

UCOR 102: Imaginative Literature and Critical Writing
Summer 2017, June 12-July 7, 2017, Online Course, Duquesne University

Instructor: Erin K. Johns Speese, Ph.D.

Email: speese@duq.edu

Office Hours: T/Th 1-2pm via GoToMeeting or By appointment (please email)

The Basics

Gendering Blackness: Black Womanhood and Literature

With the recent rise of the Black Lives Matter movement, racial inequality has once again come to the forefront as a divisive issue in the contemporary United States. BLM has brought to the forefront the long history of police brutality, the Prison Industrial Complex, and the marginalization of women of color both within and without their community. This course will examine key literary texts that illustrate the oppression of women of color, especially African Americans, and the ways literature has been used to inspire activism as well as offer social critiques of the history of racism in the United States. The backbone of this course will center around ideas presented in Melissa Harris-Perry's *Sister Citizen*, a book that examines the misrepresentation of Black women in the United States. Using Harris-Perry as a guide, we will discuss the ways literature by women of color illustrate their experiences of embodiment and invisibility. These texts, from a wide range of genres (poetry, drama, novel, short story), reveal the collective memory of women of color in the United States that drastically differs from the sanitized version of History that emphasizes both patriarchal and white supremacist values. This course will ask you to question the very political and social structures upon which the United States was built and will use literature as a way of promoting empathy for experiences that may or may not be your own. To achieve this, you will be asked to write two major papers that ask you to think critically about racial and gender issues in the United States, present clear arguments based on close readings of literary texts, and engage in extensive research about identity, including race, gender, sexuality, and class. Through this course, you will gain a new understanding about how race and literature operate and learn to articulate your ideas in clear argument structure.

Please Note: The content of the course will deal with some graphic material, including but not limited to sexual assault, political/racial violence, domestic violence, and sexual/physical abuse. If you have issues with this material due to a previous trauma, please, see me.

Required Texts (Feel free to use Ebooks or Electronic copies. Please see "Electronic Devices.")

Harris-Perry, Melissa. *Sister Citizen: Shame, Stereotypes, and Black Women in America*. Yale UP, 2013. (ISBN: 9780300188189)

Morrison, Toni. *The Bluest Eye*. Vintage, 2007. (ISBN: 9780307278449)

Packer, Z.Z. *Drinking Coffee Elsewhere*. Penguin, 2004. (ISBN: 9781573223782)

Rankine, Claudia. *Citizen: An American Lyric*. Graywolf Press, 2014. (ISBN: 9781555976903)

Shange, Ntozake. *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf*. Simon and Schuster, 1997. (ISBN: 9780684843261)

Learning Outcomes

Knowledge of Literature

- a. Students will engage in close, critical reading of literary texts
- b. Students will identify traditional literary genres such as narrative fiction, poetry, and drama, as well as other genres such as film and creative nonfiction
- c. Students will understand the fundamental literary devices and be able to analyze and explore how these fundamental literary devices create meanings in a text

- d. Students will recognize that there are different frameworks for analyzing literature, such as social, historical, philosophical, generic, biographical, and others

Processes and Conventions

- a. Students will write with an emphasis on process, and use drafting to improve their writing, critical thinking, and analysis skills
- b. Students will apply the tools of rhetorical analysis to literary and other creative or imaginative texts
- c. Students will be able to locate and use sources on usage and mechanics
- d. Students will demonstrate an understanding of grammatically correct standard written English and will be held accountable for using standard written English in their written work

Research Writing Skills

- a. Students will produce thesis-driven, coherently organized, evidence-based, academic analyses of literature
- b. Students will read, understand, respond to, and incorporate into their own writing scholarly or peer-reviewed sources in literary criticism or other disciplines
- c. Students will identify relevant scholarly secondary sources for a research paper on literature and integrate those sources correctly, relevantly, and ethically into their own work
- d. In source-based writing, students will correctly use a recognized citation/documentation style such as MLA or APA

Course Policies

Attendance:

Attendance is expected in this online course. You will be expected to check in via course discussion, assignment submission, or workshop participation every day.

Late Work:

As a rule, I do not accept late work except under extreme emergency situations. Work is due on the date and time listed in the syllabus, unless otherwise noted.

Office Hours and E-Mail:

Office hours (listed above) provide a great chance to talk one-on-one. Please feel free to use them to ask questions—or to just say hello. You may drop in during these times or make an appointment with me to talk about any questions or comments you have about your progress in the course. I'd be happy to talk with you via e-mail as well, and you can expect that I will respond to you (in email or in class) within 48 hours Monday through Friday.

In addition, this is a writing class. Improperly formatted e-mails are not acceptable. In every e-mail, you must have an opening remark (Dear so and so), the body of the e-mail, a closing remark (Sincerely, etc...), and your full name (first and last) written at the bottom. In addition, e-mails should be properly formatted—meaning using proper sentence structure, capitalization, and the absence of text/IM language (like **u** for **you**). **THIS IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT IF YOU E-MAIL FROM A CELL PHONE.** If you do not follow proper e-mail format, then you forfeit the opportunity of receiving a response from me.

Also, the syllabus contains the majority of the information that you need for this course. **Please, review the syllabus before e-mailing me a question**—especially about length requirements. If the answer to your question can be found on the syllabus, I will simply refer you to the syllabus for the

first e-mail, and thereafter, I maintain the right to not e-mail you back if the information can be found in the syllabus.

Academic Honesty:

Plagiarism is the inclusion of another's words or ideas as your own in a paper you submit for this class. This includes having another person write a paper for you, turning in another student's work who has previously had this class, taking any or all information, writing, or ideas from the internet without proper in-text citations and works cited entries, and pulling any information, writing, or ideas from any other type of source that is not your own work. To avoid plagiarism, you should always use proper in-text citations for all quotations (which are direct word for word quotations in quotation marks) and for all paraphrased information (which is the use of others' ideas and information, which has been converted into your own language). For specific in-text guidelines, see the documentation and citation section in your grammar handbook or visit the Perdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) on the internet.

If you do plagiarize, there are consequences for your actions. The university penalties include a "0" on an essay/portion of your grade, a failing grade for the course, suspension, and expulsion from the university. In order to avoid this, be sure to document and cite your sources clearly. If you are having particular trouble with documentation, writing, or even finding an idea for a paper, please, come and see me so that we can discuss your issue. It is far better to take a late penalty or even a "0" on an assignment than have to face sanctions from the university. I am more than happy to help you with your writing/citing in any way that I can.

For complete information on the university plagiarism policy, see the "Academic Integrity" section of the undergraduate catalog located at: <http://www.duq.edu/about/administration/academic-affairs/policies-and-procedures>.

Standards for Written Work

Format:

1" Margins on Top, Bottom, and Sides, 12 Point Times New Roman Font (including titles), Single Spaced Header (No Longer than 2 Lines), Double Spaced Text, Pages with last name in upper right corner, Endnotes, and MLA Bibliography Style

Technology

All assignments should be typed and when assignments are turned in electronically, you should use Microsoft Word (".doc" or ".docx" files). **Failure to post or e-mail your work as a Word Document could result in a "0" or F on that assignment.**

Athletics

If you are involved in a university athletic program and will need an adjusted work schedule, you must send an official email from the athletic department regarding this. Moreover, you are responsible for any announcements and/or class notes that you miss.

Learning Differences Support and Reasonable Accommodations

If you have any disabilities that may impact your performance in this class, please speak to me within the first week of classes. Disabilities that require accommodation must be documented by the Office of Freshman Development and Special Student Services (x6657).

Writing Center

This is a writing-intensive course. In order to assist you in the revision process of your writing, the Writing Center on campus is available and is staffed by graduate and undergraduate tutors who offer help with writing assignments in all disciplines. Before meeting with a tutor, prepare specific

questions about your work so that your time is well spent. The Writing Center is located in 216 College Hall. Appointments must be made online at www.sites.duq.edu/writing-center/

Project Descriptions and Grade Distribution

Written work is the primary focus for this class; writing assignments will be many and varied. Please feel free to ask questions if you do not understand a particular writing assignment. **For your own protection, you must keep all work that you produce for this class—including drafts and in-class notes—until the end of the term.**

Course Elements

- ✓ Close Reading Essay (20%)
- ✓ Final Paper Abstract (5%)
- ✓ Annotated Bibliography (10%)
- ✓ Final Researched Literature Argument Paper (25%)
- ✓ Paper Outlines and Workshop Responses (10%)
- ✓ Literature Argument Paragraphs (15%)
- ✓ Participation/Discussion/Professional Etiquette (15%)

Written Assignments (Generally, specific details in assignment sheets)

Grading for Written Assignments

- A: Ideas are well-developed, original, and succeeds in mastering the technical goals for the assignment. There is a clear argument supported with examples, analysis, and research. Paper follows proper citation format, includes a Works Cited page, and has few grammatical errors.
- B: Ideas are written with considerable care and attention. They are developed and detailed. There is some argument format, but ultimately, needs clearer structure. Ideas, grammar, and syntax need more clarity and development. The paper includes correct format, citations, and a Works Cited page.
- C: Ideas and structure are acceptable. The student needs to make more effort to master syntax, grammar, and argument structure and/or develop a thoughtful and focused argument and/or analysis.
- D: Student has made some effort to achieve the assignment goals, but basic fundamentals of writing and analysis need improvement. Also, citations need improvement and argument structure needs more clarity and development. The paper proposes an opinion rather than an argument supported with evidence, especially close reading of the text.
- F: Does not achieve the assignment's technical goals and/or it does not present a focused or thoughtful analysis of the text. There is no clear argument supported with close reading or research. There are no clear citations, and/or the reader summarizes others' ideas rather than constructing his/her own argument. DID NOT MEET THE MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS OF THE ASSIGNMENT.

Revision Process

Part of your final grade on revisable assignments will be based on your revision process. This will take into account the extent and thoroughness of your revisions throughout the paper process and how complete your writing is at the various deadlines for the revision process (i.e. conference, peer workshop, and Final drafts) and the extent of your revisions between the earlier drafts to the final draft. Turning in an incomplete paper as a draft for feedback or turning in a paper that does not have a clear and developed argument structure at the draft for feedback stage will decrease your grade on the paper. Also, if you miss any step in the revision process, your final grade on the paper will be reduced a grade letter for each missed deadline.

Schedule of Activities and Assignments

Course Schedule Subject To Change at Instructor's Discretion

Note: Work Due at 5pm on Date Listed

Week 1

6/12

Introduce yourself on the Discussion Board under the "Introductions" Forum

6/13

Read Melissa Harris-Perry *Sister Citizen* (1-179); Post Under "Sister Citizen 1" Discussion Forum

6/14

Read Melissa Harris-Perry *Sister Citizen* (180-300); Post Under "Sister Citizen 2" Discussion Forum

6/15

Read *For Colored Girls*; Post Under "For Colored Girls" Discussion Forum

LAP 1 Due

6/16

Read ZZ Packer *Drinking Coffee Elsewhere* (1-81); Post Under "Packer 1" Discussion Forum

Week 2

6/19

Read ZZ Packer *Drinking Coffee Elsewhere* (82-209); Post Under "Packer 2" Discussion Forum

6/20

Read ZZ Packer *Drinking Coffee Elsewhere* (210-265); Post Under "Packer 3" Discussion Forum

Introduce Close Reading Essay

6/21

Outline Close Reading Essay

6/22

Close Reading Essay Draft Due

6/23

Close Reading Essay Draft Workshop

Week 3

6/26

Final Close Reading Essay Due

6/27

Read Claudia Rankine *Citizen* (1-79); Post Under "Rankine 1" Discussion Forum

6/28

Read Claudia Rankine *Citizen* (80-156/2); Post Under "Rankine 2" Discussion Forum

LAP 2 Due

6/29

Read Toni Morrison *The Bluest Eye* (1-93); Post Under "Morrison 1" Discussion Forum

Introduce Final Researched Literature Argument Paper and Final Paper Abstract

6/30

Read Roni Morrison *The Bluest Eye* (94-206); Post Under "Morrison 2" Discussion Forum

Final Paper Abstract Due

Introduce Annotated Bibliography

Week 4

7/3

Annotated Bibliography Workshop; Post 2 Annotated Bib Entries

7/4

Annotated Bibliography Due

7/5

Final Researched Literature Argument Paper Outline Due

7/6

Final Researched Literature Argument Paper Draft & Workshop

7/7

Final Researched Literature Argument Paper Due