

E 376M • Contemporary African American Women's Fiction

Instructor: Byrnes, D.

Unique #: 35205 / 30130 / 44800

Semester: Fall 2019

Cross-lists: AFR 372E / WGS 340

Areas: G. Diverse Perspectives

Flags: Writing

Restrictions:

Computer Instruction:

Description: In this course, we will examine the novels, films, and art of women of African descent produced from the 1980s to the present. We will focus on how African and African Diasporic women writers, filmmakers, and artists reimagine the past, present, and future, paying particular attention to Black speculative arts as they relate to environment, trauma, race, gender, and resistance. We will strengthen our understanding of these texts through discussions of history, and a range of theoretical approaches, including cultural studies, feminist theory, and gender & sexuality studies.

Texts: Toni Morrison, *Beloved*; Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower*; Jesmyn Ward, *Sing, Unburied, Sing*; Nnedi Okorafor, *Binti*; Rivers Solomon, *An Unkindness of Ghosts*, Kasi Lemmons, *Harriet* (film)

Note: Additional short readings will be made available on Canvas or distributed in class.

Requirements & Grading

In order to receive a passing mark for the course, regardless of the student's performance on other assignments or total average of the student's grades, all major assignments (Dialogue Essay; 3x Short Essays; Research Paper) must be completed to the instructor's satisfaction. Note: All papers must be formatted according to the **MLA Style Guide**, available online and in-print through UT Libraries.

Final Research Paper (8-10 pages)

Through discussion with instructor, each student will develop a research topic relating to contemporary African American women's cultural production (literature, film, photography, television). Prior to the submission of the final paper, students will develop an Annotated Bibliography and a Paper Draft, which they will revise based on instructor feedback.

Dialogue Essay (5 pages)

For this essay, students will draw on both creative and critical skills to write a 4-page dialogue on the topic of *freedom*, between two literary characters we have spent time with up to this point. To accompany this essay, students will write a 1-page statement reflecting on the dialogue they've created.

Short Essays (3 x 2 pages)

Students will write (1) close-reading essay; (2) a "keyword" essay in which each student will propose a new "keyword" for the study of contemporary African American women's literature—that is, a concept or word that is important for twenty-first-century readers to understand this literary tradition; and (3) a BuzzFeed listicle related to course themes (e.g. "10 Songs Binti Would Listen To in Space").

Scholarly Book Review (2-3 pages)

Guided by your own interests, you will choose a scholarly book about Black women's fiction and write a critical review of it.

Discussion Posts & Responses (3 of each)

Throughout the semester and at a time of the student's choosing, everyone will compose three discussion posts of 300-500 words (which will be posted to our course Canvas site and made accessible to fellow classmates). Additionally, students will offer concise 100-200 word responses to one classmate's post following each discussion post due date (for a total of 3 comments over the semester).

Attendance & Participation

Your ideas, insights, and questions are what will animate this discussion-based class. Participation grades will be based on thoughtful and respectful contributions to class discussion; active listening to peers; coming prepared with notes and questions, and completion of the occasional short assignment.

Grading

Final Research Paper (8-10 pages), including Draft & Annotated Bibliography	30%
Dialogue Essay (5 pages)	15%
3x Short Essays (2 pages each)	15%
Three discussion posts & three responses	10%
Scholarly Book Review (2-3 pages)	10%
Attendance & Participation (including homework & in-class assignments)	20%

Final grades will be determined on the following scale. Please note: To ensure fairness, all numbers are absolute, and will not be rounded up or down at any stage. For example, a B- will be inclusive of all scores of 80.0000 through 83.9999. 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

Schedule

*Note: schedule is subject to change.

Week	Date	Readings	Assignments Due
1	W 8/28	Course Introductions	
	F 8/30	Audre Lorde, "Power" and "Poetry is Not a Luxury"	
2	M 9/2	Labor Day. No class.	
	W 9/4	"The Site of Memory" & "Black Matters" (excerpt from <i>Playing in the Dark</i>)	One-Paragraph Close-Reading due
	F 9/6	<i>Beloved</i> by Toni Morrison (pg. 1-33)	
3	M 9/9	<i>Beloved</i> (pg. 34-100)	
	W 9/11	<i>Beloved</i> (pg. 101-146)	
	F 9/13	<i>Beloved</i> (147-186)	Discussion Post #1 due by 6pm
4	M 9/16	<i>Beloved</i> (187-256)	
	W 9/18	<i>Beloved</i> (257-end)	Discussion Post #1 response due
	F 9/20	Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins"	
5	M 9/23	Selections from Kara Walker (visual artist)	Short Essay #1 (Close-Reading) due
	W 9/25	FILM (in class): <i>Lemonade</i> by Beyoncé Knowles-Carter & bell hooks, "A Place Where the Soul Can Rest"	
	F 9/27	<i>Lemonade</i> & Audre Lorde, "The Uses of Anger"	Discussion Post #2 due by 6pm

6	M 9/30	<i>Parable of the Sower</i> by Octavia Butler (ch. 1-4) & bell hooks "Earthbound: On Solid Ground"	
	W 10/2	<i>Parable of the Sower</i> (ch. 5-12)	Discussion Post #2 response due
	F 10/4	<i>Parable of the Sower</i> (ch. 13-15)	
7	M 10/7	<i>Parable of the Sower</i> (ch. 16-20)	Scholarly Book Review due
	W 10/9	<i>Parable of the Sower</i> (ch. 21-23)	
	F 10/11	<i>Parable of the Sower</i> (ch. 24-end)	
8	M 10/14	<i>Sing, Unburied, Sing</i> by Jesmyn Ward (ch. 1-3)	
	W 10/16	<i>Sing, Unburied, Sing</i> (ch. 4-5)	
	F 10/18	<i>Sing, Unburied, Sing</i> (ch. 6-7)	
9	M 10/21	<i>Sing, Unburied, Sing</i> (ch. 8-10)	Short Essay #2 (Reading Response) due
	W 10/23	<i>Sing, Unburied, Sing</i> (11-end)	
	F 10/25	LaToya Ruby Frazier, selections from <i>The Notion of Family</i> and <i>Flint is Family</i> (photography)	
10	M 10/28	<i>Binti</i> by Nnedi Okorafor, p. 1-46	Dialogue Essay due
	W 10/30	<i>Binti</i> & Okorafor, p. 47-end; & TED Talk	
	F 11/1	Introduction to Final Research Essay	Discussion Post #3 due by 6pm
11	M 11/4	<i>An Unkindness of Ghosts</i> (ch. 1-5)	
	W 11/6	<i>An Unkindness of Ghosts</i> (ch. 6-8)	Discussion Post #3 response due
	F 11/8	<i>An Unkindness of Ghosts</i> (ch. 9-12)	
12	M 11/11	<i>An Unkindness of Ghosts</i> (13-17)	Short Essay #3 ("Keyword") due
	W 11/13	<i>An Unkindness of Ghosts</i> (18-22)	
	F 11/15	<i>An Unkindness of Ghosts</i> (23-end)	
13	M 11/18	<i>Harriet</i> (film, in theaters) by Kasi Lemmons	Annotated Bibliography due
	W 11/20	<i>Harriet</i> & bell hooks, "Representations of Whiteness"	
	F 11/22	In-Class Writing Workshop	
14	M 11/25	Student Conferences. No class meeting.	Research Question due via email
	11/27-11/29	Thanksgiving Break	
15	M 12/2	In-Class Peer Review	Research Paper Draft due
	W 12/4	FILM (in-class): <i>Dirty Computer</i> by Janelle Monáe & Audre Lorde, "The Master's Tools"	
	F 12/6	<i>Dirty Computer</i>	
16	M 12/9	Course Wrap-Up	
	Th 12/12		Final Research Paper due

Policies: *Documented Disability Statement:* 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 471-6259 (voice) or 232-2937 (video phone), or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd>.

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.

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>.

Religious Holy Days: By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of a pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, I will give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Web Site: canvas.utexas.edu