

**AML 3604-601**  
**African American Literature**  
**Spring 2015**  
**Thursdays 2:00-4:55pm**  
**DAV 242**

**Instructor:** Dr. Julie Armstrong  
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**Office Hours:** M, T, W, R 12-2

**Description:**

This class explores a series of questions: What is African American literature? What is its relationship to identity, community, history, and culture? How do literary texts interact with other art forms? We will examine key figures, movements, genres, and contexts for discussing this body of writing, using a standard textbook for doing so, *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*. We will also look at other ways of defining and organizing the topic, through class discussions and student projects on different anthologies of African American literature produced during the past century. As a final essay, students will produce their own definitions and examples.

AML 3604 satisfies three (3) hours of Literature and Writing exit requirements. If you are an English major, check with Advising to see how the course counts for you.

**Student Learning Outcomes:**

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

- Demonstrate the ability to write a well organized and well substantiated analysis of primary literature and crucial sources in a particular discipline. (Gen Ed I-1)
- Demonstrate the ability to determine the nature and extent of information needed, evaluate information and sources critically, and write persuasively through the effective use of evidence derived from credible information sources. (Gen Ed I-2)
- Recognize key figures, movements, and genres in African American literature (Course-1)
- Examine how texts operate within different historical, literary, and theoretical contexts (Course-2)
- Formulate individual definitions of African American literature supported by textual evidence (Course-3)

**Course Text (for purchase):**

*The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*. Eds. Henry Louis Gates Jr., et. al. 3rd edition. Vols. 1-2. New York: W.W. Norton, 2014. Print.

**On Reserve at Poynter Library (for Essay 1):**

Bambara, Toni Cade, ed. *Black Woman: An Anthology*. 1970. New York: Washington Square Press, 2005. Print.

Baraka, Amiri, and Larry Neal, eds. *Black Fire*. 1968. New York: Black Classic Press, 2007. Print.

Gilyard, Keith, and Anissa Wardi. *African American Literature*. New York: Pearson Longman, 2004. Print.

Powell, Kevin, ed. *Step into a World: A Global Anthology of the New Black Literature*. New York: Wiley, 2000. Print.

Young, Kevin, ed. *Giant Steps: The New Generation of African American Writers*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2000. Print.

**Linked on Canvas (for Essay 2):**

"Assessing *What Was African American Literature?*" *African American Review* 44.4 (Winter 2011): 567-591.

### **Assignments and Grading:**

**Reading Quizzes.** (40%) These quizzes on assigned readings are designed to measure comprehension and retention. Some quizzes will be given in class, and some might be given before class on line -- so always check our course Canvas site before coming to class to be sure. We will use the results of each one to begin class discussions. Missed quizzes cannot be made up.

**Just Teach One Project.** (10%) Read "Theresa, A Haytien Tale" (pp. 151-159) and respond in writing (2 pp. minimum) to the following question: If you were assembling your own anthology for (or teaching) a course such as this one, would you include the "Theresa" text? Why or why not? What literary, historical, or other contexts would you find most appropriate for presenting this reading to students? Our discussion of this text connects to a larger national initiative, [Just Teach One: Early African American Print](#).

**Essay 1.** (25%, or 20 points essay, 5 points presentation) Examine one of the African American literature anthologies on reserve for the course and write a short (4-6 pp.) essay comparing its view of the subject to that of our textbook, the *Norton Anthology*. Essays should specifically address each anthology's introduction (or preface), its organizational strategies, and its selections. Students will share their findings in an informal class presentation (approx. 5 mins.) on Thursday 2.26

**Essay 2.** (25%, or 20 points essay, 5 points presentation) In a short (4-6 pp.) essay, answer the following question: what is (or was) African American literature? Essays should use at least 5-7 examples from assigned readings as evidence. They may also draw upon class discussions, presentations, and any supplemental materials (such as the anthologies for the above assignment). Students will share their findings in an informal class presentation (approx. 5 mins.) on Thursday 4.23.

### **Policies and Procedures:**

**Contacting Your Instructor.** The most appropriate way to contact me outside of class or office hours is via email: [jba@mail.usf.edu](mailto:jba@mail.usf.edu). I will try my best to respond within 24-48 hours, not including evenings and weekends.

**Academic Integrity.** The university's policy on academic integrity will be fully enforced. Cheating or plagiarism of any kind will not be tolerated. Please read the university's [policies on academic dishonesty](#) (PDF). For more information and a full list of the university policies visit this link: [Undergraduate Catalog](#).

**Grading.** Plus/minus and S/U grades are not given in this class. Incompletes are given only in the case of extreme emergency at the semester's end and when the student has completed at least 75% of the course work at a C or above. The grading scale is as follows: A=90-100, B=80-89, C=70-79, D=60-69, F=0-59.

**Attendance, Participation, and Manners.** This is an active-learning classroom. Points will be deducted from your final grade for a pattern (more than two instances) of missing class, coming in late, leaving early, being unprepared, or behaving in ways (in class or on line) that disrupt the instructor or other students. You do not need to let me know if you will miss class, be late, or discreetly leave early unless there is an issue about which you need to make me aware, such as your participation in a religious observance.

**Laptops, iPads, and Other Electronic Devices.** This class will employ laptops, I-Pads, and other such electronic devices for pedagogical purposes, such as quizzes at the beginning of class. When used for non-class related reasons, they can distract from the learning environment. Students whose electronics disrupt the class will be asked to turn them off or to leave.

**Student Disability Services.** Students in need of classroom accommodations for learning or other issues may arrange them through [Student Disability Services](#). Please make me aware of the necessary accommodations as soon as possible so that I can best provide them.

**Tutoring Resources.** Students needing help with writing or other academic skills should contact the [Academic Success Center](#) in DAV 107.

**Gender-Based Crimes.** Educators must report incidents of gender-based crimes including sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, dating violence and domestic violence. If a student discloses in class, in papers, or to an instructor, the instructor is required by law to report the disclosure. The Wellness Center ([727-873-4422](tel:727-873-4422)) and the USFSP Victim Advocate ([727-698-2079](tel:727-698-2079)) are confidential resources where you can talk about such situations and receive assistance in confidence.

**Recommendations.** Students frequently ask me about letters of reference and other such recommendations. I am happy to provide them if you have taken at least two classes with me, if you have performed well in those classes, and if I can honestly say that I know/remember you and your work.

**Course Calendar:**

Expectations: Students are expected to read all selected course materials before class, including the introductions to each author. This calendar is subject to change. Students are expected to check Canvas for announcements before each class.

Date	Topic/SLO Link	Activities
R 1.8	Course Introduction: What is African American literature?	Survey of course themes, syllabus, and outcomes
R 1.15	Literature of Slavery and Freedom, Pt. 1 (Course 1 and 2)	Read and take <b>Quiz 1 in class</b> on Introduction, pp. 75-87; Olaudah Equiano, selections; and Phillis Wheatley, "To the University of Cambridge," "On Being Brought from Africa to America," "On the Death of the Rev. Mr. George Whitefield," and "To S.M., a Young African Painter," selections in pp. 112-151
R 1.22	Literature of Slavery and Freedom, Pt. 2 (Course 1 and 2)	Read and take <b>Quiz 2 before class</b> on Sojourner Truth, selections, pp. 176-180, and Frederick Douglass, <i>Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass</i> , pp. 326-393
R 1.29	Literature of Reconstruction to the New Negro Renaissance, Pt. 1 (Course 1 and 2)	Read and take <b>Quiz 3</b> on Introduction, pp. 505-520; Charles Chesnutt, "The Goophered Grapevine," pp. 580-591; and Ida B. Wells Barnett, selections pp. 669-679
R 2.5	Literature of Reconstruction to the New Negro Renaissance, Pt. 2 (Course 1 and 2)	Read and take <b>Quiz 4</b> on W.E.B. Du Bois, "Of Our Spiritual Strivings," pp. 679-683 and 688-693; Paul Laurence Dunbar, "We Wear the Mask" and "Sympathy," pp. 894-896, 906, 910; Angelina Weld Grimké, selections, pp. 950-952
R 2.12	Harlem Renaissance, Pt. 1, and Preparing for Essay 1  (Course 1 and 2)	Read and take <b>Quiz 5</b> on James Weldon Johnson, preface to <a href="#">The Book of American Negro Poetry</a> , pp. 780-783 and 871-893; and Alain Locke, "The New Negro," pp. 967-968 and 973-981; also Johnson's "The Creation," pp. 790-792; Anne Spencer, "Before the Feast of Shushan," pp. 953-955; Georgia Douglas Johnson's "The Heart of a Woman," pp. 983-983; and Claude McKay's "If We Must Die," pp. 1000-1005
R 2.19	Harlem Renaissance, Pt. 2 (Course 1 and 2)	Read and take <b>Quiz 6</b> on Introduction, pp. 929-944; Zora Neale Hurston, "Sweat," and "How It Feels to Be Colored Me," pp. 1029-1042; Langston Hughes, "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," "I, Too," "Song for a Dark Girl," "Christ in Alabama," and "Harlem," selections in pp. 1302-1320
R 2.26	<b>Due: Essay 1 (by midnight)</b> (Gen Ed I-1 and I-2, Course 3)	In class: presentations on Essay 1. Students presenting on same topics should plan together before this date.
R 3.5	Spring Break	Have fun! -- and read ahead, there's a lot coming up: all good!
R 3.12	Realism, Naturalism, and Modernism, Pt. 1 (Course 1 and 2)	Read and take <b>Quiz 7</b> on Introduction, pp. 93-107; and Lorraine Hansberry, <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> , pp. 470-530
R 3.19	Realism, Naturalism, and Modernism, Pt. 2 (Course 1 and 2)	Read and take <b>Quiz 8</b> on Richard Wright, "The Ethics of Living Jim Crow," pp. 119-125 and 132-140; Ralph Ellison, selections from <i>Invisible Man</i> pp. 243-247 and pp. 258-279; and Gwendolyn Brooks, "kitchenette building," "the mother," and "We Real Cool," selections in pp. 326-337
R 3.26	The Black Arts Era, Pt. 1 (Course 1 and 2)	Read and take <b>Quiz 9</b> on Introduction, pp. 533-561; James Baldwin, "Notes of a Native Son," pp. 390-394

		and 400-413; and Audre Lorde, "Coal," "Power," and "Poetry is Not a Luxury," pp. 637-646
R 4.2	The Black Arts Era, Pt. 2 (Course 1 and 2)	Read Amiri Baraka, "Black Art," "It's Nation Time," and "Wailers," pp. 660-665 and 703-708; June Jordan, "Getting Down to Get Over," "Poem about Police Violence," and "Poem about My Rights," pp. 751-753 and selections in pp. 754-769. No quiz: read poems before class -- be prepared -- then we'll listen to some, read some, and discuss some.
R 4.9	"Just Teach One" Project (Gen Ed I-1 and I-2, Course 2 and 3) <b>Due: Just Teach One Response (by midnight)</b>	Read "Theresa, A Haytien Tale" and draft 2 pp. writing response before class. In class: discuss "Theresa" and workshop responses to turn in by end of day
R 4.16	What Is/Was African American Literature?  Preparing for Essay 2  (Course 1, 2, and 3)	Read and take <b>Quiz 10</b> on Introduction to the Contemporary Period (Norton, pp. 913-929) and <i>African American Review</i> forum, "Assessing <i>What Was African American Literature?</i> " (linked texts).
R 4.23	Last official class day The Contemporary Period, Pt. 1  Preparing for Essay 2  (Course 1, 2, and 3)	Choose your own readings from the Contemporary Period (at least two of which should be included as examples for Essay 2): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- One complete play (Wilson or Parks)</li> <li>- One poet (Clifton, Komunyakaa, Dove, Mullen, Trethewey, Young)</li> <li>- One prose fiction writer and/or essayist (Morrison, Gaines, Wideman, Walker, Butler, Johnson, Jones, Mosley, Danticat, Whitehead)</li> </ul> <p>In-class presentation on Essay 2 topic/material: how do the above writers fit or not fit the definition of African American literature that you will propose in your essay?</p>
R 4.30	<b>Due: Essay 2 (by midnight)</b>	Have a great summer, and keep in touch!