

# PERFORMING BLACK AUTHORS: GWENDOLYN BROOKS FALL 2017

AFR372E 30495 | TD357T 26192 | E349S 35580 | WGS340 46860  
MWF 1:00 UTC 2.132

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*“This is the urgency: Live!  
and have your blooming in the noise of the whirlwind.”*

*--Gwendolyn Brooks*

**DESCRIPTION:** This course is an examination of the poetry and prose of Gwendolyn Brooks, along with scholarly responses to her work. The course rests on the premise that embodied knowledge expands our understanding of literature and of ourselves. Students will engage in a series of experiences designed to deepen their artistic impulses and align those impulses with their intellectual understandings.

**OBJECTIVES:** Upon completion of this course the students should be able to adapt prose fiction for performance, work collaboratively on the creation of a production, create aesthetic scholarship, use Black Feminist theory as a performance strategy, and identify the major elements in the poetry and prose of Gwendolyn Brooks.

## **TEXTS**

Course Packets are available at the University Coop, 2246 Guadalupe.

All other readings are available on Canvas.

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

### *Solo Performance*

You will create a 30 to 60-second individual performance that includes three excerpts: 1) *Maud Martha*, 2) Brooks' poetry, and 3) scholarship about Brooks' work. This performance is to be an embodied response to Brooks in which you employ your voice, body, and spirit. You will be assessed on your ability to effectively blend the three texts and to imaginatively physicalize the work.

### *Chamber Theatre/Aesthetic Scholarship Script*

Individually, you will create a 3 to 5-page script that combines excerpts from *Maud Martha*, Brooks' poetry, and scholarship about Brooks' work. The poetry and scholarship should augment the novel, with the novel serving as the core of the script. The script must have roles for each member of your ensemble (including yourself), and ensemble members may take on more than one role. The script should demonstrate your understanding of narrative techniques, polyphony and choral work, the cultural and political specifics of the novel, and the role of aesthetics in scholarship. Along with the script itself, include a copy of the three original works from which you have created your script. A format for creating the script will be distributed in class. The script should be emailed to me on 23 October before 1:00 p.m.

### *Dramaturgical Analysis*

After your ensemble has chosen one script for continued exploration, each ensemble member will write a dramaturgical analysis in one of the following areas: Political Context (social climate, relevant legislation); Artifacts (objects mentioned); Persons/Places/Events; Aesthetic/Spiritual Context (fashion, religion, music, film, architecture); Social Norms (gendered, racialized, and class expectations). Your dramaturgical analysis should reference whichever poems and novel chapters are included in the script. The dramaturgical analysis should be emailed to me on 6 November before 1:00 p.m.

### *Chamber Theatre/Aesthetic Scholarship Ensemble Performance*

Your ensemble will present a 10 to 15-minute production of the script you have selected. Your production should be informed by the dramaturgical analyses that each ensemble member conducted. Attention should be given to historical details, use of space, relationship to the audience, and individual commitment and focus. Your ensemble will receive a grade for the overall production, and each ensemble member will receive an individual grade for their efforts in making the production a success.

### *2-Minute Essay*

You will write five pop essays based on the course readings. You will have two minutes to complete the essay. This assignment is designed to encourage you to focus on key ideas in the readings and in the course.

### *Participation*

Your participation in the course is divided into three areas:

1. In-Class Discussion

Offering your comments in class is a vital way of developing your analytical skills. You will be encouraged to actively participate in class so

that you build your confidence and clarity in expressing yourself with others.

2. In-Class Collaboration

A significant aspect of both Black Feminist pedagogy and art-making require community-building. You will have opportunities to strengthen your ability to build community across identity markers. You will be assessed on your ability to listen, to demonstrate radical empathy, to acknowledge how your privilege may be shaping an interaction, to offer honest commentary with respect and humility, and to actively engage in exercises.

3. Attendance at Two Performance Events

- a. *Ocean*, Vortex Theatre 2307 Manor Road, 31 August, 8:00 pm
- b. TBD

*Attendance*

Your attendance has a direct impact on everyone in class; we rely on each other to create strong art and to establish a healthy community. More than two unexcused absences will result in lowering your final score for the course. If you arrive more than 10 minutes late to class or leave class early, you will be marked as absent.

**POINT VALUES**

Solo Performance	10 pts.
Script	15
Dramaturgical Analysis	20
Ensemble Performance	
Ensemble	15
Individual	10
Two-minute Essays (5/2pts)	10
Participation	
Collaboration	5
Class discussion	5
Performance Events	
<i>Ocean</i>	5
TBD	5
TOTAL	100 pts.

**COURSE GUIDELINES**

*Classroom Protocols*

\*No electronic devices may be used during class time.

\*We will create and observe guidelines for hearty, respectful collaboration.

\*Bring the course packets to every class period.

*For Assignments*

\*Students will observe the University of Texas Honor Code: 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.

\*Late assignments will not be accepted.

\*Emergencies and illness that prevent you from attending class or submitting assignments must be documented.

\*I will strive to return graded material within two weeks of submission.

\*Grade disputes must be initiated within seven calendar days from the receipt of the grades. After that time, disputes will not be considered.

*Course Support*

\*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 512-471-6259 (voice), or 512-410-6644 (video phone), or at <http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/>

\*Sanger Learning Center: <https://ugs.utexas.edu/slc>

\*University Writing Center: <http://uwc.utexas.edu/>

\*Counseling & Mental Health Center: <http://cmhc.utexas.edu/>

\*Student Emergency Services: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/>

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

### **WEEK 1 COURSE FOUNDATIONS**

- Aug 30 Black Feminist Performance, Brooks, Aesthetic Scholarship  
31 Attend *Ocean*: Vortex Theatre, 2307 Manor Road, 8:00 pm  
Sep 1 Guest Workshop—Sharon Bridgforth

### **WEEK 2 THE POETRY OF GWENDOLYN BROOKS**

- 4 HOLIDAY- Labor Day  
6 “A Street in Bronzeville” pp. 3-59  
8 “Annie Allen” pp. 63-124

### **WEEK 3 COMMENTARY ON BROOKS’ POETRY**

- 11 “The Bean Eaters” pp. 309 - 369; “In the Mecca” pp. 374 - 426  
13 Exploration w/ *Queenhood*  
15 Exploration w/ *Black Women Writers at Work*

### **WEEK 4 THE WORLD OF GWENDOLYN BROOKS**

- 18 *Maud Martha*, pp. 127 - 190  
20 *Maud Martha*, pp. 191 - 252  
22 *Maud Martha*, pp. 253 - 306

### **WEEK 5 COMMENTARY ON BROOKS’ NOVEL**

- 25 Explorations  
27 Explorations w/ “An Order of Constancy” & “Nuance and the Novella”  
29 Explorations w/ “Domestic Epic Warfare” & “Taming All that Anger”

### **WEEK 6 SOLO AESTHETIC SCHOLARSHIP PERFORMANCES**

OCT 2 **Solo Performances**

4 **Solo Performances**

6 **Solo Performances**

**WEEK 7 STAGING VISIONS**

9 Black Feminist Politics: View *A Place of Rage* In Class

11 Black Feminist Aesthetics: View *Conjure Women* In Class

13 Explorations

**WEEK 8 THE NATURE OF CHAMBER THEATRE**

16 Staging Narration, Time, Point of View, Perspective

18 Explorations

20 Explorations

**WEEK 9 CHAMBER THEATRE SCRIPTS**

23 **Chamber Theatre/Aesthetic Scholarship Scripts Due**

25 Select Scripts

27 Select Scripts; scripts chosen

**WEEK 10 WORKSHOPPING SCRIPTS**

30 Guest Workshop—Shirley Jo Finney

NOV 1 Script analysis, Casting

3 Script Analysis, Casting

**WEEK 11 DRAMATURGICAL ANALYSES**

6 **Dramaturgical Analyses Due**

8 Dramaturgical Discussions

10 Dramaturgical Discussions

**WEEK 12 REHEARSALS**

- 13 Rehearsal
- 15 Rehearsal
- 17 Rehearsal (with feedback)

**WEEK 13 REHEARSALS**

- 20 Rehearsal (with feedback)
- 22 Thanksgiving Break
- 24 Thanksgiving Break

**WEEK 14 REHEARSALS**

- 27 Rehearsal
- 29 Rehearsal
- DEC 1 Rehearsal

**WEEK 15 FINAL PRESENTATIONS**

- 4 **Aesthetic Scholarship/Chamber Theatre Presentations**
- 6 **Aesthetic Scholarship/Chamber Theatre Presentations**
- 8 **Aesthetic Scholarship/Chamber Theatre Presentations**

**WEEK 16 SUMMATION**

- 11 Review of the Course