ENG 245: Twentieth-Century African American Women Writers

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Winter 2007
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Course Description: The possibilities for, and the obstacles to, self-development, independence, and creative expression are a crucial—and particularly vexed—issue for African American women writers. ENG 245 examines the ways writers from Nella Larsen to Toni Morrison challenge the social, economic, and political inequalities of American life for women of color from the 1920s to the present. The course incorporates works of prose, poetry, and drama, and attends closely to political and cultural events that run parallel to developments in 20th century African American literary history. No prerequisites are required, but students should be prepared for advanced university-level work in literary studies.

Required Texts and Materials (UO Bookstore):
- Octavia Butler, Parable of the Sower
- Valerie Lee, ed. The Prentice Hall Anthology of African American Women’s Literature
- Toni Morrison, The Bluest Eye

Course Requirements:
- Midterm Essay: 4-5 pages, 20%
- Midterm Exam 20%
- Final Essay: 6-7 pages, 25%
- Final Exam 25%
- Participation 10%

Please note: Success in this course relies on your active engagement with the readings and with your discourse community; simply being present in the classroom does not constitute active engagement, so be prepared to contribute meaningfully to all discussions and workshops and, when relevant, to share your work with the class. In-class writings and quizzes will also join this category when I figure final grades.

Course Policies:
- Late work: I do not accept it.
- e-submissions: I do not accept them.
- Attendance: More than three absences will result in the lowering of your participation grade by one-third of a grade per absence (A- to B+, C to C- etc). Also, class begins at 1:00. Two late appearances equal one absence and will affect your grade accordingly.
- Accommodation: If you have a disability that you think may affect your performance in this class, please see me during the first week of the term so we can discuss whatever accommodation may be necessary.
• Plagiarism: All work submitted in this course must be your own and be written exclusively for this course. The use of sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrases) must be properly documented. In cases where plagiarism has clearly been established, the award of an F for the final course grade is standard practice. Please see me if you have any questions about your use of sources.

• Formatting: All work completed outside of class must follow the formatting guidelines provided—see attached “Pesky Formatting Details” handout. I reserve the right to return work that does not meet these guidelines. Improperly formatted work will automatically receive a one-third grade deduction (A- to B+, C to C-, etc.).

• Email: Any email correspondence should have an appropriate subject header and should be written using a tone and language appropriate for formal correspondence. Also, I will only return emails during “business hours.” Last, I am willing to answer questions through email but email should never be considered a substitute for office hours.

• Electronic Devices: ALL electronic devices must be turned off and stored away prior to the start of each class period.

Schedule
(Readings and written assignments are due on the date that appears in the margin. The schedule may be adjusted during the term.)

Week 1: 1/8 Course Introduction
         1/10 Introduction, cont.
         1/12 Fauset

Week 2: 1/15 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day—classes cancelled
         1/17 Larsen, Parts One and Two
         1/19 Larsen, Part Three

Week 3: 1/22 Thesis Workshop: We will discuss strategies for writing successful papers on literature.
         1/24 Brooks
         1/26 Brooks

         **Due: 1-page abstract for Midterm Essay.**

Note: If you think you would like to write on Hansberry’s play, it is your responsibility to read ahead and then come to office hours (or make an appointment) to discuss the play and your thoughts on it with me before you submit the midterm abstract. Plan accordingly!

Week 4: 1/29 Hansberry Act 1
         1/31 Hansberry Act 2
         2/2 Hansberry Act 3

Week 5: 2/5 Midterm Exam Review—bring all of your materials!
         2/7 **Midterm Essay Due**
         In-class writing
         2/9 **Midterm Exam**
Week 6: 2/12 Sanchez and Giovanni  
2/14 Bambara, “The Lesson”  
2/16 Bambara, “My Man Bovanne”

Week 7: 2/19 Morrison, 1-109  
2/21 Morrison, 110-63  
2/23 Morrison, 163-end

Week 8: 2/26 Butler, 1-102  
2/28 Butler, 103-59  
3/2 Butler, 160-201  
**Due: 1-page abstract for Final Essay**

Note: If you think you would like to write on Morrison’s short story or on the excerpt from Jones’s novel, it is your responsibility to read ahead and then come to office hours (or make an appointment) to discuss the reading and your thoughts on it with me before you submit the final abstract. Plan accordingly!

Week 9: 3/5 Butler, 202-end  
3/7 Morrison revisited: “Recitatif”  
3/9 Jones

Week 10: 3/12 **Final Essay Due**  
In-class writing  
3/14 Final Exam Review—bring all of your materials!  
3/16 Course Evaluations

FINAL EXAM: 3:15 pm on Wednesday, March 21.