

## E 376M • Contemporary African American Women's Fiction

**Instructor:** Richardson, M  
**Unique #:** 35780  
**Semester:** Spring 2011  
**Cross-lists:** AFR 374F (30580)

**Areas:** III  
**Flags:** Writing, Cultural Diversity  
**Restrictions:** None  
**Computer Instruction:** N

**Prerequisites:** Nine semester hours of coursework in English or rhetoric and writing.

**Description:** In this course, we will examine the fiction and films of women of African descent produced from the 1970s to the present. We will focus on issues of imagination and the creation of spectacular images of the past and the future. Considering the past violence and violations suffered under systems of racism, misogyny and homophobia, what would a utopia or a dystopia look like? How does collective experiences of trauma affect our visions of utopia? In this course, we will use the work of history and psychoanalytic, cultural, queer and feminist theories to assist our exploration of these questions and issues.

**Texts:**

*Beloved* by Toni Morrison  
*Parable of the Sower* by Octavia Butler  
*Erzulie's Skirt* by Ana-Maurine Lara  
*Brown Girl in the Ring* by Nalo Hopkinson  
Course readers are available at Jenn's Copy on Guadalupe and 21<sup>st</sup> St.

**Requirements & Grading:**

Two short papers (5-6 pages each) 20% each 40% total  
Close Reading Assignments (no longer than 1pg)20%  
Final Paper (8-10 pages) 20%  
Attendance and participation 20%

**Office Hours:** Students are REQUIRED to come to office hours at least once during the semester to discuss your progress in the class and any additional questions you may have. You are encouraged to take further advantage of office hours and I am also available by appointment.

**Attendance:** Students are expected to attend class every session. Participation in all aspects of the class is MANDATORY. All readings and assignments should be completed before class meetings and students are responsible for adding to class discussions of material. Please note that attendance and participation is worth 20% of your total grade. Late arrivals are disruptive to class and I will not repeat concepts and assignments given during class. If you miss a class or are late, you are still responsible for any announcements, assignments, lecture material and/or deadlines that are made. Your grade will be affected if you have more than two unexcused absences during the semester.

**Short Paper Assignments:** There are two short writing assignments as well as a final paper. Short essays are designed to help students analyze the historical and theoretical importance of the primary course material. Collectively the short papers are worth 40% of your final grade. Papers must be TYPED, double-spaced, with times new roman (or equivalent) 12 point font and 1inch margins.

**Close Reading Assignments:** Each member of the class is required to hand in 4 short papers for the semester. Response papers are brief (one page maximum!) discussions of a particular passage from the assigned reading for the day it is submitted. Papers must be TYPED, double-spaced, with times new roman (or equivalent) 12 point font and 1inch margins.

**Final Paper:** The final paper is designed to assess students accumulated application of knowledge. Papers must be TYPED, double-spaced, with times new roman (or equivalent) 12 point font and 1inch margins.

**Blackboard:** I will be in contact with you about updates in assignments through Blackboard. It is the students' responsibility to make sure that Blackboard has your updated email address.

NO LATE PAPERS.

I Do Not Accept Electronic Submissions of Papers.

Unless otherwise noted, papers are due on Fridays.

**Schedule:**

WEEK ONE

INTRODUCTION

excerpt from *Finding Soul and the Path to Orisha*

WEEK TWO

“The Spirits” from *Introduction to African Religion* by John S. Mbiti, Heinemann Educational Books (ISBN 0-435-94002) pgs 71-81.

“Concept of Time” and “The Nature of God” from *African Religions and Philosophy* by John S. Mbiti, Heinemann Educational Books (ISBN 0-435-89591-5) pgs 15-38. FILM *Daughter’s of the Dust*

WEEK THREE

FILM *Daughter’s of the Dust*; “Interview with bell hooks and Julie Dash” from *Daughters of the Dust: The Making of An African American Woman’s Film*, by Julie Dash, NY: The New Press , 1992, 27-67.

FILM Discussion of *Daughter’s of the Dust*; Start **Brown Girl in the Ring; Close Reading of Daughters of the Dust Due**

WEEK FOUR

**Brown Girl in the Ring** and “ ‘Making the Impossible Possible’: An Interview with Nalo Hopkinson” in *Social Text*, Vol 20 no. 2, Summer 2002, 97-113.

**Brown Girl in the Ring; and** M. Jacqui Alexander, “Pedagogies of the Sacred: Making the Invisible Tangible,” from *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory and the Sacred*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005, 287-300;

**Close Reading of Brown Girl in the Ring Due**

WEEK FIVE

Finish **Brown Girl in the Ring** and M. Jacqui Alexander “Pedagogies of the Sacred: Making the Invisible Tangible”

**FIRST SHORT PAPER DUE**

WEEK SIX

Start **Erzulie’s Skirt**

**Erzulie’s Skirt**

WEEK SEVEN

**Erzulie’s Skirt** and “Ezili” from *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn* by Karen McCarthy Brown, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991, 220-257.

**Erzulie’s Skirt; Close Reading of Erzulie’s Skirt Due**

WEEK EIGHT

Start **Beloved**

**Beloved**

WEEK NINE

**Beloved**

**Beloved** and Barbara Christian, “Fixing Methodologies: Beloved,” *Cultural Critique*, no. 24, Spring 1993, 5-15.

WEEK TEN

**Beloved**

**Beloved; Close Reading of Beloved Due**

WEEK ELEVEN

FILM **BELOVED**

FILM **BELOVED**

WEEK TWELVE

Discussion of Film

FILM **Eve’s Bayou**

**SECOND SHORT PAPER DUE**

WEEK THIRTEEN  
FILM Eve's Bayou  
Discussion of Film

WEEK FOURTEEN

Start **Parable of the Sower** and "In Memoriam: Octavia Butler" by Gregory Hampton, *Callaloo* Vol. 29 no. 2, 2006, 246-248. and "An Interview with Octavia E. Butler" by Charles Rowell, *Callaloo* Vol. 20 no. 1, 1997, 47-66.

NO CLASS THANKSGIVING

WEEK FIFTEEN

**Parable of the Sower**

**Parable of the Sower** LAST DAY OF CLASSES

FINAL PAPER DUE TBA

**Policies:**

*Documented Disability Statement:* The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 (voice) or 232-2937 (video phone), or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd>.

*Code of Mutual Respect:* In general, this is not a lecture class, but one grounded in dialogue. Feel free to be candid and direct in this class. Your opinions and insights are important, and your voice needs to be heard, so look forward to the opportunity to chime in. I will respect you as adults and assume that you will treat others in the class with respect as well. Because we will be sharing many personal ideas which may conflict with your own personal ideas and beliefs, it is important that you strive to be considerate, sensitive, and respectful. Be prepared to offer constructive criticism as well as receive it. We will discuss work that includes lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender themes in this course. Students are expected to approach all class material with maturity and academic rigor.

*Code of Academic Conduct:* University policy requires that students cite sources they use in their work. THIS INCLUDES PARAPHRASING of materials. Any inclusion of ideas that are not your own will be considered plagiarism. Students who do not properly cite ideas, quotes or paraphrasing of other published or unpublished material will automatically face disciplinary action which will also be reflected in their grade.

*Religious Holidays:* If you observe a recognized religious holiday that is in conflict with the university schedule, please come talk to me.

**Web Site:** Blackboard

**Instructors:** Matt Richardson