

Coffeyville Community College

ENGL-220
COURSE SYLLABUS
FOR
AFRICAN AMERICAN LITERATURE

Waneta Davis
Instructor

COURSE NUMBER: ENGL-220 **COURSE TITLE:** African American Literature

CREDIT HOURS: 3

INSTRUCTOR: Waneta Davis

OFFICE LOCATION: 112, Weinberg Hall

PHONE: 620-251-7700 ext. 2025

E-MAIL: wanetad@coffeyville.edu

OFFICE HOURS: See schedule posted on office door

PREREQUISITES: English Composition I or permission of instructor

REQUIRED TEXT: Hughes, Langston. *Not Without Laughter*. N.Y. Simon and Schuster. 1995.
Worley, Demetrice A. and Jesse Perry, Jr. *African-American Literature: An Anthology*. Lincolnwood, IL; NTC Publishing, 1997.

**COURSE
DESCRIPTION:**

Students in this course will explore the distinct literary traditions of African Americans, kept alive beyond slavery through song, sermon, and other spoken and written forms. Through an aesthetic approach the student will experience the centuries long emergence of the traditions in poetry, fiction, drama, essays, speeches, letters, autobiographies, sermons, criticism, journals, and folk literature from secular songs to rap. Students will engage in a variety of classroom activities (often supplemented by various audio/visual resources and multi-media technologies) designed to cultivate an intimacy with the themes of African American literature; moreover, each student will record his or her experience with the course materials in a creative journal, a project that will be limited only by the imaginative faculties of the individual student. While the creative journal will be the primary means of evaluating student understanding, a number of topical exams will also be administered.

**EXPECTED LEARNER
OUTCOMES:**

Within the context of the educational objectives of Coffeyville Community College/Area Technical School, this course seeks to facilitate the general development of student skills in oral/written communication and critical/creative thinking while cultivating student appreciation for the diversity of culture. Specifically, the

course seeks to facilitate student achievement of the following learning objectives:

1. Identify the themes underlying African American experiences as represented in aboriginal literatures;
2. Relate the historical outlines of African American cultures to African American literature.
3. Identify the world-views afforded by various African American Indian cultural traditions, especially the oral traditions;
4. Distinguish the connections between the themes of African American literatures and the creation of African American identities;
5. Articulate an understanding of the differences and the similarities between Euro-American and African American cultures;
6. Demonstrate a multicultural perspective accompanied by a more inclusive sense of culture;
7. Demonstrate an ability to read and comprehend African American literature in multiple genres;
8. Improve critical thinking skills

**LEARNING TASKS
AND ACTIVITIES:**

Week 1	Introduction and Historical Overview
Week 2	Journal Instructions The Folk Tradition
Week 3	Language and Literacy African American Experience Video, Part I.
Week 4	The Blues—Pain and Survival Langston Hughes Video
Week 5	Text: <i>Not Without Laughter</i>
Week 6	<i>Not Without Laughter</i> Analysis Criteria Journals Due
Week 7	Slavery—Time of Trial African American Experience Video, Part 2 Literary Analysis Due
Week 8	Standing Ground Black Wall Street (Tulsa)
Week 9	Test, Identity
Week 10	Dreamers and Revolutionaries African American Experience Video, Part 3
Week 11	Women Journals Due
Week 12	Men Experience Report Due

Week 13	Relationships Test Journals Due
Week 14	Family and Ancestors Experience Discussion
Week 15	Final

**ASSESSMENT
OF OUTCOMES:**

Student progress toward the achievement of course objectives will be assessed through the assignment of collaborative learning exercises, the assignment of journal writing, and the administration of topical exams.

Course Assignments:

Collaborative Learning Exercises	25%
Topical Exams	25%
Journals	25%
Literary Analysis	25%

Grading Legend:

A (100-90) Excellent; B (89-80) Very good; C (79-70) Good; D (69-60) Poor; F (59-0) Failing

Grades may be interpreted according to the following subjective profiles:

- A. Excellent.** Students receiving an “A” undertake assignments with an accomplished sense of intellectual discipline, integrity, and enthusiasm. Students exhibit an ability to exceed conventional frames of reference by communicating multiple perspectives; specifically, students clarify cultural contexts, develop a number of ideas in thematic detail, explore the relationships between key ideas, anticipate intellectual objections, and critically examine their own conclusions. Attendance and participation are exemplary.
- B. Very Good.** Students receiving a “B” usually undertake assignments with a sense of intellectual discipline, integrity and enthusiasm. Students exhibit an ability to employ conventional frames of reference to communicate dual perspectives; specifically, students develop a few ideas in detail and explore the relationships between prominent ideas. Attendance and participation are distinguished.
- C Good.** Students receiving a “C” undertake assignments with a satisfactory sense of intellectual discipline, integrity and enthusiasm. Students exhibit an ability to employ a frame of reference to communicate a single perspective;

specifically students accurately recount received ideas. Attendance and participation are satisfactory.

D Poor. Students receiving a “D” undertake assignments with little sense of intellectual discipline, integrity and enthusiasm; assignments frequently are submitted late. Students exhibit some ability to employ a frame of reference to communicate a partial perspective; specifically, students inaccurately or incompletely recount received ideas. Attendance and/or participation are unsatisfactory.

F Failing. Students receiving an “F” demonstrate no sense of intellectual discipline, integrity or enthusiasm and may not undertake assignments at all. Assignments undertaken may be incomplete or otherwise unacceptable as a measure of student learning. Attendance and participation are unsatisfactory.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

To complete the course satisfactorily, students must read all reading assignments, attend class regularly, actively participate in collaborative learning exercises, pass all exams administered, and receive a passing grade on the journal.

Topical Exams: Topical exams may include but not be limited to the following types of questions: textual identifications, short answer definitions/analyses, and brief essays.

Journals: Journals may contemplate, through interrogation and reflection, specific issues of African American literature and culture arising during the course of study. While some journal writing will be in response to specific questions posed by the instructor, the content of the journal will be limited only by the imaginative faculties of the individual student. Students are encouraged to include visual components. Journal questions posted by the instructor may require use of web and internet resources.

Literary Analysis: Using some of the seven basic elements of literature: point of view, setting, plot, character, symbolism, irony, and theme, write an analysis using adequate evidence to support the inferences and interpretation.

Collaborative Learning Exercises: Collaborative learning is an instructional mode by which two or more people teach one another; that is to say each person involved is both a student and a teacher. Consequently, collaborative learning is not only an

effective form of learning but also an efficient alternative to traditional methods of instruction (ex. Lecture). While such traditional methods will be in prominent use, these methods tend to over-emphasize the relationship between instructors and students (often little more than a producer/consumer relationship), while neglecting the social relationships inherent in thought and learning.

Indeed, mature thought and learning occurs as a social process; knowledge acquisition occurs in relationships with many people, not just a single instructor. Moreover, when a subject requires sophisticated efforts to clarify, analyze, and evaluate, that subject can be learned best in a collaborative setting. African American literature is just such a subject. For the purposes of this course, then, collaborative learning will occur in the form of group exercises assigned by the instructor; in this way, perhaps full advantage can be taken of multiple relationships.

Students will learn, therefore, *together* as they engage in a problem-solving process that promotes cognitive development and the improvement of critical thinking strategies. Each student will make individual contributions in a collective effort to clarify, analyze, and evaluate important issues the study of African American literature. Perhaps, equally important students will form temporary “communities” that facilitate their learning.

Late or Missed Assignments: Assignments are due at the beginning of the class meeting on the due date; late work will be penalized 5% of assignment value per day late; no late work will be accepted after one week has elapsed. The responsibility for completing assignments lies with the student.

Exams that are missed without the prior consent and approval of the instructor may not be taken at a later date.

ATTENDANCE:

Students who do not attend class regularly will not succeed in this course. Each class meeting is the equivalent of two class periods. Roll will be taken at the beginning of each class period. Students who attend 90% of their class periods will receive a bonus of two (2) percentage points added to final grade. Students who attend fewer than 85% of the class periods will incur a penalty whereby two (2) points per excessive absence will be subtracted from their final grades. A student who misses two consecutive classes, or three 3 hour class meetings, five 1 hour class meetings overall, should withdraw.

**ACADEMIC
INTEGRITY:**

Students are expected to undertake assignments with integrity. Unless otherwise indicated, all assignments are to be completed on an individual student basis; evidence of unauthorized student collaboration will result in a zero (0) for the assignment.

Plagiarism is representing, as one's own the ideas of another person. To avoid plagiarism, one must ensure that information (arguments, designs, words, ideas, projects, etc.) deriving from other sources is properly acknowledged by appropriate citation(s). For the purpose of this class, use the MLA citation format. Plagiarized work will receive a grade of zero (0).

COMPETENCIES:

IDENTIFY THE THEMES UNDERLYING AFRICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCES AS REPRESENTED BY ABORIGINAL LITERATURES

1. Explain the importance of place in slave cultures.
2. Explain the importance of tradition in slave cultures.
3. Explain the importance of language in slave cultures.
4. Describe the role of the individual in slave cultures.
5. Describe the role of the family in slave cultures.
6. Describe the importance of memory in slave cultures.
7. Summarize the holistic world-view offered by slave cultures.
8. Explain the concept of orality as found in slave cultures.
9. Explain the concept of “survivance” as found in slave cultures.
10. Explain the concept of sovereignty as expressed in slave cultures.
11. Explain the problem of stereotypes for African American.
12. Summarize the impact of the “renaissance” in African American literature.

IDENTIFY THE WORLD-VIEWS AFFORDED BY VARIOUS AFRICAN AMERICAN CULTURAL TRADITIONS, SPECIFICALLY THE ORAL TRADITIONS

1. Identify the three major elements of the oral tradition.
2. Explain the importance of stories.
3. Explain the importance of song.
4. Explain the importance of oratory.
5. Describe the traditional African American concepts of space and time.
6. Define the concept of “holism.”
7. Define the concept of “symbolism.”
8. Explain the importance of the spirituals.
9. Explain the importance of folk tales.
10. Explain the importance of rhythm and melodic structures.
11. Explain the slave desire for freedom.
12. Explain the literary concept of rights for African Americans.
13. Explain the role of abolitionism and social protest in literature.
14. Distinguish between escape from slavery, new freedom, and ideal freedom in select readings.
15. Describe the role of the folk tales.
16. Paraphrase the origin stories of African Americans.

DISTINGUISH THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE THEMES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN LITERATURES AND THE CREATION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN IDENTITIES

1. Distinguish the connections between experience and identity.
2. Distinguish the connections between place and identity.
3. Distinguish the connections between tradition and identity.
4. Distinguish the connections between language and identity.

5. Distinguish the connections between family and identity.
6. Distinguish the connections between Euro-American stereotypes of African Americans and identity.
7. Relate the concept of “survival” to identity.
8. Relate the concept of sovereignty to identity.
9. Describe the role of memory in identity.
10. Explain the importance of African American literary “renaissance” for identity.

<p style="text-align: center;">ARTICULATE AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE DIFFERENCES AND THE SIMILARITIES BETWEEN EURO-AMERICAN AND AFRICAN AMERICAN CULTURES</p>

1. Compare concepts of space and time.
2. Compare the concepts of circularity and linearity.
3. Compare orality with textuality.
4. Compare the roles of folk tales in these cultures.
5. Compare selected African American origin stories with the Euro-American origin stories.
6. Compare the roles of song in these cultures.
7. Compare selected African American songs with Euro-American songs.
8. Compare the roles of oratory in these cultures.
9. Compare selected African American orations with Euro-American orations.
10. Contrast the African American concept of “values” with the Euro-American concept of saving.
11. Contrast the African American respect for age with the Euro-American emphasis on youth.
12. Contrast the African American practice of cooperation with the Euro-American practice of competition.
13. Contrast African American efforts to work in harmony with the environment with Euro-American efforts to control the environment.
14. Distinguish between African American —Euro-American conflict and African American —Euro-American misunderstanding.
15. Identify areas “ripe” for dialogue between African American and other Americans.

<p style="text-align: center;">DEMONSTRATE A MULTICULTURAL PERSPECTIVE ACCOMPANIED BY A MORE INCLUSIVE SENSE OF CULTURE</p>
--

1. Identify prominent African American writers by name.
2. Describe the multiple perspectives from which African Americans write.
3. Critique the historical biases against certain types of African American literature, particularly the oral “literatures.”
4. Defend the value of African American literature for the broader American culture.
5. Critique stereotypes of African Americans.

DEMONSTRATE AN ABILITY TO READ AND COMPREHEND AFRICAN AMERICAN LITERATURE IN MULTIPLE GENRES
--

1. Summarize selected African American stories, essays, short-stories, novels, plays and films.
2. Paraphrase selected African American poems.

IMPROVE CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

1. Participate in collaborative learning exercises that facilitate the development of critical thinking skills such as knowledge acquisition, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

NOTE: The procedures of this course are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances. Students will be notified of any changes.

No cell phone or CD player usage allowed in class.

Instances of plagiarism will earn a zero for the assigned the first time. A second instance will earn an F for the course.