

SYLLABUS
AFRICAN AMERICAN LITERATURE AFTER 1950 (21 352 396 Q1)
TOPICS IN BLACK STUDIES (21 014 302 Q1)
SPRING 2018

Hill Hall Room 210 Saturday 9 a.m. – 12:15 a.m.
Prof. Karen Oliver kmoliver@andromeda.rutgers.edu 908 884-9023 (cell)

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- This is a writing intensive course focusing on literature written by selected authors of African descent from the mid-20th century through today.
- We will examine cultural values, historical events and literary and intellectual trends that influenced the writers we will study.
- The goals of the course are:
 - Knowledge of black American authors and literature of the period
 - Knowledge of themes, symbolism and trends in black American literature of the period
 - Improved critical reading, thinking and writing
 - Enhanced ability to clearly present ideas orally and in written form
 - Proficiency in leading discussions and effectiveness in working in small groups

TEXTS

- The required texts are:
 1. *Go Tell It on The Mountain* by James Baldwin
 2. *Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates
 3. *Sula* by Toni Morrison
 4. *The Street* by Ann Petry
 5. *Down These Mean Streets* by Piri Thomas
 6. *Salvage the Bones* by Jesmyn Ward
 7. *A Short Guide to Writing about Literature*, latest edition, Barnet, Sylvan and William Caid
 8. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, latest edition
- The following texts are recommended, though not required:
 1. *Rowman & Littlefield Guide to Writing with Sources*
 2. *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature Volume 2*
- All the required texts are available at the campus bookstore.
- If you order your books online, make sure they will arrive in time for you to finish reading them when they are scheduled for class discussion. Not receiving books on time is not an acceptable excuse for being unprepared.
- It is best that you use the specified editions, so that we can all consult the same page numbers.
- *Spark Notes* or other such publications are unacceptable as a substitute for readings.

SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS

Assigned readings must be completed by the indicated date. Additional readings may be assigned during the semester. The syllabus is tentative and may change – you are required to keep up with all revisions. All revisions will be posted on Blackboard. *Spark Notes* or other such publications are unacceptable as a substitute for readings.

Date	Assignment
January 20	Introduction to the course. “Part 2, Standing Back: Thinking Critically about Literature” in <i>A Short Guide to Writing about Literature</i> .
January 27	<i>The Street</i> by Ann Petry, chapters One through Eight
February 3	<i>The Street</i> , chapters nine through 18
February 10	<i>Go Tell It on The Mountain</i> , Part One and Part Two through “Gabriel’s Prayer”
February 17	<i>Go Tell It on The Mountain</i> , Part Two: “Elizabeth’s Prayer” and Part Three (page 177-263)
February 24	<i>Sula</i> (Part One)
March 3	<i>Sula</i> (Part Two) Biography Research Paper Due
March 10	SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS
March 17	SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS
March 24	<i>Down These Mean Streets</i> (1967) by Piri Thomas (entire book)
March 31	<i>Between the World and Me</i> by Ta-Nehisi Coates
April 7	<i>Between the World and Me</i> by Ta-Nehisi Coates
April 14	<i>Salvage the Bones</i> , “The First Day” through “The Sixth Day” (page 1-130)
April 21	<i>Salvage the Bones</i> “The Seventh Day” through the end (page 131-258)
April 28	Research papers due. Research paper reports.
May 5	Final Exam – 9 a.m. – 12:15 p.m., Hill Hall Room 210

HOMEWRITING ASSIGNMENTS

1. You will write several one- to two-page (no more, no less) personal essays intended to uncover your unique reactions and responses to the texts studied. No research is required or for these personal essays.

BIOGRAPHY PAPER AND CLASS PRESENTATION

1. To expand the exposure of the class to black American authors and their works, each student will write a 1,000-word (not significantly more or less) researched biography of an assigned writer and a researched analysis of an assigned long poem, play, short story or drama by the author. The paper must analyze the assigned text – not summarize it – and present important details of the author’s writing life, beliefs, significant events, literary contributions, and the trends that influenced him or her.
 - Read the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* and *A Short Guide to Writing About Literature* Chapter 15, “Writing A Research Paper.”
 - The paper must include a deeply researched analysis of the assigned work.
 - The paper must cite **at least two scholarly research sources** (preferably more) such as literary journals or scholarly books that are not part of the course reading and that support the thesis of the paper. **Wikipedia, Biography.com and similar websites are unacceptable as research sources.**
2. The paper is due **March 3**. It must be posted on BlackBoard and a print copy handed in by 9 a.m. on March 3.
3. On an individually assigned date, each student will make a 10-minute report to the class on his or her assigned author and text. The presentation must be made without reading the paper, although you can refer to notes. You can use PowerPoint slides only to illustrate and clarify points and **NOT** as a word-for-word mirror of what you are saying. Short videos (no more than two minutes) or other audio/visual aides are acceptable.
4. You must distribute a two-page (one-page front and back) information sheet about the text and author that the class can use as a study guide. The information sheet also must be posted on Blackboard.

FINAL RESEARCH PAPER AND CLASS PRESENTATION

1. Each student will write a 2,000-word (not significantly more or less) research paper that will focus on one or more of the texts studied this semester.
 - Read the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* and *A Short Guide to Writing About Literature* Chapter 15, “Writing A Research Paper.”
 - The research paper will be on a challenging topic you choose and for which you defend a position and make a conclusion. It must examine an issue, question or argument related to one or more of the texts read during the semester. It must center on the text(s), not just refer to the text(s) in passing.
 - It must properly cite **at least four scholarly articles** (preferably more) and other research sources **that are not part of the course reading** and that support the thesis of the paper and help you convince the reader that your argument is valid.
 - At least two weeks before the due date, you are advised to submit a one-page statement of intention, after you perform some of your research, that identifies your topic, states the questions that the paper will address, lists your major sources and projects your expected conclusion.

- If you do not submit a paper, you cannot pass this course, regardless of your other grades.
- The paper must be posted on Blackboard and printed and handed in on **April 28, 9 a.m.**
- This assignment will not be accepted after the April 28 due date.
- In a 10-minute class presentation on April 28, each student will give an overview of the arguments of his or her research paper.

EXAMS

1. A short quiz will be given at the beginning of each class focused on the assigned reading. There are no make-ups for missed quizzes.
2. The final exam will cover all readings, class discussions and presentations.

ADDITIONAL IMPORTANT SYLLABUS INFORMATION POSTED ON BLACKBOARD

1. Basic Rules of Engagement
2. Writing Guidelines
3. Learning Resources
4. Grading
5. Rubrics