

***CONTEMPORARY BLACK WOMEN WRITERS: SPECULATIVE FICTION OF THE  
AFRICAN DIASPORA***

FALL 2018

Professor Matt Richardson

E376M/AFR 372E

**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.

**Course Requirements:**

**Office Hours:** Students are encouraged 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 and Participation:** Students are expected to attend class every session. Participation in all aspects of the class is MANDATORY including short in-class writing assignments that will happen throughout the semester. 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 15% 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 1 unexcused absence during the semester.

**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 on a Sunday before it will be discussed in class. Submit them to the course blog at [blackwomenwriters.wordpress.com](http://blackwomenwriters.wordpress.com). Collectively, they are worth 20% of your total grade.

**Midterm and Final:** The midterm and final papers are designed to assess students' accumulated knowledge. The final will be a take home exam. Papers must be TYPED, double-spaced, with times new roman (or equivalent) 12 point font and 1 inch margins.

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

<http://canvas.utexas.edu/>

#### NO LATE PAPERS. NO LAPTOPS. NO CELL PHONES

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.

#### Required Books:

Toni Morrison, *Beloved*

Octavia Butler, *Parable Of The Sower*

Ana Maurine Lara, *Erzulie's Skirt*

Nalo Hopkinson *Brown Girl In The Ring*

Jewelle Gomez, *The Gilda Stories : Expanded 25th Anniversary Edition*

Toni Cade Bambara, *The Salt Eaters*

Books are available at the University CO-OP and the Course Reader is available at Jenn's Copy at Guadalupe St. (512) 473-8669. Please note that there are some required readings that are not in the course reader or the main texts. They will be available online or as handouts in class.

#### Grading Policy

Midterm Paper (6 pages )	30%
Blog Posts/Close Reading	20%
Final Paper (10 pages)	35%
Attendance & Participation	15%

Week One	
30-Aug	INTRODUCTION
Week Two	
4-Sep	“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. Film: Daughters of the Dust
6-Sep	Film: Daughters of the Dust
Week Three	
11-Sep	Film Daughters of the Dust 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
September 13	Discussion of Mbiti and Daughters of the Dust;
Week Four	
18-Sep	Brown Girl in the Ring; 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
20-Sep	Brown Girl in the Ring; 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.
Week Five	
25-Sep	Discuss Brown Girl in the Ring; and M. Jacqui Alexander, “Pedagogies of the Sacred: Making the Invisible Tangible,”
27-Sep	Film: Eve's Bayou
Week Six	

2-Oct	Eve's Bayou
4-Oct	Discussion of Eve's Bayou
Week Seven	
9-Oct	Beloved
11-Oct	Beloved
Week Eight	
16-Oct	Beloved: Midterm Paper Due
18-Oct	First 1/2 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.
Week Nine	
23-Oct	Second 1/2 Discuss Erzulie's Skirt and "Ezili"; Close Reading of Erzulie's Skirt due Sunday 6pm
25-Oct	Finish Erzulie's Skirt; First 1/2 of Parable of the Sower
Week Ten	
30-Oct	Discussion of Parable of the Sower
1-Nov	Finish Parable of the Sower; Close Reading of Parable Due on Sunday at 6pm Octavia Butler, Parable of the Sower; Start Jewelle Gomez, The Gilda Stories
Week Eleven	
6-Nov	The Gilda Stories
8-Nov	The Gilda Stories; Close Reading of The Gilda Stories Due 6pm Sunday
Week Twelve	
13-Nov	The Salt Eaters; Invisible Southern Black Women Leaders in the Civil Rights Movement: The Triple Constraints of Gender, Race, and Class, Bernice McNair Barnett
15-Nov	The Salt Eaters; Combahee River Collective Statement
Week Thirteen	
20-Nov	Thanksgiving
22-Nov	Thanksgiving
Week Fourteen	
27-Nov	The Salt Eaters

29-Nov	Film: Pumzi, Brujas Princess Nokia; The Ibeji; Close Reading of The Salt Eaters Due 6pm Sunday
Week Fifteen	
4-Dec	Dirty Computer
6-Dec	Film: Oya: Rise of the Orisha
8-Dec	Final Paper Due by 5pm