ENG 241 Introduction to African American Literature
CRN 26038, 4 credits
Winter 2011
MWF 2-2:50, 142 HEDCO
Professor Thorsson
Email: thorsson@uoregon.edu
Office Hours: MW 11-1 and by appointment, 521 PLC

Course Description
This course is a survey of writings by African American authors of the 19th and 20th centuries. Studying fiction, essays, and poetry, we’ll close read representative texts to identify formal and thematic elements that characterize the African American literary tradition. We will consider how these works exemplify and complicate lived and literary identities. In other words, how do these texts fit into or defy ideas about race, gender, and class on the one hand and classifications of genre, period, and literary style on the other. We’ll study relationships among these works to uncover how they reflect on, depend on, or revise one another. We will also look for relationships between these works and other art forms, such as blues, jazz, folklore, and visual arts. The goal of this course is to help you engage with African American literature, improving your writing, reading, and critical thinking skills in the process.

Required Books (available at the UO Bookstore and the Knight Library reserves desk)
• Ralph Ellison, Invisible Man

Course Requirements and Policies
Participation and attendance are mandatory. Bring the assigned readings to class and be prepared to discuss them. Your participation grade is based on class discussion, in-class writing, group work, and one question you will bring in to spark our discussion of a particular text.

Missing class more than twice in the term will result in reduction of your final grade by 1/3 of a letter grade for each absence beyond the two permitted. There is no distinction between excused and unexcused absences. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to get notes for that day from a classmate and/or otherwise catch up on any material you have missed.

Close readings must be submitted in hard copy at the beginning of class on the due dates listed below and formatted according to current MLA guidelines (1 inch margins, single-side print, stapled, correct citation and quotation including works cited). Consult the MLA Handbook or Bedford Handbook if you are uncertain of correct MLA format. Each of your close readings will analyze a short passage of your choice from among the assigned readings. Close readings must observe and analyze both the form and content of your chosen text. Close readings #1 and #2 may offer an interpretive argument about the chosen text, but are not required to do so. Close reading #3 must make an interpretive argument about the text. Each of your close readings should address a different text.

Late assignments will be marked down by 1/3 of a letter grade (B becomes a B-) for each day they are late. No assignments will be accepted more than one week after the due date.

The midterm and final will require that you identify the author, work, and time period of several passages and that you answer short essay questions.

If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please make arrangements to meet with the instructor soon. Please request that the Counselor for Students with Disabilities
send a letter outlining your approved accommodations. Disability Services: disabsrv@darkwing.uoregon.edu, 346-1155; http://ds.uoregon.edu/.

The University Student Conduct Code (conduct.uoregon.edu) defines academic misconduct. Students are prohibited from committing or attempting to commit any act that constitutes academic misconduct. Students should properly acknowledge and document all sources of information (e.g. quotations, paraphrases, ideas) and use only the sources and resources authorized by the instructor. If there is any question about whether an act constitutes academic misconduct, it is the student’s obligation to clarify the question with the instructor before committing or attempting to commit the act. Additional information about a common form of academic misconduct, plagiarism, is available at www.libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students.

**Grading:**

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Close Reading #1 (2-3 pgs)</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<td>Close Reading #2 (2-3 pgs)</td>
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<td>Close Reading #3 (4-5 pgs)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final</td>
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**Week 1**

M 1/3  
Introduction

W 1/5  
David Walker, from *Appeal in Four Articles* (1830) (p 228-238)

F 1/7  
**No class**

**Week 2**

M 1/10  
Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, A Slave, Written by Himself* (1845) (p 387-421)

W 1/12  
Douglass, *Narrative* (p 421-440)

F 1/14  
Douglass, *Narrative* (p 440-452)

**Week 3**

M 1/17  
**No class – Martin Luther King Jr.’s Birthday Observed**

W 1/19  
Harriet Jacobs, from *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) (p 280-297)

F 1/21  
Jacobs, from *Incidents* (p 297-315)

Close Reading #1 Due (2-3 pgs) (observation, analysis)

**Week 4**

M 1/24  
Anna Julia Cooper, “Womanhood a Vital Element in the Regeneration and Progress of a Race” (1892) (p 636-650)

W 1/26  

F 1/28  

**Week 5**

M 1/31  

W 2/2  
Johnson, *Autobiography* (p 841-883)

F 2/4  
**Midterm**
### Week 6
- **M 2/7**  
  Zora Neale Hurston, “Characteristics of Negro Expression” (1934) (p 1041-1053) and “Negro Folklore” from *Mules and Men* (1935) (p 1053-1063)
- **W 2/9**  
  Sterling Brown, all poems (1927-1980) (p 1248-1266)
- **F 2/11**  
  Langston Hughes, “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain” (1926) (p 1311-1314) and all poems (1921-1965) (p 1291-1311)

### Week 7
- **M 2/14**  
  Richard Wright, “Blueprint for Negro Writing” (1937) (p 1403-1410)
- **W 2/16**  
  Ann Petry, from *The Street* (1946) (p 1504-1516); Gwendolyn Brooks, “kitchenette building” (1945) (p 1625)
- **F 2/18**  
  Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (1952) (prologue and chapters 1-9)

Close Reading #2 Due (2-3 pgs) (observation, analysis, maybe argument)

### Week 8
- **M 1/21**  
  Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (1952) (chapters 10-18)
- **W 1/23**  
  Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (1952) (chapter 19-epilogue)
- **F 1/25**  
  James Baldwin, “Sonny’s Blues” (1957) (p 1728-1749)

### Week 9
- **M 1/28**  
  Hoyt Fuller “Towards A Black Aesthetic” (1968) (p 1853-1859)
  Amiri Baraka, all poems (1961-1982) (p 1939-1946)
- **W 3/2**  
  Jayne Cortez “How Long Has Trane Been Gone?”(1969) (2036-2038)
- **F 3/4**  

Close Reading #3 Due (4-5 pgs) (observation, analysis, and argument)

### Week 10
- **M 3/7**  
- **W 3/9**  
- **F 3/11**  
  **Final Exam**