

Syllabus, Class Policy Statement, and Schedule

Fall 2018 – E314V / AFR 317F

African American Literature and Culture

Instructor: Adena Rivera-Dundas

Unique number: 35150

Flags: Cultural Diversity, Writing

Class Time and Place: TTH 3:30 pm-5:00 pm PAR 210

Course Website: <https://utexas.instructure.com/courses/1230276>

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course will engage with the rich literary tradition of black female writers, starting with the rise of black feminism in the 1980s and ending with the contemporary moment. As a class, we will read long- and short-form fiction, experimental prose, essays, and poetry in order to investigate ways in which literary form informs, challenges, or is shaped by intersectionality and anti-racist politics. This class will ask students to consider the relationship between race, gender, and literature, and ask what writing and reading can do in the face of sexist and racist systems.

The primary aim of this course is to help students develop and improve the critical reading, writing, and thinking skills needed for success in upper-division courses in English and other disciplines. They will also gain practice in using the Oxford English Dictionary and other online research tools and print resources that support studies in the humanities. Students will learn basic information literacy skills and models for approaching literature with various historical, generic, and cultural contexts in mind.

This course contains a writing flag. The writing assignments in this course are arranged procedurally with a focus on invention, development through instructor and peer feedback, and revision; they will comprise a major part of the final grade.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*. 1988

Butler, Octavia. *Dawn*. 1987

Rankine, Claudia. *Citizen: An American Lyric*. 2014

COURSE GOALS:

In this course, students can expect to:

- Research topics in African American literature and culture, using a range of UT library databases and print sources.
- Explore a wide range of formal and informal strategies for interpreting literary texts. Students will close read texts to construct thoughtful analyses (supported by textual and contextual evidence).
- Become familiar with the challenges (both practical and ethical) involved in researching and writing about historically marginalized and underrepresented groups.
- Produce college-level writing through outlines, reading responses, peer review, self-evaluation, and revision.

COURSE FLAGS:

This course carries both a **Cultural Diversity in the U.S.** flag and a **Writing** flag.

Cultural Diversity courses are designed to increase your familiarity with the variety and richness of the American cultural experience. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from assignments covering the practices, beliefs, and histories of at least one U.S. cultural group that has experienced persistent marginalization.

Writing courses are designed to give students experience with writing in an academic discipline. In this class, you can expect to write regularly during the semester, complete substantial writing projects, and receive feedback from your instructor to help you improve your writing. You will also have the opportunity to revise assignments, and you will be asked to read and discuss your peers' work. You should expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from your written work.

COURSEWORK AND GRADING

You will be graded on the following assignments this term:

Unit Projects (70%)

Project 1: Close Reading Paper	10%
Project 2: Annotated Bibliography	10%
Project 3: Context Paper (with first draft)	20%
Project 4: Argument Paper (with first draft, peer review, and presentation)	30%

Short Assignments (30%)

Six short written exercises	15%
Weekly blog posts	10%
In-class participation	5%

Grades

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+.

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|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| • A = 94-100 | • B = 84-86 | • C = 74-76 | • D = 64-66 |
| • A- = 90-93 | • B- = 80-83 | • C- = 70-73 | • D- = 61-63 |
| • B+ = 87-89 | • C+ = 77-79 | • D+ = 67-69 | • F = 0-60 |

Participation

Because this is a class based on the exchange of ideas, participation is necessary and expected. Your presence, attention, preparation, and willingness to engage are required for your success and the success of your peers. That said, all learning styles are welcome in this classroom.

CLASS POLICIES

Late Work

Work that is submitted past its deadline will drop one letter grade for **every day that it is late**. For example: an assignment due on Sunday at 1 pm will be deducted one letter grade (ex: from an A- to a B-) if turned in before 1 pm on Monday, and two letter grades if turned in before 10 pm on Sunday, etc.

Absences

Attendance is mandatory in this course. After four missed classes, your final grade in the course will go down a complete letter grade for each subsequent missed day.

You will not be penalized for missing class on religious holy days. A student who misses classes or other required activities, including peer review, for the observance of a religious holy day should inform the instructor, in writing, at least one week before the absence, so that alternative arrangements can be made to complete work. If you know you will have to miss class(es) for this reason, provide your instructor with the date(s) as early as possible. Please note that the University specifies very few other excused absences (e.g., jury duty).

If you miss a class, you are responsible for getting notes and assignments from a classmate.

Please let me know as early as possible if your access needs limit your ability to attend class regularly. I'm happy to work with you to make sure you are still able to learn in this class.

Tardiness

Three tardinesses of 15 minutes or more will be counted as one absence. Please let me know as early as possible if your access needs limit your ability to attend class on time. I'm happy to work with you to make sure you are still able to learn in this class.

Email Etiquette

Consider our interactions over email professional communications which require a salutation, message, and sign-off. I will try to respond within 24 hours, but I won't check email between 8 pm and 10 am so plan accordingly.

Technology Policy

Because we will be using some resources on Canvas, you are welcome to bring a laptop or tablet when the reading is digital. However, please be mindful of how distracting computer screens are to you, to your peers, and to me. If your use of technology becomes a distraction to your peers or to me, I will ask you to put it away and you will not receive participation credit for the day. You may not use your phone to access the reading unless you ask me ahead of time. Please leave your phone off for the duration of class.

Weapons Policy

With the exception of concealed handguns, no weapons may be brought into the classroom. This applies to knives, clubs, spears, machetes, metal knuckles, explosive or incendiary devices, and any other device designed to injure or kill people. Course participants with a license to carry a handgun must keep it concealed and on their person at all times. If a gun or any other weapon becomes visible, the person who sees the weapon should leave the classroom and call 911 so that law enforcement personnel can take appropriate action and restore an atmosphere conducive to learning.

Scholastic Honesty

Turning in work that is not your own, or any other form of scholastic dishonesty, will result in a major course penalty, possibly failure of the course. This standard applies to *all* drafts and assignments, and a report of the incident will be submitted to the Office of the Dean of Students and filed in your permanent UT record. Under certain circumstances, the Dean of Students will initiate proceedings to expel you from the University.

Read and understand the *Statement on Scholastic Responsibility*, which can be found online at <http://www.utexas.edu/cola/depts/rhetoric/firstyearwriting/plagiarismcollusion.php>. If you have any doubts about your use of sources, ask for help *before* handing in the assignment.

Accessibility

Your success in this class is important to me. If there are aspects of this course that prevent you from learning or exclude you, please let me know as soon as possible. Together we'll develop strategies to meet both your needs and the course requirements. Any conversations we have about accommodations are confidential.

This class will always strive to be an inclusive space. Learning requires stretching beyond comfort zones and feeling safe is a prerequisite for a good learning environment. As we all bring diverse experiences to our shared classroom, it is imperative that we are all respectful toward one another. There is zero tolerance for slurs, derogatory language, or any other form of discrimination based on race, gender presentation, marital status, religion, disability, age, or sexual orientation.

Everyone in our class has the right to be addressed in accordance with their personal identity. I will ask for your preferred name and pronouns early in the semester, so your peers and I can address you appropriately.

If you find a reading or assignment triggering in any way, or suspect that you will be triggered, please contact me as soon as possible. I am happy to speak with you about the content of the material in advance and/or provide you with an alternative assignment. If you are troubled by or feel unsafe in any class discussion, please speak with me as soon as possible so that we can work to resolve the immediate problem and prevent future issues.

Any student with a documented disability who requires academic accommodations should contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 512-471-6259 (voice) or 1-866-329-3986 (video phone) as soon as possible to request an official letter outlining authorized accommodations. The office is located at SSB 4.206. More information is available on the Services for Students with Disabilities website at <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd>

UT also offers many support services that are available to all students:

- **Student Veteran Services** is online at deanofstudents.utexas.edu/veterans and located at SSB 4.104.
- **The Multicultural Engagement Center** is located at SAC 1.102 and online at ddce.utexas.edu/multiculturalengagement. The MEC provides resources, programs, and opportunities that help build a culturally diverse campus.
- **The Gender & Sexuality Center** is located at SAC 2.112 and online at ddce.utexas.edu/genderandsexuality. They offer mentoring and walk-in advising.
- **The Counseling and Mental Health Center** is online at cmhc.utexas.edu. Their services are inexpensive and confidential. They can be reached at (512) 471-3515 for appointments. Their crisis line is open 24/7/365: (512) 471-2255, or, for Deaf/HH students, 711 + (512) 471-2255. They are on the fifth floor of SSB.
- **The Behavior Concerns Advice Line** offers confidential assistance in the event that you are concerned about the behavior of a friend, classmate, roommate, etc. They can be reached 24/7 at (512) 232-5050.
- **The University Writing Center** offers free, individualized help with both academic and non-academic writing. UWC consultants will work with you at any point in your writing process, from brainstorming, to drafting, to revising. You can schedule an appointment online at uwc.utexas.edu, or by calling (512) 471-6222. The UWC is located at PCL 2.330.

SEMESTER SCHEDULE

**** NOTE:** You should read the materials listed by the date given (e.g., if Audre Lorde: “A Litany for Survival” is listed for 1/18, you should come to class on Thursday 1/18 ready to discuss that poem).

****Schedule subject to change****Week One: Unit One—Close Reading

8/30 **Thurs**: Introductions to course, goals, one another.

Week Two

9/4 **Tues**: Audre Lorde “Power”

9/6 **Thurs**: Toni Morrison *Beloved* [B] 3-23

Week Three

9/11 **Tues**: B 24-100

9/13 **Thurs**: B 101-173

9/16 Sunday: Close Reading Exercise 1 due on Canvas by 1 pm

Week Four

9/18 **Tues**: B 174-235

9/20 **Thurs**: B 235-277

9/23 Sunday: Close Reading Exercise 2 due on Canvas by 1 pm

Week Five

9/25 **Tues**: B 281-324

9/27 **Thurs**: Guest Lecturer: Saidiya Hartman “Venus in Two Acts”

Week Six: Unit Two—Research

10/2 **Tues**: Writing Day — no class

10/4 **Thurs**: Intro to Research — no reading

10/7 Sunday: Close Reading Paper due on Canvas by 1 pm

Week Seven

10/9 **Tues**: Toni Morrison *Playing in the Dark* [PitD] 1-29

10/11 **Thurs**: PitD 29-61

10/14 Sunday: Research Exercise due on Canvas by 1 pm

Week Eight

10/16 **Tues**: Octavia Butler, *Dawn* [D] 1-44

10/18 **Thurs**: D 47-112

10/21 Sunday: Annotated Bibliography due on Canvas by 1 pm

Week Nine: Unit Three—Context

10/23 **Tues**: Lorde “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House”

10/25 **Thurs**: D 115-196

10/28 Sunday: Context Exercise due on Canvas by 1 pm

Week Ten

10/30 **Tues:** *D* 199-248

11/1 **Thurs:** Revision workshop. Bring Context Paper Draft to class.

11/4 Sunday: Context Paper Draft due on Canvas by 1 pm

Week Eleven

11/6 **Tues:** Mandatory conferences no class).

11/8 **Thurs:** Introduction to *The Racial Imaginary: Writers on Race in the Life of the Mind*; Claudia Rankine *Citizen* 1-37

11/11 Sunday: Context Paper due on Canvas by 1 pm

Week Twelve: Unit Four—Arguments

11/13 **Tues:** *C* 41-79

11/15 **Thurs:** *C* 82-135

11/18 Sunday: Argument Exercise #1 due on Canvas by 1 pm

Week Thirteen

11/20 **Tues:** *C* 139-161

11/22 **Thurs:** THANKSGIVING — no class

11/25 Sunday: Argument Exercise #2 due on Canvas by 1 pm

Week Fourteen

11/27 **Tues:** Students' choice of cultural artifact, tbd

11/29 **Thurs:** Peer review workshop. Bring to class: Final Paper Draft

12/2 Sunday: Presentations due on Canvas by 1 pm

Week Fifteen

12/4 **Tues:** Presentations

12/6 **Thurs:** Presentations

12/9 Sunday: Argument Paper due on Canvas by 1 pm