

Fall 8-15-2014

ENG 2705-001: African-American Literature

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Introduction to African American Literature
 English 2705 — Fall, 2014
 Tues/Thurs, 9:30 – 10:45, Coleman 3691

Instructor: Tim Engles
 Office: CH 3831

Instructor's e-dress: tdengles@eiu.edu
 Office hours: 10:45 – 12:00, Tues & Thurs and
 by appointment

Textbook Rental Books:

Solomon Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave* (1852)
 Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861)
 Nella Larsen, *Passing* (1929; in *The Complete Fiction of Nella Larsen*)
 Langston Hughes, *The Ways of White Folks* (1934)
 Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* (1970)
 Walter Dean Myers, *Monster* (1999)
 Percival Everett, *Erasure* (2001)

Chester Himes, *If He Hollers Let Him Go* (1945)
 Sister Souljah, *The Coldest Winter Ever* (1999)
 ZZ Packer, *Drinking Coffee Elsewhere* (2003)

COURSE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Read the following sections carefully! These words constitute our contract, and participation in this course will require your written agreement to them.

Course Description and Goals: The two primary goals of this course: (1) to enhance your skills in the art of textual analysis (which are skills that any university student should fully develop), and (2) to introduce you to important African American authors and their literature's themes, techniques, and subject matter.

Topics, ideas, and words that some consider sensitive or off limits may arise in our readings and discussions, so you will need to approach this course with a mature, open mind and a willingness to consider viewpoints expressed from different perspectives. This course will require dedicated daily work, including reading and class participation; regular quizzes, which are meant to be easy *if* you do the reading, which you must do before each session to succeed in this course; a brief individual presentation; two formal essays; and two examinations.

For the record, here is EIU's Undergraduate Catalog Description:

ENG 2705 - African-American Literature.
 (3-0-3) F. Introduction of African-American literature in its socio-cultural and historical contexts, with emphasis on such writers as Douglass, Hurston, Hughes, Wright, Ellison, Baldwin, Baraka, Morrison, Walker, Wilson. (Group 2) WI

Prerequisites: ENG 1002G.

Credits: 3

Regarding Reading: Again, a primary purpose of this course is to help you develop your skills in the art of textual analysis. Consequently, you must give the readings more than a quick skimming over. Instead of wolfing them down right before class, set aside enough time to read carefully—decide for yourself, before coming to class, what each author is trying to describe and bring to light. Also, to ensure that your final grade reflects your reading effort, I will give frequent “pop” quizzes at the beginning of class on required readings. These quizzes will not be announced and they cannot be made up. Basically, if you try to get by with only doing some of the reading listed on our “Daily Schedule,” you won’t do well at all in this class.

Grades: Your final course grade will be determined in the following way:

10-minute Sociohistorical Presentation	5%
First essay (5-6 pages)	15%
Exam 1	20%
Second Essay (7-8 pages)	25%
Final exam	25%
Participation/quizzes/attendance	10%

Regarding Writing: The two exams will be in-class written exams, with questions that ask for short and long essay answers, quotation IDs, and character-matchings. The two formal essays will be graded on how thoughtful, well-developed, and insightful they are. Clean, careful writing counts as well, and essays that have errors and problems in them that distract from the content will be downgraded accordingly. Both writing assignments are to be turned in at the beginning of the class period on the day they are due. Papers are due at the beginning of class on the due date whether the student is in class or not. Late papers will be penalized fifteen points (15%) each day they are late, beginning at the end of the class period of the day on which they are due. Finally, be mindful of the extreme consequences of plagiarism, as described below—some previous students have failed my classes for plagiarizing other people’s writing.

Missed Quizzes/Exams, and Late Papers: Again, because the answers to unannounced quizzes come up in class after they are taken, quizzes cannot be made up (even if you come to class late). These quizzes are one way to reward those who attend class regularly and on time. At the end of the semester, the average grade on these quizzes will constitute a major portion of your class participation grade (in order to account for the possibility that a day will arise when you *must* be absent, I will drop your lowest quiz score before figuring the average grade).

There will be no make-up exams—students who miss the first exam will substitute a 6-8 page major essay in response to questions written by Dr. Engles. Students who miss the final exam will receive an automatic “Zero” on it, unless arrangements are made ahead of time regarding an essay substitution. Again, papers are due at the beginning of class on the due date whether the student is in class or not. Late papers will be penalized fifteen points each day they are late. You may turn in papers before their due dates if you know you must miss class that day.

Regarding the Writing Center: If you are aware of chronic problems with your writing, I strongly recommend that you make use of the English Department’s Writing Center. Tutoring services there are free, and students are welcome to drop in, or schedule appointments during working hours (Room 3110 of Coleman Hall, <http://www.eiu.edu/~writing>). While I will pay

close attention to each student's particular writing problems, I may advise some students to seek additional help at the Writing Center.

Writing Center consultants will not proofread your papers; they instead will work with you on a number of important tasks, such as these:

- Understanding and analyzing writing assignments
- Moving past writer's block
- Brainstorming topics and ideas
- Revising for stronger content and adapting to audience
- Developing focus and thesis statements
- Organizing ideas and support
- Developing evidence, examples, and supporting details
- Revising for stronger development of and work with source materials
- Guiding writers to effectively integrate source materials
- Providing guidance on using citation systems
- Offering assistance on how to effectively and ethically summarize, paraphrase, and quote source materials
- Implementing strategies for strong paragraphing
- Improving cohesion through transitions and organization
- Revising for sentence-level clarity, precision, and emphasis
- Creating sentence variety for emphasis and cohesion
- Offering strategies for efficient and effective proofreading and editing
- Helping students find their own process for proofreading and editing

As you can see, the Writing Center's professional helpers can be *very* helpful. And of course, if you ever need help from me with any aspects of an essay, I will be available during my office hours to consider ideas or a rough draft with you. It's also okay to email me about a paper in progress with specific questions or issues.

The Student Success Center: Students who are having difficulty achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the Student Success Center (www.eiu.edu/~success) for assistance with time management, test taking, note taking, avoiding procrastination, setting goals, and other skills to support academic achievement. The Student Success Center provides individualized consultations. To make an appointment, call 217-581-6696, or go to 9th Street Hall, Room 1302.

E-mail activity: Enrollment in this class requires an e-mail account, and you must check it frequently for messages pertaining to the course (that is, several times per week, at least). You already have an EIU account; you're welcome to use another type of account, but just be sure you use one for this course that you tend to check frequently, and be sure that messages pertaining to this course do not end up in your "Junk Mail" folder. We will use our course listserv (or "e-mail discussion list") for announcements and for extension of in-class discussion. E-mail is also the quickest, easiest way to reach me, especially since faculty in the English Department do not have office telephones; I welcome any and all e-mailed questions and comments, and I usually reply quickly.

Using e-mail is crucial for this course—send me an e-mail message (tdengles@eiu.edu) by Friday, August 29 at 3:00 p.m. In that message, (1) tell me which course you're in (English

2705); (2) describe yourself in whatever way you choose, including your career aspirations; (3) write a statement to the effect that you have read and agree with (or perhaps in part disagree with, which is fine, if you explain why) these course policies and requirements, and (4) as with all academic and professional emails, sign this email by including your name at the end of it. Sending me this message will also constitute your “signature” of our course contract, that is, these policies and procedures that you are reading.

Attendance Policy: I will take attendance, and I expect you to attend class every day, on time, and prepared to discuss the material listed for that day on the “Daily Schedule.” If you have more than three absences this semester, your course grade will drop a full letter grade for each absence beyond three.

Regarding Tardiness: This is a small class, so late arrivals are disruptive—if for some bizarre reason you wish to get on my bad side, you can easily do so by developing the habit of arriving late for class. If you will not be able to arrive for this class on time because of other commitments, drop it and take another section.

Classroom Environment: I do not plan to lecture in this class; instead, we should all contribute together to a positive, challenging, interesting learning environment. I expect all of you to participate in class discussions (class participation will be figured into your final grade). The best way to demonstrate that you are an active, engaged, and interested reader is by contributing regularly to class discussions, and by paying close, respectful attention to what everyone else has to say.

As noted above, be aware that sensitive issues sometimes arise within a course on multicultural material, so we must respect the opinions of others—try to respond to ideas, rather than to the person stating them. In my experience, it’s okay for discussions to become “heated,” as long as we respect each other.

If you have questions, no matter how simple or complicated, go ahead and ask me, either in class or via e-mail—chances are that other students will have the same question.

Also, in the interests of keeping everyone in class undistracted and focused, *please do not read outside materials or eat food in class (drinking beverages is okay), and do not use a computer in class.* Also, if you have a cell phone, *be sure to silence it ahead of time, and do not check or write text messages during class.* If you happen to be expecting an important or emergency call or text, that’s okay, but be sure to let me know before class begins. Finally, please refrain from “packing up” during the last few minutes of class; I will signal when the discussion is finished, and I promise to end by the scheduled end of our time together.

For students with disabilities: If you are a student with a documented disability in need of accommodations to fully participate in this class, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services (OSDS). All accommodations must be approved through OSDS. Please stop by Ninth Street Hall, Room 2006, or call 217-581-6583.

Academic Honesty: I expect you to act honestly and do your own work in this class, and so does Eastern Illinois University. If you are uncertain whether something you have written is an example of plagiarism, just ask me to look it over before you turn it in. It is your responsibility to

familiarize yourself with the English Department's policy on plagiarism: "Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism—'The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one's original work' (Random House Dictionary of the English Language)—has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office."

**ENGLISH 2705 : DAILY SCHEDULE
FALL, 2014**

This schedule may be subject to change; BE SURE to bring the listed readings to class if a reading assignment is listed for that day; students who show up without a copy of the day's reading assignment may be marked absent

- T AUG 26 Introduction to the course; Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, "Bury Me in a Free Land" (1845; handout)
- R AUG 28 Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave* (1852), Title page to 37
- F AUG 29 3 p.m. **Deadline** for sending Dr. Engles (tdengles@eiu.edu) the e-mail described above on Page 3
- T SEP 2 *Twelve Years a Slave*, 38-94
- R SEP 4 *Twelve Years a Slave*, 95-146
- T SEP 9 *Twelve Years a Slave*, 147-186
- R SEP 11 Finish *Twelve Years a Slave* (187-217); In-class film-screening and discussion, *Twelve Years a Slave* (directed by Steve McQueen, 2013)
- T SEP 16 Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861), 9-45

- R SEP 18 Langston Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" (handout, 1926); print out, read and bring to class Charles Chesnutt, "The Passing of Grandison" (1899; emailed short story—print out, read carefully, and bring to class)
- T SEP 23 Charles Chesnutt, "The Wife of His Youth" (handout, 1898) and Nella Larsen, "Sanctuary" (1930), in *The Complete Fiction of Nella Larsen*, 19-28
- R SEP 25 Larsen, *Passing* (1929), 163-206
- T SEP 30 *Passing*, 207-59
- R OCT 2 Finish *Passing* and read Richard Wright, "The Ethics of Living Jim Crow" (1938; emailed essay—print out, read carefully, and bring to class)
- T OCT 7 Hughes, *The Ways of White Folks* (1934)
- R OCT 9 *The Ways of White Folks*
- T OCT 14 **Mid-term Exam** (Reminder: There are no make-up exams in this course—students who miss this exam will substitute a 6-8 page major essay in response to questions written by Dr. Engles.)
- R OCT 16 Excerpt from Isabel Wilkerson's *The Warmth of Other Suns* (2011; handout), *The Bluest Eye* (1970); discussion of Paper One topics
- F OCT 17 **Fall Break – No Classes**
- T OCT 21 *The Bluest Eye*
- R OCT 23 *The Bluest Eye*
- **Paper One due at the beginning of class**
- T OCT 28 *The Bluest Eye*
- R OCT 30 Toni Morrison, "Recitatif" (1983; emailed short story—print out, read carefully, and bring to class)
- T NOV 4 Everett, *Erasure* (2001) and Nick Chiles, "Their Eyes Were Reading Smut" (handout from Thursday)
- R NOV 6 *Erasure*
- T NOV 11 *Erasure*
- R NOV 13 Finish *Erasure*; discussion of Final Paper

T NOV 18 handouts to read for today: bell hooks, “Artistic Integrity: Race and Accountability” (1996) and “Ryan Coogler Talks with Ava DuVernay about *Fruitvale Station*” (2013); in-class film-screening: *Fruitvale Station* (2013), written and directed by Ryan Coogler

R NOV 20 Continue watching *Fruitvale Station* and read for today ...TBA (handout)

NOVEMBER 24 – 28 **Thanksgiving Break!**

T DEC 2 Walter Dean Myers, *Monster* (1999)

R DEC 4 *Monster*

T DEC 9 Finish *Monster* and also read Tim Engles and Fern Kory, “Incarceration, Identity Formation, and Race in Young Adult Literature: The Case of *Monster* versus *Hole in My Life*” (handout)

R DEC 11 last day of class – **Final Paper due at the beginning of class**

Final Exam: Wednesday, Dec. 17, 8:00 – 10:00 a.m. (Reminder: Students who miss the final exam will receive an automatic “zero” unless arrangements are made ahead of time.)