LIT 304-01: The African American Novel

Professor Harrison
Office: LA 114
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Office Hours: TuThs 2:00-3:00 & by appointment

REQUIRED TEXTS

Ellison, Ralph. Invisible Man. (Vintage.)
Hurston, Zora Neale. Their Eyes Were Watching God. (Harper Perennial Modern Classics.)
Ondaatje, Michael. Coming Through Slaughter. (Vintage.)
Petry, Ann. The Street. (Mariner.)
Reed, Ishmael. Mumbo Jumbo. (Scribner.)
Wilson, Harriet E. Our Nig. (Penguin Classics.)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

LIT 304 examines a limited number of extraordinary African American novels in their historical, cultural, and especially literary contexts. Beginning with Harriet E. Wilson’s Our Nig (1859), we’ll trace the evolution of the African American Novel from the era of sentimental fiction to after postmodernism, explore the impact of the blues on the genre, sound the energy and legacy of the New Negro Renaissance, and read in light of the arguments, disagreements, and cultural analyses of Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Ta-Nehisi Coates, among others. As the course progresses, we’ll also have opportunities to discuss different critical theories and apply them to the primary texts. The course aims to deepen your sense of African American literary history and to deepen your interpretative skills.

COURSE OUTCOMES

1. Students will understand the historical, cultural, critical, and especially literary contexts of the African American Novel.
2. Students will understand the major characteristics of American literary sentimentalism, realism, regionalism, naturalism, modernism, and postmodernism and will be able to utilize those characteristics to analyze individual American novels.
3. Students will be able—while drawing on appropriate critical terms and concepts—to state clearly the central themes, concepts, and ideas at play in individual works.
4. Students will be able to evaluate the literary and cultural importance and/or significance of individual African American novels.
5. Students will be able to engage thoughtfully and openly with a range of critical and theoretical perspectives on literary and cultural (and even controversial) issues, including the ability to state clearly the assumptions and premises of their own positions.
6. Students will be able to perform a literary close reading (both in class discussions, exercises, and assignments and in out-of-class writing assignments), demonstrating an ability to read and interpret literary works by thoughtfully integrating quoted passages into larger argumentative claims.

7. Students will be able to write clear, grammatically correct, and rhetorically effective papers of literary analysis and interpretation (and perhaps even of critique), driven by a thesis and sustained by logic, textual and historical evidence, and a reasoned, ordered, and coherent argument.

**GRADING**

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tr>
<td>Essay 1 (Proposal; 8-10+ pages):</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<td>Essay 2 (Proposal; 8-10+ pages):</td>
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<td>Final Exam:</td>
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<td>Participation:</td>
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**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

Please note that you must complete ALL written work to pass LIT 314. You must, in other words, turn in both essays and take the Final Exam. Essays will be deducted ONE letter grade for EACH class period they are late.

**DEPARTMENT AND UNIVERSITY POLICIES**

**Department Assessment:** The Department of English’s ongoing process of assessing its curriculum requires a committee of professors to read student papers (including exams) to learn how students in general are progressing through the program or course of studies. Thus, your professor may choose a copy of one of your papers or ask for an electronic version of it to use in this assessment process. (All identifying information—such as name or ID number—will be removed and no evaluation of student work outside the boundaries of the course will play any role in determining a student’s grade.) If you do not want your work used in such a way, please inform your professor and she or he will not forward it to the Assessment Committee. Otherwise, the Department of English appreciates your tacit consent.

**University Assessment:** Students should also note that this course may require an electronic submission (via Moodle) of an assignment stripped of your personal information to be used for educational research and assessment of the university’s writing program. Your paper will be stored in a database. A random selection of papers will be assessed by a group of faculty and staff using a rubric developed from the following writing learning outcomes:

- Compose written documents that are appropriate for a given audience or purpose
- Formulate and express opinions and ideas in writing
- Use writing to learn and synthesize new concepts
• Revise written work based on constructive feedback
• Find, evaluate, and use information effectively
• Begin to use discipline-specific writing conventions (MLA)
• Demonstrate appropriate English language usage

This assessment in no way affects either your course grade or your progression at the university. Your work is used anonymously.

Plagiarism, Academic Integrity, and the Student Conduct Code:
Plagiarism: the use of someone else’s ideas or words as if they were your own. To avoid this contravention of the fundamental values of the academy, you must acknowledge, by citation of name, title, and page number, work that has influenced your thinking. For more on matters of Academic Integrity, see the Student Conduct Code available on the web.
(http://www.umt.edu/student-affairs/dean-of-students/)

Accommodation:
Students with disabilities will receive reasonable accommodation for coursework. To request accommodation, please contact the professor as soon as possible. For more information, visit the Disability Services website at http://www.umt.edu/dss/ or call (406) 243-2243 (Voice/Text).
SYLLABUS

Tu Aug 28:  Introduction
Th Aug 30:  **Essay 1: Assigned**
**Lecture:  Autobiography, Sentimental Fiction, Slave Narratives, Captivity Narratives, & Seduction Novels: Historical/Cultural Contexts**
Wilson vii-xxiii, Original Title Page-40 (plus corresponding Explanatory Notes)

Tu Sept 4:  Wilson 41-86 (plus corresponding Explanatory Notes)
Th Sept 6:  **Lecture:  Realism & Modernism: Historical/Cultural Contexts**
Hurston 1-62

Tu Sept 11:  Hurston 62-128
Th Sept 13:  Hurston 129-193, 195-205 (“Afterword”)

Tu Sept 18:  **Lecture:  Late Naturalism: Historical/Cultural Contexts**
Petry 1-84
Th Sept 20:  **Lecture:  The Blues/The Blues Novel: Historical/Cultural Contexts**
Petry 85-162

Tu Sept 25:  Petry 163-256
Th Sept 27:  Petry 257-350

Tu Oct 2:  Petry 351-436
Th Oct 4:  **Lecture:  Modernism/High Modernism: Historical/Cultural Contexts**
Ellison epigraphs-83

Tu Oct 9:  Ellison 83-166
**Essay 1: Due**
Th Oct 11:  Ellison 166-250
**Essay 2: Assigned**

Tu Oct 16:  Ellison 251-332
Th Oct 18:  Ellison 333-417

Tu Oct 23:  Ellison 417-512
Th Oct 25:  **TBA:  WLA Conference, St. Louis**

Tu Oct 30:  Ellison 513-581
Th Nov 1:  **Lecture:  Postmodernism: Historical/Cultural Contexts**
Reed 3-71
Tu Nov 6:   **No Class: Election Day**
Th Nov 8:   Reed 72-140

Tu Nov 13:  Reed 140-218
Th Nov 15:  **Screening: Do the Right Thing**

Tu Nov 20:  **Screening: Do the Right Thing**
Th Nov 22:  **Thanksgiving Break: No Classes**

Tu Nov 27:  Ondaatje 3-79
            **Essay 2: Due**
Th Nov 29:  Ondaatje 80-156

Tu Dec 4:   **Review for Final Exam**
Th Dec 6:   **Review for Final Exam**