

**ENG 354/AFH 354**  
**AFRICAN AMERICAN LITERATURE: HARLEM RENAISSANCE TO THE PRESENT**  
**Spring 2014 – Course Syllabus and Guidelines**

Line # 13989 ENG T Th 3:00-4:15 PM

Line # 14682 AFH T Th 3:00-4:15 PM

Instructor: Dr. Lynette D. Myles  
Office: Language and Literature Building LL 303A  
Office Hours: TTH 7:45-8:45 AM, 4:30-5:30 PM, and by appointment  
Contact: lynette.myles@asu.edu or 480-965-1540 (Please do not leave messages.)

**Course Description and Objectives**

This course will examine the African American literary tradition from the Harlem Renaissance to the present. It will focus on major Black literary works and African Americans' contribution to the canon of American literature. Students will become familiar with the major periods in twentieth century African American literature, and understand how these periods reflect historically with African American culture. The course readings will include a selection of novels, plays, poetry, and essays along with other materials that will help fill in the historical and cultural context of such works. Through individual analyses and informative discussions, students will use the literature as a way to investigate critical issues on race, gender, and class.

**Learning Outcomes**

1. To understand theoretical concepts of race, racism, and gender as they inform the creation of an ethnic literature.
2. To examine the critical connections between historical eras and events and the formation of narrative.
3. To begin to understand the unique aspects of African American literary theory.
4. To understand how African Americans have resisted and struggled to recreate their own cultural identities in relations to each other and dominant white groups, leading to both conflict and community empowerment
5. A critical understanding of identity and how it is constructed and reinvented by individuals and groups over time and different contexts.
6. Develop and sharpen critical communication skills through the facilitation of discussions and writing skills through essay assignments.

**Required Texts**

(You must bring your book and reading materials to each class, as I will be making specific references to the readings.)

- Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Nellie Y. McKay, eds., *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (2004)
- Ntozake Shange, *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow Was Not Enough*
- *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 7<sup>th</sup> Edition

**Additional Requirements and Links:**

- An ASU E-mail account

- An ASURITE ID and password to access my.asu.edu
- *A notebook for journal writings to use for this class only.*
- Access to a word processing program that enables you to submit papers as either a MS Word document (.doc) or .docx

Course Blackboard: <http://www.my.asu.edu>

Student Code of Conduct: <http://www.asu.edu/studentlife/judicial>

### **Class Format**

This class is a student-centered learning environment. Unlike some approaches to learning in which the professor largely determines the content of course lectures and discussions, a student-centered approach views learning as a process of intense exchange and a negotiation of each other's different beliefs, social locations, and ways of knowing. Student-centered courses are not lecture-based, and so they depend on student dialogue and the professor's relentless facilitating, questioning, and mediating of student ideas.

### **Course Requirements**

**1. Attendance and Participation (15%):** Attendance is required and is recorded at the beginning of each class. Students who are late are responsible for seeing to it that their names are recorded. **More than four (4) absences excused or unexcused will result in the lowering of your final course by one letter grade (e.g. a B would become a C). If you miss more than five (5) classes, you will FAIL the course.** If you miss class, it is your responsibility to find out what you have missed from your peers.

Attendance means showing up on time and ready to participate. If you must leave 10 minutes early, please inform me in advance in person or by e-mail. If you continually leave early, or are not prepared to participate, you may lose credit for that day's activities. Leaving more than 10 minutes early, you will be counted absent. **Being 10 minutes late on three occasions will count as an absence.**

**Policy on Class Participation:** This course relies heavily on the class participation of students, but it will also include a sequence of brief lectures. You are expected to engage actively in discussion in every class. This means that not only must you attend, but that you must endeavor to contribute to the flow and body of the course. The syllabus includes guidelines for preparation: study questions, brief written and oral assignments to help in formulating major ideas clearly before coming to class, exercises to do before or after reading the selection. On Blackboard is a glossary of key terms used, some basic guidelines for writing an essay on literature, and an explanation of expectations for written work submitted in this course. The major works not assigned but referred to in lectures are cited by author's name for each class. Students are responsible for material covered in class from those works. Subsequent exams and study questions will refer to them. This is another reason for not missing class. Your participation grade includes class and group discussions and in-class activities. Class participation grades of 0-3 points are assigned for each class period. Class participation will be awarded one point for meeting each of the following requirements:

- 1 = Well engaged (Responses showing a higher level of reflection and commitment; speaking more than once in class.)
- 1 = Engaged (Responses are reflective and show commitment to the discussion)

1 = Present in class

**PLEASE DO NOT ASK TO MAKE UP IN-CLASS WORK, IF YOU HAVE BEEN ABSENT.**

**Group Work:** Each student will be assigned to a group, and each group will be required to make one presentations during the semester; please refer to the schedule on Blackboard for your assigned topic and date of presentation. If you are absent on your assigned presentation time, you cannot make up the assignment.

**2. Reading Journal (20%):** You will use your reading journal to record your thoughts and responses to the readings. Readings should provide a focused response to a question at issue you see arising from reading. These readings will be graded primarily on the thoroughness and intelligence with which you grapple with issues at hand in the text rather than on traditional criteria of organic form in a persuasive essay. They do not need to be grammatically correct. When you have an idea sitting and stewing in your head, write it in your journal.

You should bring your journals to every class, so when we do in-class writing, you can use this journal. You will regularly be called on to share your ideas about the readings from your journal in order to promote discussion.

Please note that journal writing is not “busy work,” but, instead, lays the foundation(s) for our class discussions and for writing your papers. You will make a minimum of two entries a week anywhere from 300-500 words in length.

- **Journals** will be used for your responses to readings *before class*.
- **Journals** should also include responses *following a class discussion*.
- The **journal section** should be sequentially dated.

**Additional Topics You Can Write About in Your Journal:**

- Brainstorm questions and ideas for papers.
- Anything that comes to mind.

**Submission Dates:** Two-three times during a semester I will collect journals. The points you earn will depend on the attention and time you put into your writing. You must date, number, and title each of your entries.

**3. Two Formal Essays (45%):** You will write two papers. I will provide paper specifics and topics for your essay. You should begin thinking about the essay early in the term.

**Late Papers:** All major writing projects are expected to be turned in by the due date. **Late papers will be graded down 1/2 of a letter grade for every class period late.** Permission to turn in a late paper without penalty will be rarely granted and only after communicating with me and never on the day of the assignment is due. If you have trouble completing the paper, contact me right away. Further, if you wish to turn in a paper late, you must contact me immediately to make appropriate arrangements.

**Submission Procedures for Formal Papers:** You will submit your essays on Blackboard through the Assignment link. Your paper must be submitted in Microsoft Word as I cannot open them in any other form. Work that is not formatted correctly cannot be graded and will receive no credit.

**I DO NOT ACCEPT WORK VIA E-MAIL. NO EXCEPTIONS.**

**4. Final Exam (20%):** Students are required to take a comprehensive in-class final exam.

### Grading Criteria

**Assignment Grade Scale:** Grading for essays will follow English Department standards, which are based on content, organization, expression, and mechanics.

A = 4.0	C = 2.0
A- = 3.7	C- = 1.7
B+ = 3.3	D+ = 1.3
B = 3.0	D = 1.0
B- = 2.7	D- = .7
C+ = 2.3	E = .3
	No paper = 0

### Breakdown of Final Course Grades:

• Attendance and Participation	15%
• Reading Journal	20%
• Paper One	20%
• Paper Two	25%
• Final Exam	20%
Total	100%

**Please note: Grades are weighted.** Writing projects are worth 65% of your semester grade, so they need to be completed on time to avoid high grade loss. Do not downplay the journals to such an extent that you miss doing a lot of them or they will have a significant negative impact on your grade because it is worth 20% of your grade. **This understanding is critical to your success in this class.**

To check your grade, click on "Tools" in our Blackboard website Course Menu sidebar and then on "View Grades." You will see your points for each assignment graded to date. Please note that grades are not calculated through Bb. Instead "My Grades" is used merely as a placeholder for points and grades.

To compute final course grades, the following values are assigned to the standard letter grades of A through E:

A.....	3.9-4.0
A-.....	3.5-3.8
B+.....	3.2-3.4
B .....	2.9-3.10

B-.....	2.5-2.8
C+.....	2.2-2.4
C .....	1.9-2.1
C- .....	1.5-1.8
D+.....	1.2-1.4
D.....	.90-1.0
E .....	.49 and below

A grade of I (Incomplete) will not be offered in this course except under extreme conditions and with advisement from the Department of English.

### Course Guidelines

**1. Blackboard – MyASU:** Blackboard is used for communications, assignments, course material, and resource links. You should check course Blackboard and email frequently for notices and coursework.

**2. Cancelled Classes/Office Hours/Appointments:** If I am absent, I will try to get someone to post a sign. I also will try to email you all, before class. However, if you come to class and I am not here by the time 15 minutes has elapsed (from when class is to start), please assume that class is cancelled and check your email for further instructions.

**3. Classroom Etiquette:** While I want us to constantly challenge ourselves and others during the class, I think it is important to maintain a genial, courteous, cooperative learning atmosphere in the classroom for all.

- First and foremost, I expect that you respect me and your fellow students. There should be no talking when I am addressing the class, when another student has the floor, or when we are viewing a power point presentation or video.
- **Please close the top of your laptop computer when I begin class discussions or when we, as a class, are having a class discussion.** This means iPads, MP3 players, smartphones, cell phones, and iPods must be turned off before class begins. You should not and will not receive calls during class. **Cell phones must be set to silent before class begins. Text messaging during class is not permitted and will not be tolerated: it is an action that will constitute absence. Phones must be kept out of sight until class ends:** Even, for example, if one uses a phone for its calendar/memo functions, it is not permissible to input calendar-related information until class has ended.
- **Class begins promptly.** Therefore, be on time to class. A late is a late is a late. **Three lates are the equivalent of one absence.** Class will also end promptly. Do not begin to "pack things up" until it is absolutely clear that class is officially.
- I expect you to be involved in whatever the class is doing, in other words, not doing work for another class, reading a newspaper or other outside material, doing a crossword, napping, etc. If you absolutely must do these things then don't come to class.
- Do not wear headphones, ear buds, etc. in class.

- Also, the classroom is not the appropriate time for complaining about the class, the workload, your grade, etc. This includes before class, after it ends, and during any break we might take. If you have a problem, you should come to my office hours or schedule a time to discuss it with me in private.
- **Public Nature of the Class:** Be aware that our class will be composed of diverse members; it is your responsibility to use appropriate language in class and in writing and to respect the opinions and cultures of others, per university guidelines. Everyone should feel comfortable speaking in class.
- **Finally,** failure to abide by these guidelines may have a negative impact on a student's participation grade. Repeat offenders may be seen as disruptive and asked to leave class.

**4. Disability Resources for Students:** If you have a disability and need accommodation for equal access to education at ASU, please let me know and call Disability Resources for Students at 480-965-1234. Please feel free to discuss special accommodations with me.

**5. Extra Credit:** No extra credit assignments will be given.

**6. Literary Terms:** A glossary of terms is provided in TOOLS on Blackboard. It will be important for you to understand these terms and use them in your discussions and writings. Some terms may be included in the final exam.

**7. Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is stealing. Whenever you borrow a phrase, sentence, paragraph—or even an idea stated in your own words—from any outside source without giving credit to that source, you have plagiarized. The consequences are severe, including failure for the assignment, probable failure for the course, disciplinary referral to the Dean, and possible expulsion from the University.

**8. Problem Solving:** I encourage you to see me during office hours, email me, or make an appointment (if you cannot attend my scheduled office hours) if you wish to discuss issues connected with this class and/or your performance. Please discuss concerns with me while we still have options. I tend to be generous with students who take the initiative to consult with me about concerns while they are still “situations” and “not yet crises,” and less generous with those who permit things to slide until a crisis is unavoidable.

**10. Study Guide Questions:** For most of the readings, I have provided Study Guide Questions to direct your reading. The questions can be quite useful for journal entries and for possible paper topics. You are not required to write out answers to these questions.

#### **Further Values and Requisites:**

- Bring your honest efforts, your questions and concerns, a sense of humor, and the curiosity to explore new territory. Your commitment to our work and to each other will make our course vibrant, pleasurable and successful.
- Please remember to respect the opinions of others, especially when they disagree with your own. Learn to listen – be careful not to monopolize discussions. Everyone should feel comfortable sharing his or her ideas in class.
- I encourage you to make use of my office hours. I enjoy the opportunity to get to know you better.

## ENG 354/AFH 354 Tentative Schedule Spring 2014

**Note:** This schedule should be regarded as a tentative guide to the assignments. I reserve the right to make changes as necessary throughout the semester. Because good in-depth discussion is more important than keeping up with the schedule, you should not be disturbed if some selections are omitted or if we appear to fall behind.

**Reading assignments ARE NOT OPTIONAL, they are REQUIRED. Do this reading carefully** – paying attention to how the writings are constructed, what forms they use, and how the author uses style and language. **Because I will be making specific references to the readings, you must bring your reading materials to each class.**

**The date that something is listed on the calendar is the date you should have that work finished.** So, if you are supposed to read several chapters (i.e. Chapters 1 – 3) that reading needs to be completed by class time on the date listed so that you are ready to DISCUSS what you have read.

### Important Dates

13 Jan	First day of ASU classes
14 Jan	Add/drop deadline
20 Jan	Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday
9-16 Mar	Spring Break
1 May	Last Day of ENG 354
6 Apr	Course Withdrawal Deadline
2 May	Complete Withdrawal Deadline

### **WEEK 1**      **Introductions and Dispelling Myths and Stereotypes**

T 14 Jan      **First Day of Class.** Introduction to the course. Review course requirements and guidelines.  
**Video:** Marlon Riggs, *Ethnic Notions*

TH 16 Jan      “What is African American Literature?” Finish *Ethnic Notions*

#### **Come to class with the following things done:**

- Familiarize yourself with course Blackboard (Bb).
- Due: Pre-course survey. (Click Assignment and Survey tab in Bb.)
- Due: Syllabus Acknowledgement/Student Responsibility Form. (Click Assignment and Survey tab in Bb.)

**Homework: Critical Response to *Ethnic Notions*.** Respond to questions provided on Blackboard.

### **WEEK 2**      **The Harlem Renaissance: Thought and Practice and Its Literature, 1919-1940**

T 21 Jan      **DUE: Response to *Ethnic Notions*. \*Due by 11:59 PM. Submit via link ASSIGNMENT.**  
“Introduction to the Harlem Renaissance,” 953-62. (Continue on next page.)

Jean Toomer, From *Cane* (1923) Section I "Karintha" "through "Portrait in Georgia" pp. 1168-86. Groups assigned.

TH 23 Jan "Song of the Son," "Blood Burning Moon,"  
Section II "Seventh Street" "Rhobert," "Beehive," pp. 1186-98

### WEEK 3

T 28 Jan **Give and Introduce Paper One Assignment**  
Alain Locke, "The New Negro" (1925) pp. 983-93  
Richard Bruce Nugent, "Smoke, Lilies and Jade" (1926) [Blackboard]

TH 30 Jan "Smoke, Lilies and Jade"

### WEEK 4

T 4 Feb Nella Larsen, *Quicksand*, Chapters 1-4 (1928) pp. 1085-01

TH 6 Feb **Due: Journal Entries for Students A-M**  
*Quicksand*, Chapters 5-11, pp. 1102-23

### WEEK 5

T 11 Feb *Quicksand*, Chapters 12-17, pp. 1123-45

TH 13Feb **Due: Journal Entries for Students N-Z**  
*Quicksand*, 18-end, pp. 1145-67

### WEEK 6 African American Realism and Modernism (1940-1959)

T 18 Feb "Introduction to African American Realism and Modernism," 1355-68  
James Baldwin, "Everybody's Protest Novel" (1949) pp.1696-05  
Richard Wright, "The Man Who Lived Underground" (1942) pp.1399-02; 1436-70

TH 20 Feb "The Man Who Lived Underground" (1942)

### WEEK 7

T 25 Feb **Due Paper One Assignment. \*Due by 11:59 PM on Blackboard.**  
Ann Petry, "The Street" (1946) pp. 1496-97; 1504-16

TH 27 Feb **Due: Journal Entries for Students A-M**  
Ralph Ellison, From *Invisible Man*. 1952) pp.1535-38; 1548-70

### WEEK 8

T 4 Mar **DUE: Mid-Course Survey on Blackboard via Bb.** (Go to Assignment and Survey on Bb.)  
*Invisible Man*



TH 6 Mar	<p><b>Due: Journal Entries for Students N-Z</b></p> <p>Gwendolyn Brooks, "kitchenette building," "the mother," "A Song in the Front Yard," "Sadie and Maud," "The Ladies of the Poor," "We Real Cool," pp. 1623-38</p>
<b>WEEK 9</b>	<b>Spring Break – March 9-16</b>
T 11 Mar	
TH 13 Mar	
<b>WEEK 10</b>	<b><u>The Black Arts Era, 1960-1975: "Furious Poets and Playwrights"</u></b>
T 18 Mar	<p>"Introduction to the Black Arts Movement" pp.1831-50</p> <p>Larry Neal's "The Black Arts Movement" pp. 2038-50</p> <p>Don L. Lee (Haki Madhubuti) "Toward a Definition: Black Poetry of the Sixties" (1971) [Blackboard]</p>
TH 20 Mar	<p><b>Due: Journal Entries for Students A-M</b></p> <p>"Revolution and the Spoken Word": The Last Poets, Gil Scott Herron, Nikki Giovanni and (Poetry of the Black Arts Movement)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Etheridge Knight "The Idea of Ancestry" to "For Black Poets"</li> <li>▪ Amiri Baraka "Black Art" P. 1943, "Wailers" p. 1945-46</li> <li>▪ Nikki Giovanni, "For Saundra," Revolutionary Music,"</li> <li>▪ Sonia Sanchez "homecoming" to "A Blues Book for Blue Black Magical Women"</li> </ul>
<b>WEEK 11</b>	
T 25 Mar	<p><b>Give and Introduce Paper Two Assignment</b></p> <p>LeRoi Jones, pp. 1937-38 "Black Revolutionary' Poets Should Be Playwrights" (1972) [Blackboard]</p> <p><i>Dutchman</i> (read all) (1964) pp. 1946-60</p>
TH 27 Mar	<p><b>Due: Journal Entries for Students N-Z</b></p> <p><i>Dutchman</i></p>
<b>WEEK 12</b>	<b><u>Literature Since 1975 and The African American Women's Literary Tradition</u></b>
T 1 Apr	<p>"Introduction to Literature Since 1975" pp.2127-39</p> <p>Ed Bullins, <i>Goin' a Buffalo: A Tragifantasy</i> (1969) pp.1968-2006</p>
TH 3 Apr	Ernest Gaines, "The Sky is Gray" (1963) p. 2322-44
<b>WEEK 13</b>	
T 8 Apr	<p><b>Due: Journal Entries for Students A-M</b></p> <p>Mary Helen Washington, "The Darkened Eye Restored: Toward a Literary History of Black Women" (1987) [Blackboard]</p>

Gloria Naylor, From *The Women of Brewster's Place* (1982) pp. 2584-2611

TH 10 Apr Finish *The Women of Brewster's Place*

**WEEK 14**

T 15 Apr **Due: Journal Entries for Students N-Z**  
Toni Morrison, *Song of Solomon* pp. 2210-32

TH 17 Apr *Song of Solomon* 2233-53

**WEEK 15**

T 22 Apr *Song of Solomon* 2353-85

TH 24 Apr Ntozake Shange, *For Colored Girls* (read all)

**WEEK 16**

T 29 Apr **DUE: Post Course Survey on Blackboard via Bb.** (Go to Assignment and Survey on Bb.)  
*For Colored Girls*  
Review for final.

TH 1 May **Last Day of Class. DUE: FINAL PAPER \*Due by 11:59 PM on Blackboard.**  
*For Colored Girls*

**WEEK 17**

T 6 May **Final Exam - Tuesday, May 6, 2:30-4:20 PM.**  
You will need two blue books for exam.