Credit Hours: 3

Classroom: Gowan 408
Thursdays, 6:10-8:40 p.m.
January 12-April 27
No Class: March 9 and April 13

Instructor contact information:
Eric Fontaine, J.D.
fontaine@cua.edu
Office Hours: Before and After Class

Course Description (from Cardinal Station http://cardinalstation.cua.edu)

A survey of the principle contributors to American literature made by Black writers.

Required Texts:
- Gloria Naylor, Mama Day, Ticknor & Fields, 0-89919-7167
- Langston Hughes, Best Short Stories by Negro Writers, An Anthology from 1899 to the Present, 978-0-316380324

Recommended Texts:
- A good dictionary (Oxford English is online: www.oed.com)
- MLA Style Sheet (www.mlastylesheet.com)

Libraries
The CUA Libraries' wide range of resources and services, including databases, online journals, and FAQs are on the main web site. For assistance on papers and assignments, consult the research guides or schedule an appointment with a subject librarian.

Course Goals
The purpose or goals of the course are to introduce students to the major concepts, themes authors within African-American literature; to sample significant writings from several periods of American history (Slavery, Freedom, Reconstruction, Harlem Renaissance; Realism and Modernism; Black Arts era; and literature since 1975); to gain insights into the vernacular traditions that have inspired this literature and the connections between it and parallel developments in music and the spoken word.
**Goals for Student Learning**

At the conclusion of the course, the student be able to articulate the major themes and authors of African-American literary scholarship; explain the relationship between the oral/vernacular tradition and the forms of higher literature it influenced; discuss in detail the development of African-American literature from slavery and the fight for freedom through the late 20th century; comprehend the major works of the major writers in each period covered in the readings; noticeable improvement in his or her critical writing skills and the possibly the beginning of one’s own personal literary style.

**Course Requirements:**

Complete all readings and writings on time, according to schedule 4 Essays (500-800 words), double-space, limited research required. Refer to CUA’s policy on plagiarism. Essays will be graded on the following; Composition, including grammar, critical thinking, and thorough topic discussion. You are encouraged to make use of CUA’s writing tutor to assist you in essay preparation. Final Exam (out-of-class essay exam)

**Class Attendance:**

Attendance is critical in a class that meets once a week. We have 15 classes; anyone with more than three or more unexcused absences may be asked to drop the course. Moreover, regular timely attendance and participation can result in a higher grade (in the case of a borderline grade). Students who do miss classes are still responsible for all material covered, so it would behoove you to exchange email addresses amongst your peers.

Come to class with all reading and writing requirements completed. Essays may be turned in late only at the cost of a lowered half grade if within one week of the due date. Essays may be submitted electronically to me no later than midnight of the due date to receive full credit.

Quizzes may be given if students are not completing the readings on time.

**Grading:**

Final grades will be based on the four essays (400 points) and the final exam (200 points) for a total of 600 points. Grading:

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Failing -- the student failed to demonstrate an adequate understanding of course concepts

| F | < 60 |

**Emergencies:**
Please follow the CUA announcements. If class is cancelled, continue with the readings and writings per syllabus; if essays are due, submit them electronically by midnight.

PLEASE TURN OFF CELLPHONES BEFORE ENTERING CLASSROOM & AFTER BREAK

**Accommodations for students with disabilities:** Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss specific needs. Please contact Disability Support (dss.cua.edu) to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

**Academic Integrity:** Academic integrity is not merely avoiding plagiarism or cheating, but it certainly includes those things. More than anything, having academic integrity means taking responsibility for your work, your ideas, and your effort, and giving credit to others for their work, ideas and effort. If you submit work that is not your own – whether test answers, whole papers or something in-between – I have a responsibility to hold you accountable for that action. I also have a responsibility to treat you with respect and dignity while doing so.

The following sanctions are presented in the University procedures related to Student Academic Dishonesty:

“The presumed sanction for undergraduate students for academic dishonesty will be failure for the course. There may be circumstances, however, where, perhaps because of an undergraduate student’s past record, a more serious sanction, such as suspension or expulsion, would be appropriate. ...In the more unusual case, mitigating circumstances may exist that would warrant a lesser sanction than the presumed sanction.”

or

“The presumed sanction for undergraduate students for academic dishonesty will be failure for the course. In the context of graduate studies, the expectations for academic honesty are greater, and therefore the presumed sanction for dishonesty is likely to be more severe, e.g., expulsion. ...In the more unusual case, mitigating circumstances may exist that would warrant a lesser sanction than the presumed sanction.”
Academic Support Services
The university’s primary academic support resources are located on the 2nd floor of the Pryzbyla Center. These affiliated offices and services include:

Kenneth Killiany is MSPS’s internal writing tutor who provides individualized writing support. He can be reached at killiany@cua.edu. Please put “Metro SPS Writing Help” in the subject line.

The Center for Academic Success provides academic support services for all students through a broad base of programs and services, including Tutoring Services, Workshops, Academic Coaching, Individual Skills Meetings, Peer Mentoring, and more.
Phone: (202) 319-5655 Email: cua-academicsuccess@cua.edu Web: success.cua.edu

The Writing Center provides free, one-on-one consultations with trained graduate instructors for writing projects across all disciplines at any stage of the process, from brainstorming to revising. Appointments in the main location, Mullen 219, can be scheduled in advance online (http://english.cua.edu/wc/). Drop-in appointments are also welcome based on availability (see website for days and hours).
Phone: (202) 319-4286 Email: cua-writingcenter@cua.edu Web: english.cua.edu/wc/

The Math Center is staffed with Math Faculty and Tutors who are trained to assist students struggling in areas ranging from the basics to complex problems in calculus and statistics. Any student who feels he or she may need assistance in this or any other math class is welcome to visit the Math Center in Pryz 202 Monday through Thursday between the hours of 4:00 and 10:00pm. No appointment is necessary and services are absolutely free.
Phone: (202) 319-5655 Email: cua-academicsuccess@cua.edu

Disability Support Services provides programs and services designed to support and encourage the integration of students with disabilities into the mainstream of the university community.
Phone: (202) 319-5211 Email: cua-disabilityservices@cua.edu Web: dss.cua.edu

The Counseling Center provides free individual and group counseling services, psychiatric consultation, alternative testing, and emergency services to CUA students. In addition, we provide consultation services and outreach programs to the CUA community. Appointments can be scheduled in person in 127 O’Boyle Hall, or by phone.
Phone: (202) 319-5765. Web: counseling.cua.edu
Course Schedule of READINGS and WRITINGS

January 12
Martin Luther King, Jr. “Letter from a Birmingham Jail.”
Malcolm X “Chapter 19: 1965.”

January 19
Ida B. Wells- “A Red Record”
Plessy v. Ferguson—Supreme Court opinions
Alice Dunbar-Nelson: “Sister Josepha”
Claude McKay-“If We Must Die, the Lynching.”

January 26
Paul Lawrence Dunbar-“We wear the mask, Sympathy”
Richard Wright “The Ethics of Living Jim Crow”
Ralph Ellison: “Flying Home”

1st Writing Due 02/02/17 (No Plot Summaries. Provide your original thinking)

Option #1 Compare and Contrast the Dr. King and the Malcolm X essays. Find support for your comparisons and/or contrasts in the Washington and DuBois’ writings. In your view would Washington and/or Du Bois agree with either man? Why or why not?

Option #2 Plessy v. Ferguson Most would argue that Harlan’s dissent is the most important part of this decision, in that it presages Brown v. Board of Ed. Given what Harlan says about race relations, how do you reconcile his view with what he says later on about a different race of people? What is the primary fallacy in Brown’s majority opinion? Do you find Harlan’s dissent to be persuade? Extra points if you can unearth which factor in Harlan’s rearing, his own life, that predisposes him to feel as he does towards African-Americans?

Option #3 A Red Record. Ida B.Wells brings up two interesting points; first is her perception of white women as given by white men, particularly regarding any congress with men of color In your essay, share what this perception is. Her second point of interest is her expression of the three excuses white men give for their acts barbarism. Explain what these three excuses are in your own words and reference the one which impacted the opportunities begun during Reconstruction, which ended with the election of R.B. Hayes.
February 02
Jean Toomer-Karintha, Blood-Burning Moon
Countee Cullen-Scottsboro too is worth a song
Zora Neale Hurston-Gilded Six Bits
Gwendolyn Brooks “We Real Cool, The Mother, Ballad of Emmett Till”
Yusef Komunyakaa “Tu Do Street, Thanks, Facing It”

February 09
Alice Walker—Laurel
Etheridge Knight-Violent Space, A Poem for Myself
Amiri Baraka-the Dutchman

February 16
Percival Everett “The Appropriation of Cultures”
Natasha Trethewy “White Lies, History Lesson, Southern Gothic”
ZZ Packer “Drinking Coffee Elsewhere”

2nd Writing Due 02/23/17 (No Plot Summaries)

Option #1—Dutchman. Watch on Youtube the 1hour version of the play in B&W. Take a hard look at Clay’s words, “You don’t know anything except what’s there to be seen. Not the pure heart, the pumping black heart. You don’t ever see that.” Write an essay about what is meant by this statement and incorporate the following; Let your essay reflect Clay’s statements about Bird and Bessie. With all of Clay’s talk of murder who is it that commits murder? Why do you think this murder happened? Were you surprised by the ending?

Option #2—Facing It. Go to the Vietnam War Wall online. In your essay include the total casualties as of 03/31/97, then those by the DMV and by race from that same area. Provide the stats on at least three levels of officers who died. What are some of the reactions starting with the poem, of vets visiting the war memorial? The writer talks about becoming a part of the wall, What does he see? What does he feel?

Option #3—Laurel. The epitome of a dream deferred. Laurel’s love for Annie. Discuss the path of this relationship from their meeting, to the auto accident, her visit, her husband, to Annie’s divorce. What do we learn about love? About ourselves? About what life has in store?

Option #4—the Appropriation of Cultures. Is Daniel believable? Why or why not? Take a look at his explanation of the black power symbol-do you find it convincing? Review the eulogy given by President Obama in 2015 on the occasion of the death of Rev. Clementa Pinckney and eight others in South Carolina. How does the eulogy address some (one?) of the major points raised in the story? Let your essay discuss the value and importance of cultures.
February 23
Mama Day by Gloria Naylor read to page 82.

March 02
Mama Day read to page 165 (end of Book 1)

March 16
Mama Day read to page 235.

March 23
Mama Day to conclusion.

3rd Writing Due 03/30 (No Plot Summaries)

Option #1 Write an essay on how Shakespeare’s play The Tempest and in particular the character Prospero, how is He similar to Mama Day?

Option #2 At one point in the novel, Mama Day says she needs George, but he does not need her. What must George give or bring to her in order to save Ophelia’s life? Why is this so difficult for George to comprehend?

Option #3 “I am no ways tired” is a spiritual that is sung by a character in Mama Day. Take a look at the lyrics and what it means. There are several approaches to solving a problem. One method is through science and medicine; another is through Faith; and yet another path is through mysticism. Write an essay on how science and medicine work with (or against) Mama Day’s purported mysticism and Faith in God? All three spheres come into play throughout the novel. How do they complement and/or conflict with each other?

March 30 Sanctified Love
Hughes—A Summer Tragedy, the Gilded Six Bits, Health Card, A Long Day in November

April 06 Unsanctified Love
Hughes—The Almost White Boy, Son in the Afternoon, Beautiful Light and Black Our Dreams.

April 20 Change in Direction
Hughes—Almos’ A Man, The Pocketbook Game, Thank You, M’am, Death of Tommy Grimes

4th Writing due April 27 (No Plot Summaries)
Option #1 In the section titled *Sanctified Love* we learn that a committed love means different things to different people. What does *commitment* mean in these stories? As with anything worth having, there is a price to pay for commitment. Cite examples of those “costs”. Give examples of couples, who having paid the cost come through their ordeals intact? Or does paying the cost change you in some fundamental way according to these authors? Cite examples of coming through intact or being changed?

Options #2 In this section called *Unsanctified Love* there is a sense that Love cannot be held to closely or tied down. It burns brightly with an intense, smoky heat, followed by? Yes, by what exactly? In your essay your task is to describe what’s left behind? Discuss the human costs associated with Unsanctified Love, and answer this –does it leave a mark on you? Reference examples from these stories to support your position.

Option #3 In the section titled *Change in Direction*, we look at what it means, what’s entailed in coming of age. Being a male and becoming a man are not one and the same. These stories discuss what becoming a responsible man looks like to the authors. Read Corinthians 13:11. Compare and contrast that statement with these stories. Are the characters in these stories likely to achieve a responsible manhood? Will they end well? Why or why not?

May 4
Final Exam
TBD