in the spirit of black revolutionary theater? Why or why not?
2. Describe the language of Sonia Sanchez' play The Bronx is Next. Compare it to the language of the author's poetry.

VII. **EVALUATION(S):**

A. Methods of evaluation:

1. Essay exams: At the conclusion of each major segment of the course, students will be tested on their knowledge of the concepts and on their ability to apply them.
2. Quizzes: These are given frequently to test the students' understanding of reading assignments. Sample test question: Analyze the imagery in Claude McKay's "If We Must Die."
3. Critiques of live performances (plays, poetry readings) or film interpretations of plays such as A Raisin in the Sun or Purlie Victorious. Students might be asked to evaluate the success or failure of the presentation in terms of the main characters as portrayed by the actors.
4. Research paper: Students must show their ability to use sources and organize them to address an issue, such as the role of literary magazines like the Crisis and Opportunity during the Harlem Renaissance.

B. Frequency of evaluation:

1. Quizzes will be given at least ten times during the semester.
2. Essay exams will be given at the end of every major unit.
3. Critiques of performances will be written at least twice during the semester.

C. Sample questions:

1. Analyze the imagery and other poetic devices in Claude McKay's "If We Must Die".
2. Discuss how the scenery, sets, and setting in the play A Day of Absence, by Douglas Turner Ward, create the mood of the drama. Do these elements convey information about the world of the play through these elements?

VIII. **TYPICAL TEXT(S):**

Davis, A. (Ed.). (1992). The New Cavalcade. Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press.

Hill, P. (Ed.). (1997). Call and Response. New York: Houghton Mifflin.

Reed, I. (Ed.). (1996). African American Literature. New York: Harper Collins College.

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