

AFRICAN-AMERICAN LITERATURE – ENG 05106

Fall 2021

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Office Hours: Tuesday: 10:00 – 3:00
*other times available by appointment

TEXTS:

Paul Lauter, et. al., *The Heath Anthology of American Literature*
Julius Lester, *Black Folktales*
Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Classic Slave Narratives*
Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*
Abraham Chapman, et. al., *Black Voices: An Anthology of Afro-American Lit.*
Gloria Naylor, *The Women of Brewster Place*
Toni Morrison, *Beloved*
*Other selections from handouts, as assigned

OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVE:

This course is intended to provide a grounding in African-American Literature. Rather than focusing specifically on regurgitating detailed information, this course emphasizes the acquisition and application of skills in literary analysis, particularly the consideration of historical context and its impact on authors and their works. We will pay special attention to the cultural, political, and economic forces that help to shape the ideas and voices that form what we read, looking closely at a rich history of various periods, influences, and movements in African-American Literature. To guide us in our exploration, this course is organized around the investigation of the definition and development of the African-American self. We will attempt to organize what we learn by providing a framework according to which we can define – and refine – our conclusions as we progress in our literary analysis. With the help of these tools and your ambition, enthusiasm, dedication, and confidence, we will strive to:

- Critically read a variety of writing genres
- Critically analyze a variety of writing genres
- Identify and employ textual evidence in support of assertive thesis statements
- Learn and consciously evaluate paper construction
- Employ textual citation according to MLA format
- Locate and utilize valuable sources of secondary research in literature
- Apply quintessential slave theory to classic and modern African-American texts
- Appreciate and understand a body of American Literature and its origins
- Investigate structures of power that enabled a system of chattel slavery and continue to operate today
- Effectively and confidently communicate our own informed ideas on a given work
- Passionately capture and convey a perspective that reflects our own personal identities

SOME QUESTIONS WE'LL ADDRESS:

- What aspects do you recognize in today's African-American culture that have roots in the *African* culture?
- How does a particular experience define a human being?
- What are the long-term ramifications of slavery that are still visible in our society today?
- What are the long-term ramifications of the Civil Rights Movement that are still visible in our society today?
- What is the rightful place of affirmative action in today's society?
- What does African-American *literature* tell us about the unique qualities of African-American *culture*?

NOTE:

The next section of the syllabus provides you with the detailed information about process, procedure, and grading in this course. Please read it so you know how we'll operate, but the short version is if we both do our jobs, none of this ever needs to be discussed. Blech! I hate that I even have to type this out, so please just work hard with me this semester so we don't have to think about the minutia and instead talk about the really important and interesting aspects of the course content. I'm so excited to learn alongside you this semester!

ATTENDANCE and TARDY POLICIES:

Absences and tardies will be reported to the Office of Academic Affairs. You will be counted tardy if you arrive to class *at any time after* the class is scheduled to begin up to ten minutes past. You will be counted absent if you arrive to class more than *ten minutes after* the class is scheduled to begin.

It is **your** responsibility to find out about any work, assignments, announcements, syllabus changes, etc., that you miss due to absence or lateness. Get information and notes from a reliable classmate, pick up handouts from the folder on my office door, and contact me for any further information you need. Your absence on the day an assignment is given is not a legitimate excuse for a late or missing assignment. If your absence or tardiness is *unexcused*, you will not be allowed to make up missed work, and your grade(s), consequently, will be entered as a zero. Also, please note that sleeping in class will be counted as an unexcused absence; your head must remain up off the desk, and your eyes must remain open at all times. This will prevent most "interpretive" conflicts that might arise later on.

Be sure to get to me any assignment that is due on a day you must miss class, either through a classmate or by delivering it to the box on my office door. Assignments should be submitted by the time class is scheduled to begin.

LATE WORK:

All late work *must* be cleared with me prior to the due date *without exception*. Things happen in life that trump school/work. I won't support your procrastination or reward indolence, but I WILL work with you when important life events inhibit schoolwork. Please communicate with me proactively.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:

I take this issue very seriously. It is extremely important that you hand in your own work and give credit for any borrowed ideas, words, or information. If you need more detailed information on plagiarism, see me; otherwise, if you're in doubt, cite it and give credit where credit is due. Consult me and/or *A Writer's Reference* for help with this. Conducting yourself honorably with regard to tests and other graded assignments/projects goes without saying. Avoid a situation where we have to address this embarrassing and injurious issue. Should an incident arise, I will deal with it according to the plan of action in the "Academic Honesty" section outlined in your *Student Handbook*. Consider your actions and their consequences carefully before you act.

COMPUTER USE:

You're more than welcome to use your computers to take notes during class. Please employ them in academic pursuits only.

CELL PHONES:

Cell phones should be silenced before entering the classroom. Please do not use your cellphones during class time. It's too easy to read a text or check your Snap or Insta when the notifications pop up, thus causing you to miss out on important goings-on in discussion. So, I respectfully request that you leave your cell phone in your bag for the duration of our time together.

PAPERS:

- Please type all assignments completed outside of class
- Follow MLA style citing and referencing when necessary
- Submitted at the beginning of class
- Submit a hard copy at the time the assignment is due. Printer/computer problems will evoke much sympathy from your instructor; however, your grade will still be processed according to the late work policy outlined above.

A note about your writing: Please know that I feel privileged each time you choose to share something personal with me and/or the class as part of our educational journey. To the extent possible and appropriate, I will keep your personal information confidential; however, you should understand that I am a mandated reporter. Sometimes I am legally and ethically obligated to pass along information to another source. Anything that details abuse or neglect, present or past, for instance, has to be reported. Please understand these parameters as you determine what to share with me.

SCHEDULE OF DAILY READINGS / ASSIGNMENTS:

Please have each assignment thoroughly read by the date above it. Changes I note in class take precedence over what is printed in the syllabus.

GRADING:

The grading scale I will employ in this class is as follows:

A	93-100	B+	87	C+	77	D*	69 and below
A-	90-92	B	83	C	73		
		B-	80	C-	70		

I grade on a point system, rather than the percentage breakdown you will encounter in many other classes. Larger and smaller assessments will be weighted appropriately. **Class participation, though, is worth approximately 30%** of your overall grade. Class participation points will be added to your grade on a weekly basis. You need to be aware of this large “assignment” that has a significant impact on your overall grade. Also, be aware that the “Class Participation” heading covers but is not necessarily limited to the following:

- Class discussion
 - Answering questions clearly and thoughtfully, evidencing your preparation for class
 - Generating your own ideas clearly and thoughtfully without monopolizing the discussion
 - Handling difference of opinion in a civil and mature manner (i.e. not personally attacking someone who disagrees with you)
 - Listening to others and responding to what they have said
 - Focusing on the question at hand
 - Citing textual evidence to support ideas put forth
- Attendance
- Attitude
 - Making positive contributions to the class atmosphere, rather than negative ones (through your actions and other nonverbal communications)
 - Contributing willingly, rather than complaining about it
 - Conducting yourself in a reasonable and considerate manner at all times
- Compliance with course requirements and policies outlined in this syllabus and through the instructor’s communiqués.

HELP:

Take advantage of my office hours. I’ll be around a lot, especially during the daytime hours. I expect you to think and work independently to a large extent, but if you need help, take the initiative see me.

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible. My office location and hours are listed above.

MASKS:

The Indiana Academy will follow [Ball State University’s mask policy](#)(see Section IV). Based on current CDC guidance recommending the wearing of face masks for all people—regardless of vaccination status—in public indoor settings in communities where the rate of coronavirus transmission is high or substantial, all employees, students, and campus visitors are required to wear a mask while inside any University building. This requirement is effective on August 9, 2021. Fully vaccinated people are not required to wear masks outdoors.

Individuals who are not fully vaccinated for COVID-19 are required to wear face masks while inside campus buildings and outside when physical distancing cannot be maintained.

If a student declines to wear a face mask as required, the student will be referred to the Director of Academic Affairs or the Director of Residential Affairs. If the situation occurs in a classroom or other academic setting, it is considered a classroom management issue, and the teacher will remind the student of the requirement and give the student a

chance to comply with it prior to referring the matter to the Director of Academic Affairs or the Director of Residential Affairs. Wearing masks is crucial to preventing the spread of COVID-19 to others.

FREEBIES:

You are entitled to one “freebie” per semester in my class. A “freebie” is NOT a free pass to skip an assignment. Rather, it is a way to compensate for a moment of forgetfulness or a printer fiasco. Here are the stipulations:

- You must be able to prove that the work has been completed on time, so you can show it to me on your computer, for instance.
- You may email me the assignment. This should be done at the time the assignment is collected.
- Please inform me as soon as possible that you will be utilizing your “freebie.”
- Once again, if you cannot show me the work was completed on time, the “freebie” status does not apply.
- If you have any questions or need clarification on what is acceptable, please ask.

PLEASE NOTE:

There will be various long and short term projects and assignments, as well as other formal and informal assessments (like tests and quizzes) throughout the course of the semester. Some are listed in this syllabus; many are not. Be sure to listen in class in order to receive these assignments as they are given so you are not stuck trying to scurry at the last minute in order to complete them by the due date.

PLEASE ALSO NOTE:

Important Literature is often about the deepest and most difficult struggles of humans to live authentically in a complex world. Through the thoughts and experiences of literary characters, we readers can examine and evaluate our personal responses to life’s mysteries, complexities, disappointments, and joys. In addition, we begin to understand how a writer, in his or her own struggle to express experience creatively, has responded to the social, political, and artistic environment of his / her times. The English Department at the Academy selects reading material that reflects these human struggles, has endured the test of time, and has earned a respected place in the universe of letters. In addition, the instructors include recently published poems, short stories, and articles that reflect the diversity of contemporary cultures and experiences. If, because of the powerful nature of the reading experience, you are unable to read and study a specific text with reasonable analytic objectivity, please confer with your instructor. Alternative texts (of comparable length and degree of difficulty) are available.

DIVERSITY:

Ball State University aspires to be a university that attracts and retains a diverse faculty, staff, and student body. We are committed to ensuring that all members of the community are welcome, through valuing the various experiences and worldviews represented at Ball State and among those we serve. We promote a culture of respect and civil discourse as expressed in our Beneficence Pledge and through university resources found at <http://cms.bsu.edu/campuslife/multiculturalcenter>.