



English 353

African American Literature to the  
Harlem Renaissance

Fall 2008

Line nos. 81154 (English) 71631 (African American Studies)

TTh 1:30-2:45pm Cowden 218

Instructor: Prof. Joe Lockard  
209 LL  
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480-727-6096 [do not leave voicemail]

Office Hours: TTh 10:30am-12 noon and 3-5pm, or by appointment

**Course Texts** (in reading order)

Phillis Wheatley, *Complete Writings* (Penguin)  
Henry Louis Gates, *The Trials of Phillis Wheatley* (Basic)  
Jeffrey Brace, *The Blind African Slave, or the Memoirs of Boyrereau Brinch* (Wisconsin)  
Henry Louis Gates, *The Classic Slave Narratives* (Signet)  
David Walker, *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World* (Pennsylvania State)  
Charles Chesnutt, *The Marrow of Tradition* (Penguin)  
W.E.B. DuBois, *Souls of Black Folk* (Dover)  
Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (Harper)

**Online Texts**

Boston King, *Memoirs of Boston King, A Black Preacher* [[http://antislavery.eserver.org/narratives/boston\\_king/](http://antislavery.eserver.org/narratives/boston_king/)]  
Ida Wells-Barnett, *The Red Book* [<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/14977/14977-h/14977-h.htm>]

**Course Description**

It is an intellectual and historical commonplace today that African American literature is central to an informed understanding of American literature and culture. Yet one of the persistent features of our understanding of African American literature is that it arose relatively late in US history.

This course emphasizes that the origins of African American literature lie in the eighteenth century, and that this literature echoed with many issues that have troubled the American republic since its foundation. Using recent scholarship and

newly-available materials, the course traces out the transatlantic advent of African American literature in narratives and poetry. It later examines the post-Reconstruction use of the novel to dramatize and oppose white supremacy. We shall locate further expression of this literary resistance in the prose and rhetoric of anti-lynching campaigns that energized African American political life in the late nineteenth century. The readings conclude with W.E.B. DuBois and Zora Neale Hurston, and their perspectives on the problem of the 'color line' in the early twentieth century.

### **Course Films** (in screening order)

*Frederick Douglass: When the Lion Wrote History*. Orlando Bagwell (dir.); 1994.  
*Roots of Resistance: A Story of the Underground Railroad*. Orlando Bagwell (dir.); 1990.  
*Ida B. Wells: A Passion for Justice*. William Greaves (dir.); 1989.

### **Course Requirements**

- Two five-page papers [20 percent each, 40 percent total]
- Take-home midterm exam [20 percent]
- Take-home final exam [30 percent]
- Participation [10 percent] (based on instructor evaluation)

### **Attendance**

Attendance is required throughout the course. Two absences without prior excuse will result in the lowering of a student's final course grade by one letter. Four absences will result in failure. Attendance sign-in will be taken at all class meetings. Medical excuses must be documented.

### **Reading**

A complete knowledge of the day's assigned reading is required. This course is predicated on give-and-take discussion, and without a reading knowledge of the text it is difficult or impossible to participate meaningfully in class discussions. This is more than a standard syllabus clause; it is a matter of respect towards the class discussion, and in a larger sense, respect towards the history this literature embodies.

### **Office Hours**

Students will be required to attend one 15-minute office hours session early in the semester. The purpose of these sessions is to discuss coursework, paper assignments, and any questions you might have. Large universities need personalization; no one will disappear into anonymity.

Office hours sign-up lists will be passed around at class meetings. To cancel a scheduled appointment, send me an e-mail note. It is poor form to skip an appointment without prior notice. If I must cancel an office appointment, I will try to notify you by e-mail.

Please feel encouraged to visit without an appointment during office hours, to discuss coursework or just to chat.

### **Course Electronics**

There is a MyASU course-site for this course. Course materials will be posted there regularly, including lecture materials and section discussion summaries. Consult the English 353 MyASU site regularly, visible and accessible via your MyASU homepage.

*E-mail instructions.* All class e-mail from the instructor will be generated from the course site, and MyASU sends e-mail to university addresses. Since e-mail will not be delivered to non-university addresses, please check your university e-mail regularly and correspond with the instructor from that same address. I cannot accept responsibility for ensuring e-mail receipt at non-university addresses.

### **Writing**

Your writing is a crucial element of your success in this course. I will be available in office hours to discuss paper ideas, and to read and comment on paper drafts. For in-depth editorial work on your writing, visit the Writing Center at LL340 or call them for a tutorial appointment at (480) 965-4272.

High rates of plagiarism have been noticeable recently in English literature courses. Plagiarism violates the ASU Student Code of Conduct, available online at: <http://www.asu.edu/aad/manuals/sta/sta104-01.html>. I treat plagiarism with utmost seriousness and follow university procedures to resolve such problems. Paper assignments will be formulated to reduce possibilities for plagiarism and better guarantee a fair opportunity to all students.

### Grades

Grades are an archaic form of evaluation, and better forms of evaluation can be employed. However, your instructor appreciates having a salary and this course gives honest grades using clear criteria. Those criteria appear in every assignment.

You have the right to query or challenge any grade given during this course, *without concern for making the request*. Upon receiving a grade query, I will either raise or confirm the grade. A good number of grade queries accompanied by a substantive reason do receive a positive response. Please remember that a grade constitutes an evaluation of the work, not of the person.

Occasionally, at my discretion, I may decline to grade work and return it to a student if the grade would be a failure. In this event, the student will be requested to re-submit an improved version of the work within a specified brief period. This policy is in place because the instructor prefers not to give failing grades.

### Honors

I will give section 18s to Barrett Honors College students. Please talk with me after class early in the course.

### Accommodations

If you have a learning variation that makes class-work or assignments difficult, please let me know and we will arrange for an accommodation. If certain instructional styles work better for you than others, please let me know: e.g., if you need handouts in large print, if certain visual formats are more difficult for you to understand than others, if all printed material needs to be in black and white instead of colors, etc. Such accommodation requests should be made at the beginning of the semester.

This is a child-friendly class. If you have a child-care emergency or arrangements problem that otherwise might prevent you from coming to class, please bring your children to class (remember the crayons to occupy them!) and we shall be delighted to see your family.

### Detailed Schedule

- *This schedule is subject to adjustments and alterations, which will be announced both in class and online.*
- *Readings are due at the class meeting on the assignment date specified. Specific page references will be provided in class.*
- *Bold numbers in square brackets refer to class session number.*

Tuesday, August 26 [1]

Introduction

Thursday, August 28 [2] **Three Eighteenth-Century Transatlantic Voyagers: Equiano, King and Brace**

Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano (Gates)

Tuesday, September 2 [3]

Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano (Gates)

Thursday, September 4 [4]

Boston King, Memoirs (online)

Tuesday, September 9 [5]

Brace, The Blind African Slave

Thursday, September 11 [6]

Brace, The Blind African Slave  
Paper 1 assigned

Tuesday, September 16 [7] **“An Intrinsic Ardor Prompts to Write”: A Life in the Early Republic**

Gates, The Trials of Phillis Wheatley  
Wheatley, Collected Works

Thursday, September 18 [8]

Wheatley, Collected Works

Tuesday, September 23 [9]

Wheatley, Collected Works  
Paper 1 due

Thursday, September 25 [10] **“We Feel Ourselves  
Sensibly Aggrieved”: Philadelphia’s Black  
Community and the Yellow Fever**

Newman, Freedom’s Prophet (selection  
online)  
Allen & Jones, Narrative (online)

Tuesday, September 30 [11] **“We Coloured People of  
the United States”: David Walker**

Walker, Appeal

Thursday, October 2 [12]

Walker, Appeal

Tuesday, October 7 [13] **“I Would Pour Out My  
Soul’s Complaint”: Frederick Douglass**

Douglass, Narrative (Gates)

Thursday, October 9 [14]

Douglass, Narrative (Gates)

Tuesday, October 14 [15]

Screen *Frederick Douglass: When the Lion Wrote  
History*. Orlando Bagwell (dir.); 1994.

Thursday, October 16 [16] **“Why Does the Slave Ever  
Love?”: Harriet Jacobs**

Jacobs, Incidents  
Take-home midterm exam

Tuesday, October 21 [17]

Jacobs, Incidents

Thursday, October 23 [18] **Underground Railroad  
Narratives**

Read selections from William Still, *The  
Underground Railroad* (online)  
Screen *Roots of Resistance: A Story of the  
Underground Railroad*.

Tuesday, October 25 [19] **Anti-Lynching Literature:  
Wells and Chesnut**

Screen *Ida B. Wells: A Passion for Justice*.  
William Greaves (dir.); 1989.

Thursday, October 30 [20]

Wells-Barnett, Red Record (online)

Tuesday, November 4 [21]

Chesnutt, Marrow of Tradition

Thursday, November 6 [22]

Chesnutt, Marrow of Tradition

Tuesday, November 13 [23]

Chesnutt, Marrow of Tradition

Thursday, November 18 [24] **“Up the New Path the  
Advance Guard Toiled”: W.E.B. DuBois**

DuBois, Souls of Black Folk

Tuesday, November 20 [25]

DuBois, Souls of Black Folk  
Paper 2 assigned

Thursday, November 25 [26] **“She Called in Her  
Soul”: Zora Neale Hurston**

Hurston, Their Eyes Were Watching God

Tuesday, December 2 [27]

Hurston, Their Eyes Were Watching God

Tuesday, December 4 [28]

Hurston, Their Eyes Were Watching God

Tuesday, December 9 [29]

Reserve Day  
Paper 2 due  
Final class – take-home final exam