

**Fayetteville State University  
College of Arts and Sciences  
Department of English  
ENGL 220 - 02: African American Literature  
Butler 325  
Fall 2011**

**I. Locator Information:**

Professor: Brooksie Harrington  
Course Title: ENGL 220-02  
Office Location: Butler 135  
Semester Credit Hours: 4  
Office hours: M – T—W—Th 10 - 2; Tu Th 12-2, F 2-5  
Office Phone: 672-1931  
Total Contact Hours for Class: 45  
Email address: [bharrington@uncfsu.edu](mailto:bharrington@uncfsu.edu)

**The following statement should appear on the first page of each course syllabus:**

**FSU Policy on Electronic Mail:** Fayetteville State University provides to each student, free of charge, an electronic mail account ([username@uncfsu.edu](mailto:username@uncfsu.edu)) that is easily accessible via the Internet. The university has established FSU email as the primary mode of correspondence between university officials and enrolled students. Inquiries and requests from students pertaining to academic records, grades, bills, financial aid, and other matters of a confidential nature must be submitted via FSU email. Inquiries or requests from personal email accounts are not assured a response. The university maintains open-use computer laboratories throughout the campus that can be used to access electronic mail.

Rules and regulations governing the use of FSU email may be found at  
<http://www.uncfsu.edu/PDFs/EmailPolicyFinal.pdf>

**II. Course Description**

African -American Literature is an exploration of the prose and poetry, fiction and nonfiction of the African Diaspora. While examining multiple genres: oral, written and cinematic, it also investigates the spiritual, historical, philosophical, political, and genderracial forces that influenced the form and matter of this literature. It offers a revision not only of African-American texts of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but it also provides the students with another way of viewing the traditional canon of American Literature. English 220 is a three credit course that examines the Aesthetics of African American Literature up through 1945.

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This course will not be developed along historical lines; rather the students will study the material from a perspective of genre and thematics. This is the prototypical syllabus and is modified for summer and alternative semester sequences.

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Evaluate effectiveness of various forms of communication
2. Create written and oral communication; organization
3. Create written and spoken communication: clarity
4. Cite sources accurately
5. Develop and demonstrate personal system of ethics and morality

English 301 contributes to the following FSU Core Objectives:

1. Evaluate effectiveness of various forms of communication
2. Create written and spoken communication: clarity and organization
3. Develop and demonstrate personal system of ethics and morality
4. Cite sources accurately

**III. Disabled Student Services: In accordance with Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ACA) of 1990, if you have a disability or think you have a disability to please contact the Center for Personal Development in the Spaulding Building, Room 155 (1<sup>st</sup> Floor); 910-672-1203.**

**TEXTBOOK:** Gates, Henry Louis and Nellie McKay. **The Norton Anthology of African-American Literature.** New York: W.W. Norton, 2006. In accordance with the various modes of expression, recordings, guest lecturers, documentaries and commercial and independent films will be used: F. Douglass, Amistad, Ragtime, and Jim Crow Museum (YouTube).

**Page 3****V. FSU Student Learning Outcomes –**

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- 1) Arrange African American literature between 1700 and 1900 in a chronology.
- 2) Understand characteristics of the genres used in African American literature, such as political speeches, essays, autobiographies, sermons, testimonies, riddles, proverbs and cinema.
- 3) Defend the view that some of the early African American literature had at its center political empowerment.
- 4) Question the promise of the documents on which this country is founded, particularly as these documents relate to African Americans.
- 5) Write a researched analytical paper on a topic related to African American up through 1945.

**VI. Course Requirements and Evaluation Criteria -**

- a. Grading Scale – The class grading scale must be consistent with the university catalog.

***Final Grades – This policy becomes effective on August 16, 2007***

Final grades are calculated on a four-point system and affect a student's grade point average as indicated below. Faculty members will delineate in each class syllabus the methods and evaluative criteria for determining final grades in the class.

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Credit Hours</b>	<b>Quality Points</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
A	Hours attempted and earned	4 per credit hour;	Exceptionally high
B	Hours attempted and earned	3 per credit hour	Good
C	Hours attempted and earned	2 per credit hour	Satisfactory
D	Hours attempted and earned	1 per credit hour	Marginally passing
F	Hours attempted – Not earned	0 per credit hour	Failing
FN	Hours attempted – Not earned	0 per credit hour	Failing due to non-attendance. (Student registered, but <u>never</u> attended.)
W	Hours attempted – Not earned	No impact on GPA	Class withdrawal prior to deadline (see Academic Calendar)
P	Hours attempted and earned	No impact on GPA	Satisfactory - Assigned only in classes specified as Pass/Fail
WU	Hours attempted – Not earned	No impact on GPA	Withdrawal from all classes for semester or term
AU	Hours attempted – Not earned	No impact on GPA	Auditing

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b. Attendance Requirements: Fayetteville State University no longer has a WN grade. So, for this course, **if you miss more than five (5) classes you will receive an F for the course.** If you miss a class when an assignment is due, not only will that count as an absence, but also there will be a lateness penalty attached to the assignment. If something important occurs, *negotiate with the instructor as soon as possible*, preferably in advance: maybe something can be worked out. Missing your conference appointment will count as **THREE** absences.

## Graded Assignments:

Two major essays and Two Oral Presentations	@ 12%
Peer comment checklists @ 2%	=12%
Midterm Examination the week of October 12 @ 5%	= 5%
Miscellaneous In-class and Homework Exercises @5%	=5%
Final Examination @6%	=6%

**V. Course Outline and Assignment Schedule:**

SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS  
(Subject to adjustment)

The schedule is arranged by **week**, not by individual class days, and is deliberately designed to be flexible. More precise specifications will be furnished as we go along.

Due dates for Essays refer to when to start working on them; the final turn-in dates will be set later. ALL AT-HOME ESSAYS WILL REQUIRE SEVERAL DRAFTS. Department requirements, in-class exercises, and other readings might be assigned as the professor sees necessary. Please complete ALL THE READINGS **BEFORE** CLASS BEGINS. That is so you can be prepared to discuss – and often write about – the works in class. Operate on the assumption there might be a quiz: even if there is not a quiz, when people are prepared and aware, less time is wasted doing the basics and – most important of all – class is less boring. Much of the in-class assignments (summaries, comparison-and-contrast) will be based on the reading selections assigned.

If you don't know what a word means, LOOK IT UP. Don't be embarrassed: nobody – NOBODY, not even an English teacher – knows every word there is; and learning new concepts and the words that go with them is one good reason to go to college in the first place.

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– ► ALL WRITING ASSIGNMENTS ARE DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS. That is so you can share (and sometimes work on) your writings with your classmates. Papers turned in after the beginning of class count as LATE and will be PENALIZED. All versions must be typed or (preferably) done on a computer. Double space. Use standard, default margins, fonts, and point size (11 or 12).

►► Do not wait until the night before the paper is due to begin writing. The night before is for proofreading and, even more important, to insert ideas that occurred to you after you started writing.

Further specifications for each paper will be furnished as we go along.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

By the end of the semester, students will have met specific objectives.

Student will be able to do the following:

A. Decode language used in the traditional sense to discuss African-American Literature.

The following terms will acquire new connotations: minority, majority, canon, American, African-American Literature, white, black, race, culture, and myth.

B. Decode figurative speech used to characterize American Literature and apply the traditional figurative language to African-American Literature;

C. Construct a literary canon that is counter to that of the traditional American canon in that the old canon is based on a different cultural base; outdated references as opposed to postmodernist ones of the Africanist culture.

D. Compose definitions, informal and formal, for African-American Literature, in particular, and African-American aestheticism in general.

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**COMPETENCIES**

Students will demonstrate knowledge of the following, as recommended by the Department of Public Instruction and stated in “Guidelines and Competencies for Undergraduates in the English/Communication Skills Preparation Program”:

2.2 Basic information concerning the English language: its structure, standards, and variations;

2.6 Various modes of discourse (narration, exposition, description, and persuasion) and their appropriate use in all areas of experience: personal, social, educational, business, and vocational;

2.7 Elements of literature and how these elements affect interpretation;

2.8 The genres common to oral, written, and visual expression.

This course will also develop knowledge and competencies consistent with the standards recommended by the National Council of Teachers of English. Specifically, students will be able to do the following:

1.1 Complete a specific language arts course of study;

2.6 Recognize the impact that culture, societal events and issues have on teachers, students, the English language arts curriculum, and education in general;

3.1.2 Demonstrate how reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, and things are interrelated;

3.1.3 Recognize the impact of cultural, economic, political, and social environments upon language;

3.1.4 Show a respect for and an understanding of diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles;

3.1.5 Show an understanding of the evolution of English language and the historical influences on its various forms;

3.1.8 Show various purposes for which language is used;

3.2.2 Use writing, speaking and observing as major forms of inquiry, reflection, and expression;

3.2.5 Apply knowledge of language structure and conventions of creating and critiquing print and non-print texts;

3.3.1 Demonstrate how to respond to and interpret what is read in different ways;

3.3.2 Demonstrate how to discover and create meaning from texts;

3.3.3 Use a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts;

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3.4.3 Demonstrate how written discourse can influence thought and action;

3.5.3 Show knowledge of a broad historical and contemporary spectrum of United States, British, and world literature, including:

3.5.1.1 works from a range of cultures;

3.5.1.2 works from a range of genres.

## CONTENT

Week One Introduction of text and syllabus Focus: Mini Lecture: "What African-American Literature Isn't." Assignment: Diagnostic Essay: Students compose essay based on definition of African-American Literature. **An initial examination of Frederick Douglass**

## DISCUSSION ON HENRY L. GATES from YOUTUBE (Current Controversy)

Week Two Breaking the Code: Dictionary and literary handbook assignment (Holman's Handbook or Harper and Frye's Handbook) involving the re-definition of terms traditionally used to define African-Americans and their culture. Students use unabridged texts to search for definition and re-create their own definitions in the light of a more re-visioned text. Students will explore, analyze, and define slavery through slave narratives (Frederick Douglas). Students exchange information in class and compose their new definitions outside of class.

Please note that students are requested to use unabridged texts to search for definitions and re-create their own definitions in the light of a re-visioned text. Students exchange information in class and compose their new definitions outside of class. All readings from chapter One

## Weeks Three and Four

Students discuss Frederick Douglass (Essay online as well as the Text.) In addition, extra credit is provided for the review of AMISTAD, a film about slave insurrection that provides demythification of slave history and images counter to those presented in Twain, Harris, and other American authors.

Assignment: Students explore traditional figurative language used to discuss literary and, to an extent, cinematic texts.

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In-class exercises will provide opportunity to apply terms such as METAPHOR, SIMILE, IMAGERY, SYMBOL, TROPE, ALLUSION, IRONY, PARADOX, GENRE, AND OXYMORON to the film. Students submit personal slave narratives due at midterm. Students must also submit an annotated bibliography of slave narratives that have been made into films.

### **Weeks- -Five and Six**

Students explore the literature of the vernacular with an emphasis on oral forms. Dr. Harrington, musician and departmental member, will offer two mini-lectures on the aesthetics of the gospel, the spiritual, and the hymn as they reveal the slave idiom.

Assignment: Students must have read the "Preface" and the "Introduction." Students, using MLA format, will compose an annotated bibliography on the musical form or musician of their choice. Annotation is limited to one to three sentences.

\*All introductions to the historical periods and the relevant authors must be read by the students. Class participation grade is connected to one's ability to answer questions about text materials.

### **Week-- Seven**

Students finalize exploration of music genres of the African-American musical literary. Dr. T. Hennessey, along with professorial notes from Mr. Malachi Sharpe, noted local jazz musician, will explore the realm of jazz during the early twentieth centuries

### **Week-Eight**

Students explore the genre of the slave narrative from the non-traditional approach. Elements of gender, class, and skin color weigh far more heavily than the questions traditionally posed in research of this genre. Excerpts from the following writers were chosen: EQUIANO, FREDERICK DOUGLAS, BOOKER T. WASHINGTON, W.E.B. DUBOIS, and HARRIET JACOBS.

MIDTERM ASSIGNMENT: Students will complete a writing assignment in class that discusses African-American Literature as the literature of resistance; one class session will discuss the format that this essay takes. The essay must include research and class materials.

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### **Weeks-Nine and Ten**

The feminist experience in slavery is discussed using texts from Jacobs' INCIDENTS... and Toni Morrison's BELOVED. The focus is on the uniqueness of the female experience; in Jacob's case, the emphasis is black racism and the caste system, symbolized through the trope of the "tragic mulatto"; in excerpts from Morrison's BELOVED, the emphasis is on genre format and magic realism and the surreal. A video of Morrison discussing her research for BELOVED will be shown.

### **Weeks-- Eleven and Twelve**

Excerpts from Harriet Wilson's OUR NIG, Chesnutt's "The Wife of His Youth" and Ida B. Well's "Essays" meld the themes of the body as the ultimate sign undergirding the black literary aesthetic.

Assignment: Students view a documentary on Madam C.J. Walker, which provides political, historical, and sociological information for the emphasis on body politics as it relates to the black American after slavery in American culture. Students will be given excerpts from the essays of Dr. Stanley Gilman and Dr. Terry Eagleton, scholars of western aesthetics.

### **Weeks-Twelve and Thirteen**

William Greaves' documentary on the Harlem Renaissance opens this segment of the course. To begin this section, students will read Hughes's essay defining the "racial mountain." The emphasis in this course will be on cultural revolution, an introduction to modernism for some critics and postmodernism for others.

Dr. Booker Anthony, a scholar in the black poetics, will discuss form and content of black poetry. Dr. Barlow will provide a cursory exploration of the works of Phyllis Wheatley and Jupiter Hammon and some of Dunbar's dialect work. Dr. Barlow, a Keats scholar, will collapse the works of Cullen, Tolson, and Dunbar into a poetic melange, emphasizing the African and American sensibilities.

Dr. Anthony is currently designing the only course at this University which focused solely on the black poetic aesthetic and will provide the depth and comprehensiveness that this genre calls forth. .

### **Weeks-- Fourteen and Fifteen**

Students will read Locke's "The New Negro." A discussion of this essay will involve a pre-lecture on Houston Baker's remarks about the African-American aesthetic and postmodernism.

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## EVALUATION

*Please see above explanation*

### Bibliography

#### African American Literature

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