

Contemporary African American Women's Fiction

SPRING 2014

Professor Matt Richardson

E376M (36190), AFR 372E, WGS 340

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Contemporary Black Women Writers: Speculative Fiction of the African Diaspora --

In this course, we will examine the novels 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 the future? In this course, we will use the work of history, critical race theory, queer theory and feminist theories to assist our exploration of these questions and issues.

Grading Policy

Two short papers (4-6 pages each) 20% each 40% total

Close Reading Assignments (no longer than 1pg)20%

Final Paper (8-10 pages) 20% due date missing

Attendance and participation 20%

Required 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**

***Fledgling* by Octavia Butler**

Course Reader: Readers are available at Jenn's Copy on Guadalupe and 21st St.

Course Requirements:

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 short response papers for most texts this semester. Response papers are brief (one page maximum!) discussions of a particular passage due 6pm the day before it will be discussed in class. They will be submitted to the course blog at blackwomenwriters.wordpress.com

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.

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.

Students with Disabilities: Any student with a documented disability (physical or cognitive) who requires academic accommodations should contact the

Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Office of the Dean of Students at 471-6259 (voice) or 471-4641 (TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing) as soon as possible to request an official letter outlining authorized accommodations.

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

WEEK 1	
T 1/14	Introduction
TH 1/16	FILM Daughter's of the Dust
WEEK 2	
T 1/21	FILM Daughter's of the Dust
TH 1/23	Discussion of Film "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. Excerpt from Finding Soul on the Path of Orisa
WEEK 3	
T 1/28	"The Spirits" from Introduction to African Religion by John S. Mbiti, Heinemann Educational Books pgs 71-81.
	"Concept of Time" and "The Nature of God" from African Religions and Philosophy by John S. Mbiti, Heinemann Educational Books pgs 15-38.
TH 1/30	Brown Girl in the Ring; Close Reading of Daughters of the Dust Due
WEEK 4	
T 2/4	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.
TH 2/6	Brown Girl in the Ring; and M. Jacqui Alexander, "Pedagogies of the Sacred: Making the Invisible Tangible," from <i>Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory and the Sacred</i> , Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005, 287-300; Close Reading of Brown Girl in the Ring Due
WEEK 5	
T 2/11	Finish Brown Girl in the Ring
TH 2/13	FIRST SHORT PAPER DUE

WEEK 6	
T2/18	Eve's Bayou
TH 2/20	Eve's Bayou
WEEK 7	
T 2/25	Discussion of Eve's Bayou and Start <i>Erzulie's Skirt</i> , <i>The Secrets of Voodoo</i>
TH 2/27	Erzulie's Skirt and "Ezili" from <i>Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn</i> by Karen McCarthy Brown, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991, 220-257.
WEEK 8	
T 3/4	Erzulie's Skirt; Close Reading of Erzulie's Skirt Due
TH 3/6	Erzulie's Skirt
WEEK 9	Spring Break
T 3/11	
TH 3/13	
WEEK 10	
T 3/18	Beloved
TH3/20	Beloved
WEEK 11	
T 3/25	Beloved
TH 3/27	Beloved, Close Reading of Beloved Due
WEEK 12	
T 4/1	Film Beloved, Second Short Paper Due
TH 4/3	Film Beloved
WEEK 13	
T 4/8	Film Beloved
TH 4/10	Discussion of Film Beloved, Start Parable of the Sower
WEEK 14	
T 4/15	Parable of the Sower
TH 4/17	Parable of the Sower, Close Reading of Parable Due
WEEK 15	
T 4/22	Fledgling
TH 4/24	Fledgling

WEEK 16	
T 4/29	Individual Meetings with Professor
TH 5/1	Individual Meetings with Professor