

AML 4300-601
Selected American Authors: Toni Morrison and August Wilson
Spring 2015
Tuesdays 2:00-4:55pm
DAV 251

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Description:

This class focuses on selected plays by August Wilson and novels by Toni Morrison. By looking closely at two authors, students will learn how to develop expertise in a particular area of literary study and how to apply that expertise toward professional goals. The course will operate as a seminar, employing active, participatory learning strategies. Students will give informal presentations and work with the professor to develop individually designed research projects that involve critical perspectives, teaching approaches, or public/digital humanities scholarship on one of the authors.

Students are not ready for AML 4300 until they have taken ENC 3445 **and** at least one other 3000-level English course.

Student Learning Outcomes:

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

- Explain the operation of different literary or artistic conventions, rhetorical or metaphorical figures, or forms characteristic to specific modes, genres, or traditions (LCS 1b)
- Analyze the figurative meanings of texts and classify their formal effects within appropriate aesthetic, literary, or historical/cultural contexts. (LCS 3b)
- Produce writing that shows a clear awareness of purpose, audience, and medium, through a writing process that involves reflection and/or revision. (LCS 2a)
- Generate ideas and questions; pose problems; gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways suitable to broader academic conversations. (LCS 3d)

Course Texts:

Toni Morrison novels:

- *The Bluest Eye*. New York: Knopf, 2007. Print. 9780307278449.
- *Beloved*. New York: Knopf, 2004. Print. 9781400033416.
- *Song of Solomon*. New York: Knopf, 2004. Print. 9781400033423.
Sula. New York: Knopf, 2004. Print. 9781400033430.

August Wilson plays:

- *Fences*. New York: Penguin, 1986. Print. 9780452264014.
- *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*. New York: Penguin, 1988. Print. 9780452260092.
- *The Piano Lesson*. New York: Penguin, 1990. Print. 9780452265349.
- *Radio Golf*. New York: Theater Communications Group, 2008. Print. 9781559363082.

Secondary readings:

- Awkward, Michael. "Unruly and Let Loose: Myth, Ideology, and Gender in *Song of Solomon*." *Callaloo*. 13.3 (Summer 1990): 482-498. PDF Link.
- Bigsby, Christopher, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to August Wilson*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008. Electronic Text. Available at Poynter Library.
- Bloom, Harold, ed. *Toni Morrison: Modern Critical Views*. New York: Infobase Publishing, 2011. Electronic Text. Available at Poynter Library.
- Nadel, Alan, ed. *August Wilson: Completing the Twentieth-Century Cycle*. Iowa City: University of

Iowa Press, 2010. Electronic Text. Available at Poynter Library.

- Tally, Justine, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Toni Morrison*. New York: Cambridge University Press, Electronic Text. Available at Poynter Library.

Assignments and Grading:

Reading Quizzes. (40%) These quizzes on assigned readings are designed to measure comprehension and retention. We will use the results of each one to begin class discussions. Most quizzes will be multiple choice or short answer, or a combination of the two. SLO link: LCS 1b and 3b.

Informal Critical Presentation. (10%) Give a brief (5-10 mins.) informal presentation on a recommended secondary reading. Presentations are due the day the reading is assigned and cannot be made up if missed. More than one person can present on a secondary reading; the point of this assignment is to generate conversation and critical thinking. Specific grading guidelines are linked to the Canvas assignment description. SLO link: LCS 3d

Community Engagement Reports. (20%) Students will write two short (2-3 pp.) reports on community engagement activities, (1) one required and (2) a second chosen from a list of options. Specific grading guidelines are linked to the Canvas assignment description. SLO link: 1b and 2a.

- (1) **Required:** (10 points total) For the first report, the class will attend a live performance of August Wilson's *Radio Golf*; students will write a 2-3 pp. review of the performance, modeled after the types of reviews found in newspapers and magazines, posted to the Discussions section of Canvas. Students should then post a comment of 100-150 words minimum to at least two of those critiques.
- (2) **Options:** (10 points total) For the second report, students can **choose one** from the options below. All options require a 2-3 pp. piece of writing posted to the Discussions section of Canvas and a comment of 100-150 words minimum on at least two of those reports.
 - Option A -- Write a travel piece that connects the [St. Petersburg African American Heritage Tour](#) to issues of history and place as discussed in Morrison/Wilson; students choosing this option must walk (or drive) the actual tour, not just visit the website; OR,
 - Option B -- Compile and listen to discography of songs from Wilson plays we study (similar to the one at the back of the Nadel book above); discuss how listening to the songs enriches understanding of the plays; OR,
 - Option C -- Read (and, where possible, [listen](#) to) at least five of the [slave oral histories](#) at the Library of Congress; discuss how listening to these histories enriches understanding of Morrison's novels

Research Project/Presentation. (30% or 10 points for presentation, 20 points for written component) Students will select an area in which to focus their expertise, develop research topics based upon those areas, and then present their research at the semester's end. (Note: the Research Questionnaire listed on the Course Calendar is a non-graded assignment designed to generate topic ideas.) Students should consider their professional goals when choosing research areas:

- Critical or theoretical approaches to Morrison or Wilson
- Pedagogical approaches to Morrison or Wilson
- Public and/or digital scholarship and Morrison or Wilson

Presentations should be 5-10 minutes in length. The written component may be print or digital; it should be the work equivalent of a 7-10 page essay, with sources that include books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and/or the equivalent. Specific grading guidelines are linked to the Canvas assignment description. SLO link: 1b, 2a, 3b, 3d.

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. I will try my best to respond within 24-48 hours, not including evenings and weekends.

E-Portfolio Assignment. All English majors at USFSP create electronic portfolios in ENC 3445 (Introduction to the English Major), finish those portfolios in ENG 4950 (Senior Portfolio), and add assignments to them in between those two courses. The assignment to add from this class is the Research Project's written component because it assesses all four of the course Student Learning Outcomes. Students may also choose to add other assignments that reflect positively on their learning.

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.

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](#).

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. Some weeks include "primary" (e.g., literary) readings and a recommended "secondary" (e.g. theoretical or contextual) reading: all are required. This calendar is subject to change: check Canvas before each class.

Date	Topics/Writing Assignments Due	Reading Assignments
T 1.6	Course Introduction	Survey of course themes, syllabus, and outcomes
T 1.13	Quiz 1	Read Morrison, <i>The Bluest Eye</i> Secondary reading: Justine Tally, "All necks are on the line" and Ágnes Surányi, "The Bluest Eye and Sula: Black Female Experience from Childhood to Womanhood" (Tally)
T 1.20	Quiz 2	Read Wilson, <i>Radio Golf</i> Secondary reading: Christopher Bigsby, "August Wilson: The Ground on Which He Stood" (Bigsby) and Harry J. Elam, Jr., "Radio Golf in the Age of Obama" (Nadel)
T 1.27	Class meets at different time and location! Meet American Stage Theater at 9:30 a.m. for 10:00 a.m. show. Follow this link for directions and parking. Community Report 1 Due Friday	Live performance and talk-back: August Wilson's <i>Radio Golf</i> . Tickets are \$9 and the entire event will last until about 1:30 or 1:45. See your instructor if you need an excuse for another class or if purchasing the ticket poses a financial hardship.

T 2.3	Quiz 3	Read Morrison, <i>Beloved</i> Secondary reading: Claudine Raynaud, "Beloved, or the Shifting Shapes of Memory" and Deirdre Raynor and Johnella E. Butler, "Morrison and the Critical Community" (Tally)
T 2.10	Quiz 4	Continue with <i>Beloved</i>
T 2.17	Research Project Questionnaire Due (non-graded assignment) Meet with Dr. A. before Spring Break to discuss Research Topic	Read Wilson, <i>Joe Turner's Come and Gone</i> Secondary reading: Samuel Hay, "Joe Turner's Come and Gone" (Bigsby)
T 2.24	Quiz 5	Continue with <i>Joe Turner's Come and Gone</i>
T 3.3	Spring Break	Class does not meet
T 3.10	Quiz 6	Read Morrison, <i>Sula</i> Secondary reading: Patricia McKee, "Spacing and Placing Experience in Toni Morrison's <i>Sula</i> " (Bloom)
T 3.17	Quiz 7	Read Wilson, <i>Fences</i> Secondary reading: Matthew Roudané, "Safe at Home?: August Wilson's <i>Fences</i> " (Bigsby)
T 3.24	Quiz 8	Read Morrison, <i>Song of Solomon</i> Secondary reading: Michael Awkward, "Unruly and Let Loose: Myth, Ideology, and Gender in <i>Song of Solomon</i> " (pdf link)
T 3.31	Quiz 9 Community Report 2 Due Friday	Continue with <i>Song of Solomon</i>
T 4.7	Quiz 10	Read Wilson, <i>The Piano Lesson</i> Secondary reading: Felicia Hardison Londré, "A Piano and its History" (Bigsby)
T 4.14	Research Project Presentations	Research Project Presentations
T 4.21	Last official class day Research Project Presentations	Research Project Presentations
T 4.28	Research Project Written Component Due	