

English 204  
Fall, 2011  
MWF 1:30-2:20  
Oddfellows, 105A

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Office Hours:  
MW 2:30-3:30 (in Quigley  
112)  
Th 1:30-4:30 (OF 233)  
Friday, 12:30-1:30, 2:30-3:30  
& by appointment (OF 233)

## Emerging Traditions in American Literature

Description: This course sees “emerging” literary traditions as those that write back to and challenge so-called “mainstream” literary histories and the national narratives these reflect and shape. We will examine literature written by and about Asian-Americans, Native-Americans, Latino-Americans, and African-Americans, with primary emphasis on the last group. We will be interested in a variety of literary representations of the experience of “difference” in the U.S. These include recent “second wave” immigration, indigenous displacement, migration, slavery and segregation, assimilation, hyphenation, and resistance and empowerment. We will emphasize the **complexity** (both formal and thematic) of our literary texts’ engagement with these experiences and the ways in which these texts negotiate representational pressures in often surprising and unmooring ways. Students will write two papers, two in-class short-answer/passage identification exams and a take-home essay final exam. Class participation will be important and constitute part of the grade. Regular class attendance is crucial.

### Required Texts:

Mukherjee, *Jasmine*  
Welch, *The Indian Lawyer*  
Islas, *The Rain God*  
*The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, latest edition  
(various handouts throughout the semester)

### Schedule of Readings and Assignments:

Fri., September 2 Introduction to course, syllabus, texts

Mon. September 5 *Jasmine*, chapters 1-9 (this **includes** chapter 9)

Wed., September 7 *Jasmine*, chapters 10-17

Fri., September 9 *Jasmine*, chapters 18-22; first paper assigned

Mon., September 12 *Jasmine*—finish

Wed., September 14	<i>The Indian Lawyer</i> , Chapters 1-3
Fri., September 16	<i>The Indian Lawyer</i> , Chapters 4-8
Mon., September 19	<i>The Indian Lawyer</i> , Chapters 9-12
Wed., September 21	Finish <i>The Indian Lawyer</i>
Fri., September 23	Read <i>The Rain God</i> , pages 3-50
Mon., September 26	Read <i>Rain God</i> , pages 53-110
Wed., September 28	Read <i>Rain God</i> , pages 113-end
Fri., September 20	Discuss paper and connections among first three novels
Mon., October 3	Read "The Passing of Grandison" in <i>Norton</i> , pages 613-624; also headnote on Chesnut, pages 602-604
Wed., October 5	Continued discussion of "Grandison"; <b>First Paper Due at beginning of class</b>
Fri., October 7	Read "The Wife of his Youth," in <i>Norton</i> , pages 624-632
Mon., October 10	Read <i>Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man</i> , in <i>Norton</i> , pages 827; read headnote on James Weldon Johnson, pages 791-793
Wed., October 12	Read <i>Autobiography</i> , pages 827-858
Fri., October 14	Finish <i>Autobiography</i>
Mon., October 17	<b>Fall Break</b>
Wed., October 19	Read Dunbar in <i>Norton</i> , pages 905-927
Fri., October 21	Continued discussion of Dunbar
Mon., October 24	First in-class short answer and passage exam
Wed., October 26	Read Fisher's "The City of Refuge," in <i>Norton</i> , pages 1225-1236
Fri., October 28	Read Claude McKay in <i>Norton</i> , pages 1003-1010
Mon., October 31	Read Countee Cullen, in <i>Norton</i> , pages 1339-1351
Wed., November 2	Read Hurston's "Sweat," in <i>Norton</i> , pages 1019-1030
Fri., November 4	Read Langston Hughes in <i>Norton</i> , pages 1288-1311
Mon., November 7	Discussion of Hughes continued; second paper assigned
Wed., November 9	Read <i>Quicksand</i> in <i>Norton</i> , pages 1085-1111
Fri., November 11	<i>Quicksand</i> , pages 1111-1145
Mon., November 14	Finish <i>Quicksand</i>
Wed., November 16	Read Wright's "Long Black Song" in <i>Norton</i> , pages 1419-1436; also, read headnote, pages 1399-1402
Fri., November 18	Read Himes, "Salute to the Passing," (handout)
Mon., November 21	Read Petry's "Like a Winding Sheet," in <i>Norton</i> , 1497-1504
Wed., November 23	<b>Thanksgiving Break</b>
Fri., November 25	<b>Thanksgiving Break</b>

- Mon., November 28 Second in-class short answer and passage identification test  
 Wed., November 30 Gwendolyn Brooks in Norton, pages 1623-1640  
 Fri., December 2 Gwendolyn Brooks, continued
- Mon., December 5 Black Arts Poetry (TBA)  
 Wed., December 7 Black Arts Poetry continued; **Second Paper Due at Beginning of Class**  
 Fri., December 9 Read "Dutchman" in *Norton*, pages 1946-1960
- Mon., December 12 Continued discussion of "Dutchman"; take home final handed out  
 Wed., December 14 Last Day—Read Charles Johnson, "The Education of Mingo," in *Norton*, pages 2542-2552

**Take-home final exam due in my office by noon on Tuesday, December 20**

### Class Policies:

- 1) Attendance is a baseline requirement; unexcused absences will factor into your class participation grade. I consider attending class as part of the work of the class. Anyone who misses an excessive number of classes will fail the course. If you are unclear about whether absence for a school event is excused or unexcused, check with me.
- 2) All papers must be word-processed and follow standard academic paper format. They must be spell-checked and carefully proofread.
- 3) Late papers will be graded down five points per day. Papers are due at the beginning of the class period on the due date.
- 4) Any instances of plagiarism will be automatically turned over to the College Honor Board. You are responsible for knowing what constitutes plagiarism in academic papers—see the section on plagiarism in the Student Handbook. If you are confused about anything in this section, please see me.
- 5) The assigned readings are to be completed on the day that they appear on the syllabus. You will be expected to have done the reading carefully, to have taken notes, and to have prepared questions and contributions to the class discussion. I may call on people whether they raise hands or not. Failure to contribute effectively and regularly to class discussion will, obviously, affect your class participation grade. To earn in the "A" to "B" range for class participation requires that you participate actively, consistently, and productively. Some class participation—such as responses to Study Questions and poetry readings—may be structured and assigned.
- 6) Anyone taking the course (including those on a Credit/No Credit basis) must complete all the work for the course satisfactorily to earn credit. You cannot skip a paper or fail to do any of the work assigned and earn credit for the course.

### Grade Distribution:

Paper One	20%
First in-class test	10%
Paper Two	20%
Second in-class test	10%
Participation	15%
Take Home Final	25%

While it is complicated to grade class participation in a large class like ours, the following criteria will flexibly apply. You should also realize that attendance will figure importantly in your participation grade, though attendance without regular contribution to class discussion will not get you into the A-B range for this part of the grade.

### Criteria for Grading Class Participation

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 about 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 not enhance 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. As the A reader reads, she or he **prepares** to participate in a class discussion with other readers.

A B participant is less consistent than an A 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 participant or have let me know that you are not always keeping up with the reading or have, in some way, interfered with good discussion--for instance, a "dominator" would get credit for

participating often but would get knocked down to a C for taking over and not engaging others in 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.

### Criteria for Grading Papers:

1. An A paper will be
  - polished and error-free
  - insightful, going well beyond the obvious and well beyond what was said in class
  - thoroughly developed and logically structured
2. A B paper will be
  - well-written overall, but with some minor lapses
  - above average in insight, but less original than the A paper
  - competently developed but a little less thorough than an A paper
3. A C paper will be
  - competently written but with a number of minor or a few major lapses
  - average in insight and originality
  - readable in terms of organization and structure but in need of more coherence
4. A D paper will be
  - error-ridden and un-proofread
  - below average in insight and originality
  - disorganized and hard to follow
5. An F paper will be
  - unreadable because of writing errors
  - inaccurate and/or otherwise irresponsible in content
  - incoherent

**Important:** Any instances of plagiarism, whether intentional or "accidental" will automatically result in a failure on the assignment and notification of the Honor Committee. You will not be allowed to rewrite a plagiarized paper. If you are not clear about the parameters of plagiarism, read the relevant section in *The Compass*.

