



English 353
African American Literature to the
Harlem Renaissance
Fall 2006

This course is dedicated to a former student, Uri Grossman, a Huckleberry Finn in another land. May his memory be for a blessing.

Line no. 36971 (English)
64720 (African American Studies)

TTh 9:15-10:30am Cowden 218

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

Office Hours: TTh 2-5, or by appointment

Course Texts (in reading order)

Henry Louis Gates, *The Classic Slave Narratives* (Signet)
Jeffrey Brace, *The Blind African Slave, or the Memoirs of Boyrereau Brinch* (Wisconsin)
Phillis Wheatley, *Complete Writings* (Penguin)
Henry Louis Gates, *The Trials of Phillis Wheatley* (Basic)
Charles Chesnut, *The Marrow of Tradition* (Penguin)
W.E.B. DuBois, *Souls of Black Folk* (Dover)
Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (Harper)
Course Reader.

Online Texts

Boston King, *Memoirs of Boston King, A Black Preacher* [http://antislavery.eserver.org/narratives/boston_king/]
Absalom Jones, 'A Thanksgiving Sermon' [<http://antislavery.eserver.org/religious/absalomjones/>]
William Miller, 'A Sermon on the Abolition of the Slave Trade'
[<http://antislavery.eserver.org/religious/millersermon/>]
George Lawrence, 'An Oration on the Abolition of the Slave Trade' [<http://antislavery.eserver.org/religious/georgelawrence/>]
David Walker, *Walker's Appeal, in Four Articles* [<http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/walker/menu.html>]
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, Zora Neale Hurston, early twentieth-century modernism, and the new perspectives on African American communities.

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)

Unscheduled and unannounced brief text quizzes may be given at any time. Those not present will lose participation credit for the quiz (excepting certified medical absence) and there will be no make-up.

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.

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 section 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. We 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.

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.

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 22 **[1]**

Introduction

Thursday, August 24 **[2] Three Eighteenth-Century Transatlantic Voyagers:
Equiano, King and Brace**

Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano (Gates)

Tuesday, August 29 **[3]**

Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano (Gates)

Thursday, August 31 [4]

Boston King, Memoirs (online)

Tuesday, September 5 [5]

Brace, The Blind African Slave

Thursday, September 7 [6]

Brace, The Blind African Slave
Paper 1 assigned

Tuesday, September 12 [7] **“An Intrinsic Ardor Prompts to Write”:
A Life in the Early Republic**

Gates, The Trials of Phillis Wheatley
Wheatley, Collected Works

Thursday, September 14 [8]

Wheatley, Collected Works

Tuesday, September 19 [9]

Wheatley, Collected Works
Paper 1 due

Thursday, September 21 [10] **“A Scene Fraught with Misery and Horror”:
Three Religious Orations**

Jones, Miller, Lawrence (online)

Tuesday, September 26 [11] **“We Coloured People of the United States”:
David Walker**

Walker, Appeal (online)

Thursday, September 28 [12]

Walker, Appeal

Tuesday, October 3 [13] **“I Would Pour Out My Soul’s Complaint”:
Frederick Douglass**

Douglass, Narrative (Gates)

Thursday, October 5 [14]

Douglass, Narrative (Gates)

Tuesday, October 10 [15]

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

Thursday, October 12 [16] **“Why Does the Slave Ever Love?”:
Harriet Jacobs**

Jacobs, Incidents
Take-home midterm exam

Tuesday, October 17 [17]

Jacobs, Incidents

Thursday, October 19 [18] **Underground Railroad Narratives**

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

Tuesday, October 24 [19] **Anti-Lynching Literature: Wells and Chesnut**

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

Thursday, October 26 [20]

Wells-Barnett, Red Record (online)

Tuesday, October 31 [21]

Chesnutt, Marrow of Tradition

Thursday, November 2 [22]

Chesnutt, Marrow of Tradition

Tuesday, November 7 [23]

Chesnutt, Marrow of Tradition

Thursday, November 9 [24] **“Up the New Path the Advance Guard Toiled”:
W.E.B. DuBois**

DuBois, Souls of Black Folk

Tuesday, November 14 [25]

DuBois, Souls of Black Folk
Paper 2 assigned

Thursday, November 16 [26] **“She Called in Her Soul”:
Zora Neale Hurston**

Hurston, Their Eyes Were Watching God

Tuesday, November 21 [27]

Hurston, Their Eyes Were Watching God

Tuesday, November 28 [28]

Hurston, Their Eyes Were Watching God

Tuesday, November 30 [29]

Reserve Day
Paper 2 due

Tuesday, December 5 [30]

Final class – take-home final exam