

**Fayetteville State University  
College of Arts and Sciences  
Department of English**

**I. LOCATOR INFORMATION**

Semester: Fall 2011

Course No./Name: ENGL 470-02, Senior Seminar  
Ernest J. Gaines

Semester Hours of Credit: Three Credit Hours

Time Class Meets: T-TH 9:30 a.m. – 10:45 a.m., BU, Room 359

Instructor: Booker T. Anthony, Ph.D.  
Professor of English

Office Location: Hackley Honors Hall, Suite 219C

Office Hours: MWF: 9 am to 11 am  
Also by Appointment  
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**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 E-mail as the primary code 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 computer laboratories throughout the campus that can be used to access electronic mail. Rules and regulations governing the use of FSU E-mail may be found at <http://www.uncfsu.edu/PDFs/EmailPolicyFinal.pdf>.**

## II. COURSE DESCRIPTION

A directed study on special topics in English conducted by members of the Department of English, this course examines the fiction of Ernest J. Gaines. Specific themes include the following: strength of a people who are seen as outcasts in a larger society; religion and family as an antidote against bitterness; fictions about people of the soil—earth, dust, rain; community and the sense of solidarity; double vision (see W. E. Du Bois) of the southern writer who sees his own works and the larger world that suppresses others; characters who are compelled to change the structure of society; the heritage of love and hate as well as richness and beauty; history and the southern writer; female characters in Gaines's works; Black male characters in Gaines's works.

## III. REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

*Catherine Carmier* (1964)

*Bloodline* (1967)

*Of Love and Dust* (1968)

*The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* (1971)

*In My Father's House* (1978)

*A Gathering of Old Men* (1983)

*A Lesson Before Dying* (1993)

*Mozart And Leadbelly* (2005)

*Critical Reflections on the Fiction of Ernest J. Gaines* (1994)

Author: David Estes

MLA Handbook (7<sup>th</sup> edition)

#### IV. FSU LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. read, think, and write critically about literature.
2. develop research skills using online databases, peer-reviewed literary articles, and other types of secondary literary criticism.
3. write a seminar paper (20 pages) using the MLA style of documentation to document and cite sources.
4. identify literary theories (reader-response, new historic criticism, psychological, etc.) in literature and apply at least one theory in the final paper.
5. develop reading and communication skills that enhance the evaluation of ideas.
6. develop a broader understanding and greater appreciation of African American culture through the fiction of Ernest J. Gaines.

#### V. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Letter and numerical grade scores will be as follows: 92-100=A; 83-91=B; 73-82=C; 64-72=D; 63=F. Since two key parts of your total learning experience in this class are sharing your opinions and experiences with others and working with them in teaching-learning groups, your regular attendance is critically important. Many studies support, too, the thesis that class attendance affects performance. You are expected to attend all class meetings. In this class, a student who has been absent in excess of ten percent (10%) of the number of contact hours scheduled for the class for the semester may not receive a grade higher than a "D." For example, the student who misses 10% of the regular 60 hours (or six (6) hours of absences) may not receive an end-of-course grade higher than a "D." Please note that these are hours of absences, not class days.

The student may submit, under extraordinary circumstances, a documented and valid written justification for any absence(s), unavoidably exceeding the established limit. These justifications will be accepted at the discretion of the instructor. Students whose tardies become excessive (two weeks' worth) risk receiving a failing grade in the class. Students who have frequent absences because of university-related activities may be required to do extra reading and writing. Frequently, when examinations are given or papers are due, some students will intentionally skip class. The Department of English does not condone this pattern of behavior. A good policy is to have frequent dialogue with the instructor.

***OTHER NOTES:***

1. The instructor reserves the right to make changes to this syllabus.
2. Turn cell phones off or to silent position during class. Please do not send or receive text messages during class time.
3. Some assignments are due on the same day as papers are due. Please do not miss class when a paper is due or come to class late with your paper. Papers must be turned in during class time. You are responsible for each reading and writing assignment.
4. Regular class attendance is necessary if you intend to pass this course with a “C” or better.
5. We may use the final examination day to complete the Joint Oral Presentations if necessary; attendance is expected.

## REVISION OF GRADES – STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

The following revisions become effective on August 16, 2007.

### WN GRADE DISCONTINUED:

- WN - Withdrawal due to non-attendance - discontinued, effective August 16, 2007.

STUDENTS: Do not expect faculty to withdraw you for non-attendance. Drop or withdraw\* from classes according to the deadlines published in the catalog. *\*See warning below about class withdrawals.*

NEW TYPE OF GRADE: INTERIM GRADES – (New name for “midterm grade,” with additional purposes). Interim grades will be assigned from the first week of the semester until the deadline for class withdrawals. Interim grades are used for informational and warning purposes only; they are not part of your permanent transcript and have no effect on your GPA. Instructors may assign interim grade of F to warn students of poor academic performance or they may assign “X” or “EA” grades. (See below for explanations) After midterm, faculty will assign all students an interim grade of A – F to inform students of their academic status as of midterm.

- INTERIM GRADE X = NO SHOW – Assigned to students who are on a class roster, but never attend class. For warning purposes only; NOT a final grade.

STUDENTS: Check interim grades early in the semester. If you have an X grade, either begin attending the class or withdraw\* from it. *\*See warning below about class withdrawals.* If you do not take action in response to an X grade, you will receive a final grade of FN. (See “FN” below)

- INTERIM GRADE EA = EXCESSIVE ABSENCES - Assigned to students whose class absences exceed 10% of the total contact hours. For warning purposes only, NOT a final grade.

STUDENTS: Check your interim grades often. If you have an “EA” grade for a class, you are in jeopardy of failure if you do not take immediate actions. Either resume attending the class or withdraw from it. *\*See warning below about class withdrawals.*

### NEW FINAL GRADE:

- FN = FAILURE DUE TO NON-ATTENDANCE – Assigned to students who are on class roster, but never attend the class. An FN grades is equivalent to an F grade in the calculation of the GPA.

STUDENTS: You must attend (or withdraw\* from) all the classes for which you are enrolled. *\*See warning below about class withdrawals.*

### WARNING ABOUT CLASS WITHDRAWALS:

- When you withdraw from a class, you are wasting your money and time. You receive no refund for withdrawing from individual classes and you slow your progress toward degree completion.
- If you withdraw from or fail more than one-third of your classes, you will no longer be eligible for financial aid.

- STRIVE TO EARN CREDIT FOR ALL THE CLASSES IN WHICH YOU ENROLL; WITHDRAW FROM CLASSES ONLY WHEN IT IS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY!

### **Discussion Board Literary Explicators (20%):**

This semester, you, the student, will write four explicators (Microsoft word attachment documents ) in Blackboard’s Discussion Board on four of the eight novels. An explicator (two double-spaced pages) is a reader-response, micro critical, thesis-driven essay, where you identify one striking idea from the selected readings and offer a sustained discussion rooted in at least an apt or compelling textual illustrations. The discussion explicator is inspired by a specific textual example. You may draw upon any appropriate literary element (symbolism, irony, figures of speech, literary criticism theory, repetition, hyperbole, etc.) in your explicator. These explicators should not be researched. **Note: You must revise one of your first two responses based on the graded feedback I offer in Blackboard “reply” before you write the third and fourth explicators.** There is a two-step process for each Discussion Board paper. First, write your explicator and post it in Blackboard by the deadline. Second, you are to respond (in a paragraph of 5 to 8 sentences) to at least one classmate’s Discussion board post. **Your reader-response explicators will be judged on the following criteria: brief, compelling textual illustration (meaning excerpt, quoted text or passage from a novel); a thesis statement; analysis of the illustration by examining an appropriate literary element; and standard, edited English.**

### **Research Paper Prospectus (15%)**

The task here is to write a precise proposal for your term paper due at the end of the semester. First, identify the “problem” or issue and then advance what you wish to argue about that subject. The third component is to present how you wish to address or prove your thesis—the books to be consulted, the sources and ideas you will be consulting and engaging to arrive at your conclusion. On one separate page, prepare an annotated bibliography of texts you’ll be consulting. The list should have at least five sources drawn from books and academic journals. You may end up not using all the sources or ideas that you mention here in your final paper, but it’s important that you provide adequate explanation for the relevance of your sources and approach. The Prospectus should be three pages.

### **Joint Oral Presentation (10%)**

Each student will sign up to lead, with a partner, an approved topic on a designated date. The students may choose from a Prospectus topic or an Explicator topic. The idea is to collaborate on an idea discussed in class or that originated from research throughout the semester. The presentation will begin with a 5-10 minute interpretation of the text, followed by posing questions to the class on the subject.

### **Research (Term) Paper (30%)**

In consultation with me, you will formulate a thesis related Gaines's fiction. I'm open to a wide range of possibilities. For example, you may find it useful to explore female characters in Gaines's fiction; Spirituality and Religion in Gaines's fiction; religion and family as an antidote against bitterness; a sense of place in Gaines's fiction; Du Bois's concept of "double consciousness" in Gaines's fiction; love and hate in Southern literature; the environment and self in Gaines's fiction; Jung's "Collective unconscious" in Gaines's fiction; conflict between past and present in Gaines's fiction; Faulkner's influence on Gaines through point of view; a Feminist Reading of *Catherine Carmier*; Black manhood in Gaines's fiction; a Marxist reading of *Of Love and Dust*; a psychological reading of *In My Father's House*; *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* and the Slave Narrative; Creole and Caste in Gaines's fiction; folk humor in *A Gathering of Old Men*; the narrative voice in *Blood*.

Whatever you decide (in consultation with me), your paper must be on Gaines's fiction, and you must use secondary literary criticism. Your paper will be **twenty (20) pages**, not including the title page and the Works Cited page.

As a seminar, I expect your robust engagement with the issues in the books we read. This may be in the form of posing questions, contributing to discussions, or your willingness to share your own interpretation of the text with the class. Being a quiet observer is not an option. You will be graded at end of the semester based upon your active discussion in class, your regular attendance, and your ability to read critically and write evidence-based papers.

## Course Evaluation

4 Discussion Board Reader-response Explicators	20%
Research Paper Prospectus with Annotated Bibliography	20%
Joint Oral Presentations	10%
Class Participation and Attendance (show evidence of having read novels)	10%
Research Paper	<u>40%</u>
	100%

## Other Important Protocols

- ✓ All but in-class writings must be **typed, double-spaced. Use a 12-pt standard font** such as Times New Roman.
- ✓ The house style is the **MLA's**. As English majors, you should always demonstrate mastery of this particular style of documentation. You are responsible for adhering to all applicable MLA rules.
- ✓ All assignments must be submitted on their **due dates**. Late submissions may not be accepted, and if accepted, will be penalized.
- ✓ **All work is Electronic submission unless otherwise indicated.**
- ✓ When you **miss a class**, ask a peer who attended for notes and updates. If you cannot reach a peer, you may contact me for more explanations.
- ✓ **Cell phones** must be turned off while in class. I also reserve the right to ask you to discontinue the operation of a **laptop computer** should I find you engaged in non-class virtual activity.
- ✓ Please have your breakfast before attending class; **eating in class** is a distraction, in addition to causing olfactory discomfort to others.
- ✓ Cases of **plagiarism** are serious and can result in your receiving a failing grade. All term papers will be submitted to Turnitin.com prior to your placing them in the Digital Drop box. Please acquaint yourself with Fayetteville State University policy on plagiarism.

**Students with disabilities** who require academic accommodations should schedule an appointment to discuss specifics with me. It is the policy of FSU to make reasonable academic accommodations for qualified individuals with disabilities. You must present verification and register with the Center for Personal Development. Registration is needed in order to receive accommodations. With regard to **Disabled Student Services**, and In accordance with Section 505 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, please contact the Center for Personal Development in the Spaulding Building, Room 155 (1st Floor); 910-672-1203.

**PLEASE NOTE THAT THE INSTRUCTOR RESERVES THE RIGHT TO MAKE CHANGES TO THIS STUDENT CONTRACT KNOWN AS YOUR SYLLABUS!**

T-TH Class Day-To-Day Syllabus  
FALL 2011 English 470, Senior Seminar: The Fiction of Ernest J. Gaines

- Week I (Aug. 18):  
Thurs. 1. Introductory Lecture on Ernest J. Gaines
- Week II (Aug. 23, 25):  
Tues. 1. *Catherine Carmier*  
Thurs. 1. *Catherine Carmier*
- Week III (Aug. 30; Sept. 1):  
Tues. 1. *Catherine Carmier*  
Thurs. 1. *Bloodline*
- Week IV (Sept. 6, 8):  
Tues. 1. *Bloodline*  
Thurs. 1. *Bloodline*  
2. **Post First Discussion Board Reader Response Explicator tonight, Sept. 8, 2011, by 11:59 pm.**
- Week V (Sept. 13, 15):  
Tues. 1. *Of Love and Dust*  
Thurs. 1. *Of Love and Dust*  
2.
- Week VI (Sept. 20, 22):  
Tues. 1. *Of Love and Dust*  
Thurs. 1. *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*  
2. **Post Second Discussion Board Reader Response Explicator should be posted tonight, Sept. 22, 2011, by 11:59 pm.**
- Week VII (Sept. 27, 29):  
Tues. 1. *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*  
Thurs. 1. *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*  
2.
- Week VIII (Oct. 4, 6):  
Tues. 1. *In My Father's House*  
Thurs. 1. *In My Father's House*  
2. **Research Prospectus is due today. Place in Digital Drop box by 11:59 pm tonight, October 6, 2011.**

- Week IX (Oct. 11, 13):
- Tues. 1. *In My Father's House*
- Thurs. 1. *A Gathering of Old Men*
2. **Put revised explicator in Digital Drop box tonight, October 13, 2011, by 11:59 pm.**

**Midterm Break: October 17-18. ENJOY!!!**

- Week XI (Oct. 25, 27):
- Tues. 1. *A Gathering of Old Men*
- Thurs. 1. *A Gathering of Old Men*

**NOTE: OCTOBER 28<sup>TH</sup> IS THE DEADLINE TO WITHDRAW FROM CLASSES.**

- Week XII (Nov. 1, 3):
- Tues. 1. *A Lesson Before Dying*
- Thurs. 1. *A Lesson Before Dying*
2. **Post Third Discussion Board Reader-response Explicator tonight, November 3, 2011, 11:59 pm.**

- Week XIII (Nov. 8, 10):
- Tues. 1. *A Lesson Before Dying*
- Thurs. 1. *Mozart and Leadbelly*
2. **Post Fourth Discussion Board Reader-response Explicator tonight, November 10, 2011, by 11:59 pm.**

- Week XIV (Nov. 15, 17):
- Tues. 1. *Mozart and Leadbelly*
- Thurs. 1. *Mozart and Leadbelly*

**NOTE: THANKSGIVING BREAK IS NOVEMBER 24-25<sup>TH</sup> ONLY.**

- Week XV (Nov. 22):
- Tues. 1. **Put Research Paper in Digital Drop box by 11:59 pm tonight, Tuesday, November 22.**
2. Joint Oral Presentations (5-10 minutes each)

**NOTE: NOVEMBER 28-DEC 3 EXAMS FOR GRADUATING SENIORS.**

Week XVI	(Nov. 29; Dec. 1):
Tues.	1. Joint Oral Presentations (5-10 minutes each)
Thurs.	1. Oral Presentations (5-10 minutes each)

**Note: We will also use the final exam day to complete the Joint Oral Presentations or finish the novels if necessary; attendance is required.**