

CONTEMPORARY BLACK WOMEN WRITERS: SPECULATIVE FICTION OF THE AFRICAN DIASPORA

SPRING 2016

Professor Matt Richardson

E376M, AFR 372E, WGS 340

Office Hours W 10-11:30

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

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%

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 1 inch margins. 4-6 pages. **Prompts are available on the course blog at blackwomenwriters.wordpress.com**

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. **Submit them 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 1 inch margins. 8-10 pages

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

NO LATE PAPERS.

No computers, telephones or pads in class except to read the class material.

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 One	Assignment/Event
W 1/20	CLASSES BEGIN INTRODUCTION
F 1/22	"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 Two	
M 1/25	FILM: Daughters of the Dust
W 1/27	Discussion Daughters of the Dust
F 1/29	Daughters of the Dust Discussion; "The Spirits" from Introduction to African Religion by John S. Mbiti, Heinemann Educational Books pgs 71-81 and "Concept of Time" and "The Nature of God" from African Religions and Philosophy by John S. Mbiti, Heinemann Educational Books pgs 15-38. Close Reading of Daughters of the Dust Due 6pm on Sunday
Week Three	
M 2/1	Discussion of Mbiti Reading & Daughters of the Dust
W 2/3	Discuss First 2 Chapters Brown Girl in the Ring
F 2/5	Brown Girl in the Ring
Week Four	
M 2/8	Discuss Brown Girl in the Ring

W 2/10	Discuss 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.
F 2/12	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 Sunday at 6pm
Week Five	
M 2/15	Discuss Brown Girl in the Ring; and M. Jacqui Alexander, "Pedagogies of the Sacred: Making the Invisible Tangible,"
W 2/17	FIRST SHORT PAPER DUE
F 2/19	FILM EVE'S BAYOU
Week 6	
M 2/22	Eve's Bayou
W 2/24	Discussion of Eve's Bayou
F 2/26	Discussion of Eve's Bayou
Week 7	
M 2/29	Begin Beloved
W 3/2	Beloved
F 3/4	Beloved
Week 8	
M 3/7	Beloved
W 3/9	Beloved
F 3/11	Beloved
Week 9	
M 3/14	SPRING BREAK
W 3/16	
F 3/18	
Week 10	

M 3/21	Film Beloved
W 3/23	Film Beloved
F 3/25	Film Beloved
Week 11	
M 3/28	First 1/2 of Erzulie's Skirt, 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.
W 3/30	Discuss Erzulie's Skirt and "Ezili"
F 4/1	Discuss Second 1/2 of Erzulie's Skirt; Close Reading of Erzulie's Skirt due Sunday 6pm
Week 12	
M 4/4	First 1/2 of Parable of the Sower; SECOND PAPER DUE
W 4/6	Discussion of Parable of the Sower
F 4/8	Parable of the Sower
Week 13	
M 4/11	Finish Parable of the Sower; Close Reading of Parable Due on Sunday at 6pm
W 4/13	Parable of the Sower; From Darkmatter, Jewelle Gomez, "Chicago, 1927"
F 4/15	Finish "Chicago, 1927"
Week 14	
M 4/18	Begin Fledgling -- First 3 Chapters
W 4/20	Fledgling; Audre Lorde, Uses of the Erotic
F 4/22	Fledgling
Week 15	
M 4/25	Finish Fledgling; Abstract for Final Paper Due Sunday 6pm
W 4/27	Film Pumzi
F 4/29	Film
Week 16	
M 5/2	Final Paper Individual Meeting
W 5/4	Final Paper Individual Meeting LAST DAY OF CLASSES
F5/6	Review