

African American Women's Literary Tradition

English 204: Emerging Traditions in U.S. Literature

Required Texts:

Brooks, Gwendolyn. *Maud Martha*

Larsen, Nella. *Passing*

Morrison, Toni. *Sula*

Parks, Suzan-Lori. *The Red Letter Plays*

Giovanni, Nikki. *The Collected Poetry of Nikki Giovanni*

Course readings (available on Sakai)

Dr. A. Lockridge

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Office: Oddfellows, Room 217

Office Hours: M/W 12:15- 2:15pm &

Thurs. 2:45- 3:45

Course Overview:

This course provides some insight into what some might call an emerging literary tradition; in this case we will examine the literary tradition of Black women writing in America. Our examination will begin with Harlem Renaissance novella *Passing* by Nella Larsen. In this text, we observe the struggle for identity in a largely restricted, male dominated world. As we continue, we will look at other books centrally located within the African American literary tradition which provide reveal aspects of Black womanhood through the end of the 20th century. The objective of this course is to learn to read, think and write critically about African-American women's literature.

Course Policies:

1. *Attendance:* You are permitted two absences without question. Your final grade will be reduced by three percentage points (3%) for each subsequent absence.

2. *Reading:* Consistent, active reading is a requirement of this course. You will be expected to complete an aggressive reading schedule. If you do not have the time to devote to the course readings, I urge you to register for the class when your schedule permits. Texts are to be completed by the date assigned in the weekly syllabus and students are expected to bring the appropriate books/handouts/materials to class with them. Students who do not bring them will be asked to retrieve materials and return to class. Too many of these incidents will detrimentally affect your final grade. In addition, students who are unprepared for class discussion may be asked to leave and marked absent for the day.

3. *Sakai Quizzes:* There will be a reading quiz posted to Sakai every Saturday afternoon which will be due Monday at 10am. You will have a set amount of time to complete the quiz and will not be allowed to return to past questions or resubmit your quiz for any reason. Think carefully about your answers. Always complete course readings before taking the quiz. Also, please note that while you are being given the privilege of taking quizzes at your leisure, on an honor system. Dishonesty of any sort will be dealt with harshly. Under no circumstances will make-up quizzes be granted; failure to complete your quiz, for any reason, will result in a grade of zero. Your two lowest grades will be dropped as compensation.

4. *Class Participation:* Active participation is a necessary aspect of successful learning and will be rewarded in this class. My goal here is to stimulate intellectual engagement and the ability to make critical, relevant and thoughtful commentary ensures that you are indeed thinking critically. In order that everyone is able to mutually benefit from participation in discussions, please observe the following guidelines and grading criteria.

A participation is marked by its active nature, its consistency, and its quality. An A participant doesn't wait to respond to questions that the instructor poses but initiates discussion by coming prepared with questions, ideas, observations from the reading assigned that day. This participant will also be consistently engaged in class discussion, always letting me know that she/he has engaged the reading

thoroughly and thoughtfully. Finally, an **A** participant will not try to substitute **quantity** of participation for **quality** (being consistent is not the same thing as dominating a discussion). To earn the highest grade for your participation, you will want to make it possible for others to participate productively too (this is not a competition); thus, habits such as interrupting others and taking up too much conversational space will negatively affect your grade. It will also do you no good to participate if you haven't done the reading. I expect participation to be firmly grounded in careful and thoughtful reading.

A **B** discussant is less consistent than an **A** discussant in initiating discussion but is active in responding to questions or problems posed by the professor and other students. To get a **B** in participation, you will need to be in class and talk regularly-- more, certainly, than once during a class session once a week or so. Regular means regular. This level of class participation will also communicate clearly to me that you have done all the reading for the day and that you have done it thoughtfully. This level will also include productive discussion habits, such as engaging the ideas of others, not dominating, listening carefully, etc.

A **C** grade for participation means that you have contributed in an average way to the discussion. Your contributions have been less frequent than those of the **B** discussant or have made clear that you are not always keeping up with the reading. This is also the grade given for a discussant who constantly interrupts good discussion or attempts to dominate the discussion. In short, you have not been silent or absent or altogether uninvolved, but your involvement did not work consistently to make the class a productive learning experience.

A **D** grade means that you were there physically most of the time and maybe even piped up three or four times during the semester but that's it. It's just the grade it should be--a minimal passing grade.

An **F** grade should need no explanation and yet, this is the grade you will earn should your attendance be spotty and/or you consistently refuse to contribute to class discussions.

5. *Plagiarism and the Honor Code:* Plagiarism is another word for stealing. When you plagiarize you directly or indirectly use the ideas and/or language of another person or persons without acknowledgement and claim these words and ideas as your own. Not only is it a serious offense and grounds for academic expulsion, it is also against the law. You are plagiarizing if you do any or all of the following, though please keep in mind that these are not the only ways to plagiarize: 1) Use others' words directly without proper citation and quotations, 2) Use others' ideas and wording so closely (paraphrasing) that you are essentially quoting them without proper acknowledgement, 3) re-use assignments not written for this class and pretend that they are written for this class, 4) Borrow, buy, steal, download (you get the idea) others' essays, ideas, words, language, etc. and pass them off as your own. Please consult an MLA handbook, at any time, if you have citation and documentation questions. Should I suspect any act of plagiary, I will immediately report it to the Honor Committee and recommend that the student fail the course.

6. *Examinations:* There will be two examinations in this class including a midterm examination and a cumulative final exam. Please check the schedule for exam dates. Exams will consist of term identifications, quote identifications, short answer and long answer questions. Make up exams will be given solely at my discretion upon satisfactory evidence of severe personal illness.

7. *Critical Essays:* There will be four opportunities to turn in two essays of 1000 – 1250 words (about three to four pages). All essays are to be submitted to Sakai under the appropriate heading. Topics are provided on the final page of this document. It is your responsibility to ensure that you submit the required two essays. You are not permitted to submit more than two for any reason. Essays are to be carefully typed, edited and submitted to Sakai only. **Late essays will not be accepted.**

8. Final Grade/ Grading Scale*

Your grade will be assessed based on the following coursework:

- Class Participation 10%
- Essays 45%
- Examinations 30%
- Sakai Quizzes 15%

Grading Scale:			
94-100	A	79-77	C+
90-93	A-	76-74	C
89-87	B+	73-70	C-
86-84	B	69-65	D
83-80	B-	64-0	F

*** All coursework must be submitted in order to complete this course successfully.**

9. *Extra Credit:* You can earn up to a maximum of 15 extra points added to your **quiz average** throughout the semester by attending and submitting one page critiques of the events listed below. Each event has an assigned point value.

Date	Event	Location	Time	Points
1/25	Performance: Pistols and Prayers	Quigley Auditorium	11am	3
2/2	Black Studies Film #1	Carnegie 212	6:30pm	3
2/7	Keynote Lecture: Witnesses of History: Why We Are Not a Post-Racial Society	Campus Center 301/302	6:30pm	5
2/9	Black Studies Film #2	Carnegie 212	6:30pm	3
2/16	Black Studies Film #3	Carnegie 212	6:30pm	3
2/21	Lecture: American Ghost Dance: 21 st Century Nativism and the Battle to Maintain White Exceptionalism	Campus Center 301/302	6:30pm	5
2/23	Black Studies Film #4	Carnegie 212	6:30pm	3

10. *Office Hours:* A number of hours are set aside each week when I am available to meet with you individually in my office. Students are **strongly** urged to seek (and keep) appointments during those hours. While obviously, this is not required, having an appointment will assure that you skip ahead of the line that is invariably at my door each semester. These meetings are designed to assist you with course material or to provide guidance regarding essay writing in this class. To be clear, I **do not** read essay drafts but am happy to discuss essay ideas. For these types of meetings be sure to bring with you a complete outline and a number of possible theses. In general, the more specific your requests and questions, the more likely I am to be able to assist you.

11. Other Useful Information:

- Student emails will receive a response within 2 business days.
- Students are held responsible for their behavior and are expected to be respectful to their fellow classmates.
- Turn cell phones off or on silent during class. If a cell phone rings during class, I will answer it.
- The schedule is subject to change as the semester progresses.

Please Note: If you have a physical, psychological, medical, or learning challenge that may impact your ability to carry out assigned course work, I strongly urge you to contact John Mangine, the Director of Student Support Services, in the Pelletier Library at (814) 332-2898 or john.mangine@allegheny.edu. John Mangine and the staff at the Learning Commons will review your concerns and determine, with you, what accommodations are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation of disability is confidential.

Reading and Assignment Schedule

(subject to change at professor's discretion)

Thursday 1/20 Requirements and Expectations

Tuesday 1/25 *Reconstructing Womanhood*, Chapter 2 (Sakai)

Thursday 1/27 *Reconstructing Womanhood*, Chapter 2 (Sakai)

The Harlem Renaissance

Tuesday 2/1 "The Harlem Renaissance Literati" (lecture)

Thursday 2/3 "The New Negro" & "On Being Young, a Woman and Colored" (Sakai)

Tuesday 2/8 *Passing*- Part I

Thursday 2/10 *Passing*- Part II

Tuesday 2/15 *Passing*- Part III

Black Realism

Thursday 2/17 "Gwendolyn Brooks and the Realists" (lecture)

Tuesday 2/22 *Maud Martha*, Chapters 1 -15 (Essay Option #1 due to Sakai @ 9am)

Thursday 2/24 *Maud Martha*, Chapters 16 -23

Tuesday 3/1 *Maud Martha*, Chapters 24 – to end

Thursday 3/3 **Midterm**

Black Arts Movement

Tuesday 3/8 "Considering/ Reconsidering The Black Arts Movement" (lecture)

Thursday 3/10 Nikki Giovanni: "The True Import of Present Dialogue, Black vs. Negro", "Poem (no name #3)", "Seduction" and "Black Judgments"

Tuesday 3/15 Nikki Giovanni: "Ego Tripping", "Poem for a Lady whose Voice I Like", "Oppression" and "Boxes" (Essay Option #2 due to Sakai @ noon)

Thursday 3/17 Nikki Giovanni: "Nikki-Rosa", "Poem for Aretha" and "Resignation"

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Black Women's Renaissance

Tuesday 3/29 *Mahogany* (film)

Thursday 3/31 "White Privilege and Looking Relations" (Sakai)

Tuesday 4/5 *Sula* through "1920" & "Toni Morrison and Woman Centered Writing" (lecture)

Thursday 4/7 *Sula*, "1921" & "1922" (Essay Option #3 due to Sakai @ 9am)

Tuesday 4/12 *Sula*, "1923" & "1927"

Thursday 4/14 *Sula*, "1937" & "1939"

Tuesday 4/19 *Sula*, "1940"- to end

Thursday 4/21 *In the Blood*, Prologue- Scene 2

Tuesday 4/26 *In the Blood*, Scene 3- Scene 7 (Essay Option #4 due to Sakai @ 9am)

Thursday 4/28 *In the Blood*, Scene 8- to end

Tuesday 5/3 Muddying the Waters (discussion)
Tuesday 5/10 Final Examination @ 2pm

Essay Questions

Option #1- *Passing*- Tuesday, 2/22

Select a contiguous passage of no more than three paragraphs from Nella Larsen's *Passing*. Analyze the passage in detail and in a thesis-driven essay illustrate how that passage illuminates some larger aspect of the novel.

Option #2- *Maud Martha*- Tuesday, 3/15

Write a thesis-driven essay which examines the idea of being good as it is expressed in *Maud Martha*.

Option #3- Nikki Giovanni Poetry- Thursday, 4/7

Write a thesis-driven essay which examines any one poem (not discussed in class) written by Nikki Giovanni.

Option #4- *Sula*- Tuesday, 4/26

Select a contiguous passage of no more than three paragraphs from Toni Morrison's *Sula*. Analyze the passage in detail and in a thesis-driven essay illustrate how that passage illuminates some larger aspect of the novel.