

E 323E • 3-Writing Slavery

Instructor: Woodard, H
#35620
Semester: Spring 2023
Class meetings, Parlin 308; 2:00-3:30 pm
Cross-lists: AFR 330P #31185; WGS 340 31 #45590

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

Flags: Cultural diversity, Writing

English Major Area: II. Literary period or survey

I do not want to alter one hierarchy in order to institute another. It is true that I do not want to encourage those totalizing approaches to African American scholarship which have no drive other than the exchange of domination—dominant Eurocentric scholarship replaced by dominant Afrocentric scholarship. More interesting is what makes intellectual domination possible; how knowledge is transformed from invasion and conquest to revelation and choice; what ignites and informs the literary imagination and what forces help establish the parameters of criticism.”

--Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*, (1-5).

DESCRIPTION:

A particularly prevalent feature of the novels in this course investigates the interior lives of African Americans through slavery, culture, and the experiences uniquely shared by women--particularly women of color--across class and regional boundaries (*A Mercy*, *Beloved*). However, the late Toni Morrison, Pulitzer Prize winner, Nobel Laureate, and an early proponent of an aspect of critical race theory that she refers to as “American Africanisms,” posits that race permeates much of Euro-American literature through a metaphorized, shadowy, and determinate presence (*Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (1992)). This course examines that “determinate presence” of race through select novels that pertain to the slavery past in both a Eurocentric and an Afrocentric context (Edgar Allan Poe’s *A. Gordon Pym* and Mat Johnson’s *Pym*). The course further explores how slavery is (re)written, controversially in a presentist context by contemporary authors, particularly in historical fiction or neo-slave narratives that seek to restore agency and reclaim subjectivity for enslaved individuals (Colson Whitehead’s *The Underground Railroad*). Ultimately, the course engages larger issues about the different venues that writings about slavery offer for academic disciplines, literary instruction and/or pedagogy.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVES:

To cultivate critical thinking, reading, and writing skills
To develop effective skills in oral and visual communication
To work effectively with others in a group setting to support a shared goal

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*, Harvard UP, 1992.
Playing in the Dark: A Study Guide (optional)
Toni Morrison, *A Mercy*
Toni Morrison, *Beloved*
Edgar Alan Poe, *The Narrative of A. Gordon Pym of Nantucket*.
Mat Johnson, *Pym*.
Colson Whitehead, *The Underground Railroad*

REQUIREMENTS & GRADING:

.75% Three critical essays (5 pages each; typed; ds), plus one major essay revision.
.15% Weekly reading quizzes/class participation/attendance
.10% Group presentations/Lead discussants

ATTENDANCE: Regular attendance is required. More than four absences will be sufficient grounds for failure in the course. The four allowed absences will include illness, deaths of relatives, and other emergencies. If you are more than five

minutes late or leave before class ends (without permission), you will be counted absent for that class. You are responsible for all work covered in your absence.

Class Policies:

Absolutely no make-up for reading quizzes. In exchange, the lowest quiz grade will be dropped. Except under extreme emergencies, and then only with the permission of the professor, late assignments will not be accepted without a penalty. Students are expected to turn in all required assignments in hard copy on the agreed upon due date at the beginning of class. Papers turned in during or after class on the due day will be considered late. A five point deduction will be applied for every late day. Use the MLA (Modern Language Association) Stylebook for all papers. Type papers on white, 8.5" x 11" paper, using one side only. Bind pages with a paper clip.

UT Honor Code or Statement of Ethics:

The core values of the University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the University is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community. Link to University Honor Code:

<http://registrar.utexas.edu/catalogs/gi09-10/ch01/index.html>

Academic Integrity:

Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student's own work. For additional information on Academic Integrity, see <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acadint.php>

Special Accommodations for Students with a Disability:

Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities. For more information, contact 471-6259 (voice) or 232-2937 (video phone) or <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>. Please notify the professor of any special accommodations that you may need prior to the end of the second week of class.

Policy on Religious Observance:

A student who is absent from a class or examination due to the observance of a religious holy day may complete the work missed within a reasonable time after the absence if proper notice has been given. Notice must be given at least fourteen days prior to the classes scheduled on dates the student will be absent. For religious holy days that fall within the first two weeks of the semester, notice should be given on the first day of the semester.

Grading Scale:

Final grades will be determined on the basis of the following rubric. Please note that to ensure fairness, all numbers are absolute, and will not be rounded up or down at any stage. Thus, a B- will be inclusive of all scores of 80.000 through 83.999. The University does not recognize the grade of A+.

A (94-100); A- (90-93); B+ (87-89); B (84-86); B- (80-83); C+ (77-79); C (74-76); C- (70-73); D+ (67-69); D (64-66); D- (60-63); F (0-59).

Plus/minus grades will be assigned for the final grade. This is a writing-intensive course. No final exam is given.

READING GUIDE (SUBJECT TO ANNOUNCED CHANGES)

TU	1/10	Introduction to course. Policies. Group assignments. Toni Morrison, <i>The Pieces I Am</i> , A documentary.
TH	1/12	Toni Morrison, <i>Playing in the Dark</i> . Part I, “Black Matters” Toni Morrison, <i>The Pieces I Am</i> <i>The Pieces I Am</i> , continued.
TU	1/17	Toni Morrison, <i>Playing in the Dark</i> . Part II, “Romancing the Shadow” <i>Africans in America</i> , film clip.
TH	1/19	Toni Morrison, <i>Playing in the Dark</i> . “Disturbing Nurses and the Kindness of Sharks”
TU	1/24	<u>Quiz I, (<i>Playing in the Dark</i>.)</u> Introducing Toni Morrison, <i>A Mercy</i> .
TH	2/26	Morrison, <i>A Mercy</i> .
TU	1/31	Morrison, <i>A Mercy</i> .
TH	2/2	Morrison, <i>A Mercy</i> .
TU	2/7	Morrison, <i>A Mercy</i> .
TH	2/9	<u>Quiz 2, (<i>A Mercy</i>)</u> Introducing Toni Morrison, <i>Beloved</i>
TU	2/14	Morrison, <i>Beloved</i> <u>Critical Essay draft 1 DUE (TBA)</u> See prompt in the files section of canvas.
TH	2/16	Morrison, <i>Beloved</i>
TU	2/21	Morrison, <i>Beloved</i>
TH	2/23	Morrison, <i>Beloved</i> <u>Quiz 3 (<i>Beloved</i>)</u>
TU	2/28	Edgar Allan Poe, <i>The Narrative of A. Gordon Pym of Nantucket</i> <i>Chapters 1- 6; (pp. 4-57.)</i> <u>Critical Essay II <i>Beloved</i> TBA</u>
TH	3/2	Edgar Allan Poe, <i>The Narrative of A. Gordon Pym of Nantucket</i> <i>Chapters 7-12; (pp. 57- 98.)</i>
TU	3/7	Edgar Allan Poe, <i>The Narrative of A. Gordon Pym of Nantucket</i>

TH 3/9 *Chapters 13-18; (pp. 98-136.)*
Edgar Allan Poe, The Narrative of A. Gordon Pym of Nantucket
Chapters 19-25; pp. (136-175.)
Quiz 3, EAP, Gordon Pym

March 13--17 SPRING BREAK

TU 3/21 Mat Johnson, *Pym, chapters 1-6.*

TH 3/23 Mat Johnson, *Pym, chapters 7-11.*

TU 3/28 Mat Johnson, *Pym, chapters 12-17*

TH 3/30 Mat Johnson, *Pym, chapters 18-24*

TU 4/4 Quiz 4, Mat Johnson, Pym

TH 4/6 Colson Whitehead, *The Underground Railroad*
Critical Essay III, (TBA)

TU 4/11 Colson Whitehead, *The Underground Railroad*

TH 4/13 Colson, Whitehead, *The Underground Railroad*

TU 4/18 Colson, Whitehead, *The Underground Railroad*

TH 4/20 Colson Whitehead, *The Underground Railroad, conclusion*
Quiz 5, *Underground Railroad*