

**CES 332: TOPICS IN AFRICAN AMERICAN LITERATURE:  
CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN AMERICAN LITERATURE  
FALL 2007 – T, TH 1:25-2:40 P.M. – CUE 418**

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**(E-mail is the preferred method for reaching the professor. It is also the method that will yield the quickest response.)**

**Office Hours: T, TH 12:00 p.m.-1:00 p.m., and by appointment**

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*Black people have always been America's wilderness in search of a promised land.*  
**Cornel West**

*American means white, and Africanist people struggle to make the term applicable to themselves with ethnicity and hyphen after hyphen after hyphen.*  
**Toni Morrison**

*Good fiction is made of that which is real, and reality is difficult to come by.*  
**Ralph Ellison**

**Course Description:**

This course will examine the significance of an African American literary tradition in the specific context of the contemporary American and global worlds. We will begin by positioning African American literature within an American literary history. We will look at African American literature both as a literary tradition in its own right and as a lens through which we can better see contemporary African American culture and American culture as a whole. These cultural texts will allow us to see the ways in which African Americans have contributed to, have been influenced by, and have transformed America, and continue to do so. We will also closely consider verbal and literary modes, including: African retentions, oral traditions, signifying, folklore, and music, as well as their evolutions and how they have created a uniquely African American literary voice and how that voice has transformed to fit this contemporary moment. In an effort to critically map the trajectories of contemporary African American literature we will be interrogating not only the historical and political contexts of the works, but also the ways in which issues of gender, sexuality, and class specifically inform the works.

As a starting point, there are several primary questions that will guide our consideration of the course texts:

- 1) Does literature have a distinctive social purpose?
- 2) Is there an African American *identity*?
- 3) How does race play a determinative role in culture?
- 4) How do race, class, gender, and sexuality interact in African American literature?

Learning Outcomes:

- (1) To develop an understanding of an African American literary tradition as a syncretically shaped artistic form.
- (2) To begin to understand the critical uses of the narrative forms of oral traditions, signifying, folklore, and music in making African American literature a unique literary model.
- (3) To broaden your knowledge of the authors, literary techniques, genres, and themes common to the African American literary tradition.
- (4) To understand the theoretical concepts of race, racism and racialization as they inform the creation of an ethnic literature.
- (5) To examine the critical connections between historical eras and events and the formation of narrative.
- (6) To begin to understand the unique aspects of African American literary theory.
- (7) To understand how racial and ethnic groups 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
- (8) A critical understanding of ethnic identity and racial identity and how it is constructed and reconstructed by individuals and groups over time and different contexts.
- (9) Develop and sharpen critical communication skills through the facilitation of discussions and writing skills through essay assignments.
- (10) To encourage your assessment and evaluation of your own learning.

**THIS IS YOUR ONLY WARNING:** This class relies on the participation of the students. As such, we will engage in many lively discussions. Emphasizing collaboration and dialogue, conversation and debate, we, as an intellectual community, will engage one another in meaningful and challenging ways while we explore the varied perspectives that each of us bring to bear on class discussions. Hence, various opinions will be expressed and espoused. I ask that you be respectful of my opinions and those of your peers. In other words, refrain from rude and negative comments, for they will not be tolerated. We should be constantly vigilant that our contributions, opinions, and responses, while intellectually critical, are respectful of the differences in position, perspective, and experience we all have. If your beliefs are so strong that you cannot tolerate the opinions of others, please begin to practice tolerance now, or choose another class. People can disagree without being disrespectful.

**Note:** As this is a literature course, the reading load is quite heavy and the pace fast. Also, because writing is a means of discovery and a pathway to understanding, it is an important activity in this class in conjunction with the reading. Indeed, you should think of your writing as a mode of reading that will help you begin to understand the literature at hand. When essays, journals, and in-class assignments are considered together you will be doing some kind of writing assignment every week. Be prepared to spend much time carefully reading, considering, discussing, and writing about the texts in the course. If you cannot devote the time necessary to keep up with the assignments, and to do so in a critical manner, you will not do well in this class and may want to consider if this is the right class for you.

**Required Texts:**

- Beatty, Paul. Tuff. [BEATTY below]
- Butler, Octavia. Fledgling. [BUTLER below]
- Danticat, Edwidge. The Dew Breaker. [DANTICAT below]
- Jones, Edward P. All Aunt Hagar's Children. [JONES below]
- Morrison, Toni. Paradise. [MORRISON below]
- Whitehead, Colson. The Intuitionist. [WHITEHEAD below]
- course reader available at Cougar Copies

In addition, throughout the semester the professor may assign supplemental readings. The professor will announce any such additions during lecture.

**Assessment and Evaluation:**

Taking classes is your job here at the university. Thus, you should treat the work and requirements accordingly. In the workplace things such as absences, tardiness, and not doing your work properly have negative consequences. This is the case in my class as well. Many students' low grades are a result of not following directions or policies as well as not expending enough effort. It is your responsibility to be aware of the policies on this syllabus. If you miss class it is your responsibility to check with your student partner or other classmates to find out what you have missed. And though you are always welcome to follow up with me if you are absent, **do not** ask me if you "missed anything important."

Your grade is dependent on a number of factors that, together and holistically, inform the evaluation and assessment of your performance. In summary, these criteria include attendance, participation, reading quizzes, journals, facilitation, midterm, critical essay, final project, and the successful completion of any other reading and written assignments.

### **Course Requirements:**

- **Class Attendance (5% of final grade)**

Attendance at each meeting is required and will be taken. It is important that you attend all classes and arrive punctually to all class meetings. **Students will not be allowed into the classroom more than 20 minutes after our session has started as it is disruptive to the entire group.**

Attendance does affect your grade. Consistent tardiness will result in the lowering of your overall grade by one-half of a grade (e.g. a B would become a B-). During the course of the semester you are allowed three absences. **Each** further absence after three absences will result in a reduction of your grade by one-half of a grade (e.g. a B would become a B-). **You will not pass the course if you miss more than 5 classes.**

Moreover, students missing any class meeting are responsible for missed lectures and media material shown/discussed in their absence. Any in-class assignments cannot be made up. Make sure you sign the attendance sheet, which will be distributed at the beginning of each class meeting. If you come to class late and don't sign the attendance sheet at the end of class you will be considered absent on that particular day.

- **Participation (15% of final grade)**

This class is a student-centered learning environment in which you are largely responsible for making the meaning of the course. 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. Because of this pedagogical approach, participation is the cornerstone of this class, and a significant portion of your final grade.

As such, you are expected to be **present intellectually as well as physically** in the classroom. This means that not only must you attend, but that you must endeavor to contribute to the flow and body of the course. You will be expected to prepare carefully for each class by completing the required readings by the day on which they are listed in the course schedule. This course asks you to read texts closely and responsively. This means that if you want to do well you will actively engage with your books by writing questions in the margins, circling key terms, looking up words you do not know, and underlining themes or issues you find intriguing. Responsive readers think of themselves as having a dialogue with the author and use reading as the basis for formulating their own interesting ideas, questions, and arguments. This approach will likely assist you with comprehending the material and it may give you ideas for your contributions to the class and its discussions. **Note: Some of the reading on this syllabus may feature material of a sexual or violent nature, including explicit language; you should not remain in this class if you are uncomfortable reading works that may include this material.**

Your level of readiness to participate in a conversation about issues of race and racism is predicated upon a number of issues such as one's personality, awareness of issues, experience, and classroom climate. I also recognize that time constraints and size of the class will limit the number of people who participate. Ultimately though, while it is understood that not everyone contributes to the same degree or in the same manner, total silence during the course of the semester will affect your evaluation.

Your classroom participation grade will be based on the following criteria:

Excellence (A) requires that you play a leadership role in discussion, demonstrate that you carefully read and thoughtfully consider the text; discuss points articulately; listen sensitively and respond intelligently to other's views; do not interrupt, obstruct or dominate discussion; ask insightful, carefully-constructed questions; and take responsibility for the overall quality of the discussion.

Above Average (B) requires that you participate actively in discussion, demonstrate good knowledge of the text, work to achieve understanding, listen to other viewpoints, and ask sound questions.

Average (C) requires that you follow the discussion, make occasional comments, have a basic knowledge of the text, and sometimes ask questions.

Below Average (D) requires that you occupy a seat and occasionally show signs of life.

Failure (F) requires that you occupy a seat but show no signs of life.

#### ***Reader Reflection In-Class Exercises***

Throughout the term you will be asked to spend time to participate in reader reflection activities. The purpose of these exercises is to help you to consider more in-depthly the significance of the reader to literature, as well as the ways in which you, specifically, as a reader approach and engage literature. These reader reflections require no more than a few paragraphs of written response. Your written work will be submitted to the professor to receive a check mark or a very short comment. **NO LETTER OR NUMBER GRADES** will be used. Each submitted reflection will be worth 1 point toward your participation grade.

#### **• Reading Quizzes (10% of final grade)**

Throughout the semester there will be periodic unannounced reading quizzes based on the readings, both fiction and criticism, we will be reading for the course. The quizzes will alternatively be made up of multiple-choice questions and short answer/essay questions, or a combination of both. All of the quizzes combined will be worth **100 points**. You will be allowed to make up **only ONE quiz** during the term. **No exceptions.**

- **Journals (10% of final grade)**

You will be responsible for submitting **5 journal entries**. In the session IMMEDIATELY following our completion of our reading of EACH fictional work you will be responsible for submitting a **typed, 2-page, double-spaced** journal entry in which you consider the work and your response to it. (You may choose which 5 of the 6 texts you will write your entries on.) Journals should provide a careful and focused response to a question at issue you see arising from each particular work. Each journal should begin with a stated question at issue. The body of the journal will develop ideas related to that question. These journals 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 a persuasive essay. I will place significant emphasis on the clear statement of a viable question at issue, so think carefully about the kinds of questions that the texts and our discussion evoke. Journals will be worth **20 points each**.

**(If you choose to do a journal entry for all 6 of the texts your sixth entry will be considered “extra credit” and will not be worth the same amount as the other 5, rather it will be worth 5 points added to your overall final grade.)**

- **Facilitation (10% of final grade)**

Each student partner pairing will be responsible for administering one in-class assignment. Your duties will be 1) to devise a topic related to the reading for the day you have been assigned. (Concentrate your topic primarily on the fiction reading for the day, though feel free to incorporate aspects of the criticism as you feel is relevant.), 2) send me your topic via e-mail THE DAY BEFORE your assigned day, 3) **write a typed, one-page, single-spaced essay** responding to your topic, 4) come to class a few minutes early and write the topic on the board, 5) time your fellow classmates as they write a 10-minute essay. The topic you and your partner create should reflect what you find to be the most interesting, important, or even confusing element of that day’s reading. Your topic may be thematic or technical (concentrating on stylistic choices such as language, setting, point of view, characterizations, use of irony, etc.). Your topic should have a very narrow focus and include key words (i.e. analyze, summarize, compare, define) that will enable your classmates to quickly devise a writing strategy.

At the end of the 10-minutes you and your partner will read aloud your essay responses to your topic. You and your partner will also randomly choose one person from the class to read his/her response to your topic. Each day’s chosen reader will receive **2 points** toward their own facilitation grade. **You may only be chosen ONCE as the in-class reader.**

- **8 or more in-class responses to facilitation topics (not including your own presentation) = 5 points added to your facilitation grade**
- **4-7 in-class responses = 3 points added to your facilitation grade**
- **3-6 in-class responses = 2 points added to your facilitation grade**  
(As with all informal in-class assignments, facilitation responses CANNOT be made up if you are absent.)

- **Critical Essay (15% of final grade)**

During the semester you will be responsible for **ONE 4-page essay** responding to **ONE (1)** of the articles of literary criticism that we will be reading. Your essay should clearly, and briefly, explain the author's argument, including the aspects of literature, art, and/or politics that the author is criticizing and the approach they are suggesting. Your essay should then primarily focus on your critical analysis of the literary criticism, as well as **TWO (2)** discussion questions regarding the essay. The following pieces of criticism are the **ONLY** essays on which you may do your critical essay:

- *Unspeakable Things Unspoken* – Toni Morrison
- *Black Feminist Theory and the Representation of the "Other"* – Valerie Smith
- *A Black Man's Place in Black Feminist Criticism* – Michael Awkward
- *Contemporary African American Fiction and the Politics of Postmodernism* – Madhu Dubey
- *Taking the Offensive: The Quest for New Politics in Contemporary Black Satire* – Darryl Dickson-Carr

Your critical essay will be due the session following our in-class discussion of the respective essay on which you choose to focus. As you have several opportunities to choose from for your critical essay, **NO LATE CRITICAL ESSAYS WILL BE ACCEPTED. NO EXCEPTIONS.**

- **Midterm Exam (15% of final grade)**

There will be an in-class midterm exam on **Thursday, October 11**, consisting of 2 essay questions – 1 dealing with one of the critical essays, and 1 close reading passage taken from the novels.

- **Final Project (20% of final grade)**

For your final project you may choose **ONE** of the following options:

**Option 1 – Weblog**

A weblog, or blog, is a diary that is publicly posted on the Internet. What makes a Blog different is not that it is public, for writers have been publishing journals for centuries, but rather its dialogic possibilities that emerge when people comment and respond to one another's postings. In this class you may choose as your final project a Blog in which you will initiate your own responses to the readings, to discussion themes and issues, to each other's ideas, and to those of potential readers across the Internet. The following are the guidelines you will need to adhere to if you choose this option for your final project:

- 1) You must notify the professor in writing of your choice of this option **NO LATER THAN THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2007. NO EXCEPTIONS.** If you do not let the professor know of your choice to do a blog by the above date you will be responsible for Option 2 for the final project.
- 2) If you choose Option 1 you have until **THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2007,** to change your option. After this date you cannot change your option and will be responsible for completing the blog project.
- 3) If you currently have a blog and choose Option 1 for your final project you must create a **NEW and distinct blog.** It will not be acceptable to just add posts to your existing blog. For the final project the blog must be exclusively devoted to the readings and topics from this course.
- 4) If you choose Option 1 you may not do a “blog” on a social network such as Myspace or Friendster or Facebook. You can easily establish a free blog at [www.blogspot.com](http://www.blogspot.com) or use another suitable blogging tool, for instance TypePad or MoveableType.
- 5) You must submit your Blog’s URL to the professor by **TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2007** to verify its establishment. If I do not receive notification of your URL you won’t be allowed to continue with the blog option and will be responsible for completing Option 2. Beginning on that date you will be responsible for posting to your literary blog **AT LEAST ONCE** a week **EVERY WEEK** for the duration of the course, up until the last day of class.
- 6) Your posts should loosely alternate between a) responses to reading assignments and/or class discussions of reading assignments that are **AT LEAST** one paragraph long and b) posts that contain related links and/or relevant images, and your critical discussion of how these links and images connect to course readings, themes, and issues. This is a community space for you to create and share with your peers and the larger reading public about topics and issues relevant to contemporary African American literature.
- 7) I will evaluate you based on how often you post, the quality of engagement demonstrated in your posts, and the relevance of your posts. I will give you an informal assessment of how your blog project is going by the beginning of November.
- 8) Though you may continue with your blog after the semester is over, anything posted after **WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2007 BY 4 P.M.** will not be considered by the professor in her evaluation of your final course grade.

### **Option 2 – Final Paper**

If you choose Option 2 you will be responsible for writing an **8-10 page** paper regarding questions of form in relationship to content and/or aesthetic effect. The following are the guidelines you will need to adhere to if you choose this option for your final project:

- 1) **Your paper needs to focus, in part, on one of the writers from the course and the genre, (e.g. science fiction, the novel, short story, creative memoir), and style/form in which he/she writes, (i.e. language, narrative form, dialects, syntax, rhythm, literary allusions, cultural references) and the ways in which the particular genre and form advance a particular theme and/or create a particular aesthetic effect for the reader.**
- 2) **Additionally, you need to research another African American author who is NOT on the course reading list that writes in the same GENRE as that of the author from the course that you have chosen.**
- 3) **The assignment is not intended to be a traditional compare/contrast paper, rather you are researching a genre and the impact of form, and the ways in which writers of color uniquely engage these facets to address significant sociopolitical/sociohistorical issues. To this end, you will be required to submit a TYPED, ONE-PAGE, SINGLE-SPACED paper proposal that describes the issue/theme/question regarding genre and form that you will be addressing in your essay. The proposal is due IN-CLASS on THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2007. If you choose Option 2 and DO NOT submit a proposal by the above date your overall grade for the final project will be lowered by ONE WHOLE GRADE.**
- 4) **THE FINAL PAPER IS DUE TO THE PROFESSOR'S MAILBOX IN WILSON 111 NO LATER THAN 4 P.M., WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2007. NO LATE PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED. NO EXCEPTIONS.**

**Written Work & Evaluation Criteria:**

**• Written Work Guidelines:**

- Written work to be graded should be typed using a 12-point font, double-spaced (unless otherwise specified), spell checked, and proofread.
- **I DO NOT ACCEPT PAPERS VIA E-MAIL. NO EXCEPTIONS.**
- I WILL NOT ACCEPT formal assignments that are not typed. If you turn in a paper for a formal out-of-class assignment that is not typed, I will not grade it.
- **DO NOT PUT ANY ASSIGNMENTS UNDER MY OFFICE DOOR UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES.**
- Always keep copies of all important formal assignments – including **print** copies of electronic files – until after you receive your final grade in the course. Your professor will retain your final exam, and may retain the originals or copies of your other papers, but the responsibility for document preservation (for grade appeals or other reasons) is yours.
- In your written assignments, both formal and informal, please avoid extensive summary and background (unless otherwise requested to do so). Remember, all of us in class, most particularly the professor, have read (or should have read) the material for discussion.
- You are encouraged to *discuss* the course content and assignments with other students, but you must submit your work in your own words. I reserve the right to reject any apparently plagiarized or dishonest work. (*See the Academic Integrity Policy below*)

**-- Regarding written assignments, DO NOT use dictionaries or encyclopedias, of any type, (i.e. books or online), as critical references in your papers. Though I do encourage you to consult dictionaries and encyclopedias for your own personal clarification, they are to be used for clarification purposes ONLY and are not considered critical resources. [Any use of dictionaries as critical references in written assignments will result in the assignment being marked down.]**

**• Evaluation of Written Work:**

All papers will be evaluated on a 100-point scale, although letter grades and their numerical equivalent are used to determine your actual grade. Your papers will be evaluated on the basis of content, clarity, organization, style and grammar, and insight. The specific criteria grading scale are as follows:

Content (50 points) Here I will evaluate how well you cover the issues, integrate classroom readings into your paper, construct arguments to defend your position, critique other points of view, and put forth an effort to write a good paper.

Clarity (20 points) The main question here is whether your paper is clear and can be read by a neutral person.

Organization (20 points) Do you follow and develop a single line of reasoning or explanation before shifting to another issue or point? Is the paper logical consistent and well organized throughout? Is the writing discursive or rambling? Are your paragraphs well organized, substantive, and are there appropriate breaks between paragraphs?

Style and Grammar (10 points) Proofread your paper. Check your paper to make sure it is free of misspelled words and grammatical errors. Insure that it is neat, has appropriate margins, page numbering, and any appropriate citations.

**• Grading Criteria**

Grades for **all** work for the course will be determined by the following general criteria:

**Excellent Work:** Demonstrates comprehensive command of the theories and principles from the course, exceptional ability to apply concepts, and superior ability to creatively and appropriately organize and express ideas.

**Good Work:** Demonstrates solid command of the theories and principles from the course, ability to apply concepts with only minor problems, and good organization and expression of ideas.

**Fair Work:** Demonstrates acceptable command of the theories and principles from the course, basic ability to apply concepts, and moderate skill in organization and expression of ideas.

**Marginal Work:** Demonstrates little command of the theories and principles from the course, some attempt at applying concepts, and limited ability to organize and express ideas.

**Unacceptable Work:** Demonstrates lack of command of the subject matter, unable to appropriately and consistently apply concepts, and inconsistent use of format to organize and express ideas.

- **Late Work Policy:**

--If you have an **oral presentation** due and you must miss it, you are expected to notify me **BEFORE** class begins.

--Also, if you are unable to complete any paper by the due date, you should notify me at least **ONE DAY BEFORE** the due date and negotiate an extension. **ONLY ONE EXTENSION WILL BE GRANTED FOR ANY ONE ASSIGNMENT. (Except where otherwise noted.)**

--If you do not submit the assignment by the agreed upon extension date your assignment grade will be reduced by **ONE GRADE** for each additional day it is late. **NO EXTENSIONS WILL BE GIVEN FOR THE FINAL PROJECT.**

--If you do not notify me about late work at least one day before the due date to negotiate an extension, your grade for the assignment will immediately be reduced by one half grade for each day it is late and **WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED** after one week past the original due date.

- **Student Partners:**

In the first week, you will choose and set up permanent student partnerships for the entire semester. Partners will be responsible for each other in the event of absence (i.e. sharing lecture notes, reminding each other of deadlines, exchanging information about syllabus changes, etc.). You may also want to study together and exchange and edit papers before you turn them in. Additionally, you will be doing your Facilitation assignment with your student partner.

Be conscientious about your student partner. They are primarily a resource in case of absence, a possible study aid, and a collaborator on one assignment. In other words, don't rely on your partner to do your work for you. Ultimately, the success of your performance in the class lies with you, and you alone.

- **Grade Breakdown:**

By Grade Point:

**A = 4.0**  
**A- = 3.8**  
**B+ = 3.5**  
**B = 3.0**  
**B- = 2.8**  
**C+ = 2.5**  
**C = 2.0**  
**C- = 1.8**  
**D+ = 1.5**  
**D = 1.0**  
**F = 0**

By 100 Point Grading Scale

**94-100 = A**  
**90-93 = A-**  
**87-89 = B+**  
**83-86 = B**  
**80-82 = B-**  
**77-79 = C+**  
**73-76 = C**  
**70-72 = C-**  
**67-69 = D+**  
**63-66 = D**  
**60-62 = D-**  
**0-59 = F**

### **General Information:**

- **Disability Accommodation:**

Reasonable accommodations are available for students who have a documented disability. Please notify me during the first week of class of any accommodations needed for the course. Late notifications may cause the requested accommodations to be unavailable. All accommodations must be approved through the Disability Resource Center (DRC) in Administration Annex 205, 335-1566.

- **Academic Integrity Policy:**

Plagiarism will not be tolerated in any aspect of the course. Whether intentional or unintentional, plagiarism and/or cheating may result in a grade of “F” for the assignment in question, or a grade of “F” for the entire course. For this reason it is important to read and familiarize yourself with “WSU’s Academic Integrity Policy” which you will find in the WSU Student Handbook. *The rules for plagiarizing or other forms of cheating are not negotiable.* Make sure you fully understand what constitutes plagiarism and cheating. If you are unclear on the rules please consult the professor **before** proceeding in any conduct that you think may be questionable. **Remember that your grade depends on your understanding of these policies.**

- **Grade Problems**

During the semester use my office hours to talk to me about any problems you are having with your progress and/or evaluations for the course so we can try to fix any bad situation **early**, before it’s too late. You must communicate any problems you may be having that are affecting your coursework early on so that I am aware of the situation as I continue to evaluate your work. Any explanations for poor performance, relevant or not, will not be accepted at the end of the semester and will have no effect on your final grade. Please do not come to ask me to change your grade after you have failed the course. Also, do not come to ask me to give you an “I” because you are failing or have failed the course.

- **Classroom Etiquette Rules:**

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 will be no talking when I am addressing the class, when another student has the floor, or when we are viewing a video.

--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 the crossword, napping, etc. If you absolutely must do these things then don't come to class.

--Also in this regard, though I prefer that you do not take notes on a laptop computer, if you still choose to do so please be advised that if you are found to be checking your e-mail, surfing the web, playing video games, or anything other than taking notes for class, you will not be allowed to bring your computer to class for the rest of the semester. **NO EXCEPTIONS.**

-- Do not wear headphones, earbuds, etc. in class.

--If you have to come in late or leave early occasionally, do this quietly and unobtrusively so as not to disturb the 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.

--Cell phones and other PDAs need to be turned off while you are in the classroom. It is disrespectful to me and to your fellow students to interrupt them by allowing your phone to ring or, worse, to text message or leave the class in order to chat on the phone while class discussions are in progress. If I see your cell phone out during class, whether it rings or not, I will ask you to leave; this is embarrassing for both me and you, so I appreciate everyone's cooperation before we get to that point. If you simply cannot be incommunicado for the one hour and fifteen minutes during our class time then you should consider taking another class.

--The focus of class discussion should be on literary analysis of the works we are reading. Therefore, undeveloped and uncritical personal preference remarks are not acceptable for class discussion.

--**Finally, the failure to adhere to any of the above rules will result in the student being asked to leave and/or being marked absent for each respective class in which it occurs.**

**[Your continued enrollment in this course after the first week means that you have read and understand the information contained within this syllabus, and that you agree to follow the procedures and rules explained within it.]**

**IMPORTANT DATES:**

- **Thursday, September 6**

**WRITTEN INTENT TO DO THE BLOG OPTION DUE IN CLASS**

- **Thursday, September 11**

**SUBMIT BLOG URL FOR BLOG FINAL PROJECT**

- **Thursday, October 11**

**MIDTERM (in-class)**

- **Thursday, October 25**

**NO CLASS**

- **Thursday, November 1**

**-- LAST DAY TO CHANGE FINAL PROJECT OPTION FROM  
BLOG TO PAPER**

**-- ONE-PAGE PROPOSAL FOR FINAL PAPER DUE IN CLASS**

- **Tuesday/Thursday, November 20 & 22**

**THANKSGIVING BREAK**

- **Wednesday, December 12**

**FINAL PAPER DUE BY 4 P.M.**

## CLASS SCHEDULE

[Schedule subject to change. Any modifications will be announced in class.]

TUE AUG 21: **Introductions**

THU AUG 23: **What is the African American literary tradition?**

Read Toni Morrison, "Unspeakable Thing Unspoken: The Afro-American Presence in American Literature;" Joyce A. Joyce, "The Black Canon: Reconstructing Black American Literary Criticism;" John Young, "Toni Morrison, Oprah Winfrey, and postmodern popular audiences."  
**(READER: pp. 3-26; 75-91)**

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TUE AUG 28: **Paradise**

Read **MORRISON:** pp. 3-77  
Karla F.C. Holloway, "Revision and (Re)membrance: A Theory of Literary Structures in Literature by African-American Women Writers."  
**(READER: pp. 27-33)**

THU AUG 30: **Paradise**

Read **MORRISON:** pp. 81-138  
Marni Gauthier, "The Other Side of Paradise: Toni Morrison's (Un)Making of Mythic History." **(READER: pp. 178-191)**

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TUE SEP 4: **Paradise**

Read **MORRISON:** pp. 141-217  
Carola Hilfrich, "Anti-Exodus: Counteremory, Gender, Race, and Everyday Life in Toni Morrison's Paradise." **(READER: pp. 140-153)**

THU SEP 6: **Paradise**

Read **MORRISON:** pp. 221-318  
Channette Romero, "Creating the Beloved Community: Religion, Race, and Nation in Toni Morrison's Paradise;" Candice M. Jenkins, "Pure Black: Class, Color, and Intra-racial Politics in Toni Morrison's Paradise" **(READER: pp. 154-177)**

Due **Written Intent to do Blog final project**

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TUE SEP 11: **The Dew Breaker**  
Read **DANTICAT:** pp. 1-64  
Due **JOURNAL #1 – Morrison**  
Due **Submit Blog URL to professor (for those doing Option 1 for final project ONLY)**

THU SEP 13: **The Dew Breaker**  
Read **DANTICAT:** pp. 65-129

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TUE SEP 18: **The Dew Breaker**  
Read **DANTICAT:** pp. 130-194

THU SEP 20: **The Dew Breaker**  
Read **DANTICAT:** pp. 195-256  
Joyce A. Joyce, “The Problems with Silence and Exclusiveness in the African American Literary Community.” (**READER: pp. 43-46**)

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TUE SEP 25: **All Aunt Hagar’s Children**  
Read **JONES:** pp. 1-74  
Michael Awkward, “A Black Man’s Place in Black Feminist Criticism.” (**READER: pp. 47-55**)  
Due **JOURNAL #2 – Danticat**

THU SEP 27: **All Aunt Hagar’s Children**  
Read **JONES:** pp. 75-162

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TUE OCT 2: **All Aunt Hagar’s Children**  
Read **JONES:** pp. 163-238

TUE OCT 4: **All Aunt Hagar’s Children**  
Read **JONES:** pp. 239-322

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TUE OCT 9: **All Aunt Hagar’s Children**  
Read **JONES:** pp. 323-400

THU OCT 11: **The Intuitionist**  
Read **WHITEHEAD:** pp. 1-68  
In-class **MIDTERM (Bring bluebooks)**

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TUE OCT 16: **The Intuitionist**  
Read **WHITEHEAD:** pp. 69-136  
Sandra Adell, “The Crisis in Black American Literary Criticism and the Postmodern Cures of Houston A. Baker, Jr. and Henry Louis Gates, Jr.”  
(**READER: pp. 56-64**)  
Due **JOURNAL #3 – Jones**

THU OCT 18: **The Intuitionist**  
Read **WHITEHEAD:** pp. 137-205  
Saundra Liggins, “The Urban Gothic Vision of Colson Whitehead’s The Intuitionist.” (**READER: pp. 108-115**)

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TUE OCT 23: **The Intuitionist**  
Read **WHITEHEAD:** pp. 206-272

THU OCT 25: **NO CLASS**

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TUE OCT 30: **Fledgling**  
Read **BUTLER:** pp. 1-64  
Due **JOURNAL #4 – Whitehead**

THU NOV 1: **Fledgling**  
Read **BUTLER:** pp. 65-129  
Marilyn Mehaffy, “ ‘Radio imagination’: Octavia Butler on the poetics of narrative embodiment.” (**READER: pp. 92-107**)  
Due **1-page proposal for those doing a final paper**  
Reminder **Last day to change final project option from Blog to final paper**

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TUE NOV 6: **Fledgling**  
Read **BUTLER:** pp. 130-194

THU NOV 8: **Fledgling**  
Read **BUTLER:** pp. 195-259

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TUE NOV 13: **Fledgling**  
Read **BUTLER:** pp. 260-320

THU NOV 15: **Tuff**  
Read **BEATTY:** pp. 1-68  
Due **JOURNAL #5 – Butler**

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TUE NOV 20: **THANKSGIVING BREAK – NO CLASS**

THU NOV 22: **THANKSGIVING BREAK – NO CLASS**

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TUE NOV 27: **Tuff**

Read

**BEATTY:** pp. 69-137

Madhu Dubey, “Contemporary African American Fiction and the Politics of Postmodernism;” Darryl Dickson-Carr, “Taking the Offensive: The Quest for New Politics in Contemporary Black Satire.”

**(READER: pp. 65-74; 125-139)**

THU NOV 29: **Tuff**

Read

**BEATTY:** pp. 138-206

Ed Pavlic, “Rap, Soul, and the Vortex at 33.3 RPM: Hip-Hop’s Implements and African American Modernisms.”

**(READER: pp. 116-124)**

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TUE DEC 4: **Tuff**

Read

**BEATTY:** pp. 207-272

THU DEC 6: **Course Wrap-Up and Final Thoughts**

Due

**JOURNAL #6 – Beatty**

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**Final Paper due: Wednesday, December 12, 2007, no later than 4 p.m. to professor’s mailbox in Wilson Hall 111. NO LATE PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED. NO EXCEPTIONS.**

## About the Professor: Some Principles and Cautions<sup>1</sup>

On occasion, students ask about an instructor's "philosophy" or her views on the role of the instructor in a university and how she defines the student-faculty relationship. Below are some thoughts that should indicate where I'm coming from and should contribute to your understanding in general of what I view as the course goals and what I expect from my students.

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- I respect my field, that of ethnic studies, and take it seriously. Precisely for that reason, I am critical of ethnic studies and point to its flaws, ambiguities and limitations, its mistakes, distortions, slovenliness and misapplications, as well as to its strengths and its merit. This is my responsibility to my career as an ethnic studies scholar.
- I respect my students, and take them seriously. Precisely for that reason, I am critical of their work and point to its flaws, ambiguities and limitations, its mistakes, distortions, slovenliness and misapplications, as well as to its strengths, its creativity, and its merit. This is my responsibility to my profession as a teacher. If I didn't care, I wouldn't bother.
- I consider students enrolled in a university to be adults, with all that implies for them – and for me.
- Every student has a right to his or her beliefs. I do not expect, nor even want, everyone to agree with what I say in my lectures or what is contained in the textbook(s). But as a professor I have a right to expect, and I will expect, everyone to understand what I and/or the textbook say(s). If you don't understand, ask questions either in class or during my office hours. If you don't ask questions I will assume your understanding and evaluate you accordingly.
- All anyone ever really has is *opinions*, whether they be students, professors, scientists, or the U.S. Supreme Court. Opinions rooted in knowledge are worth respecting. Opinions rooted in ignorance are not. Opinions based on how a person feels about some issue are very personal; thus, they may be revealing about that person, but they alone do not shed light on an issue without larger foundations of knowledge.
- There are generally no **stupid** questions in the classroom. Largely, there are only questions rooted in degrees of ignorance or in degrees of knowledge. In time, the hope is that *the latter* should begin to predominate over the former.
- In general, there are no "right" answers or "wrong" answers – only good ones or poor ones. An answer is **good** if it reflects understanding, or if it leads to understanding; it is **poor** if it does neither. Understanding or explanation of something is **never complete** and **never permanent**. It is always **tentative, open to doubt**, and **partial**; and it is almost always **controversial**.

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<sup>1</sup> Modified from Professor H.H. Bash – Sociology 360 – University of Missouri, St. Louis.

- I do **not** consider myself accountable for how **others misunderstand** or how **they misconstrue** what I say; nor am I responsible for how **they misapply** it. However, it is my responsibility as an instructor to try to **correct** misunderstandings and to **reorient** misinterpretations – but I can obviously do that only *if*, and to the extent that, they come (or are brought) to my attention. If you find yourself confused or bothered by something that is said in class, either by myself or by a fellow student, please bring it to my attention, in class if appropriate, or in private if that is more comfortable, so that we may move toward resolving problems and improving the class environment and learning climate for everyone.
- **A grade represents my best professional evaluation of a piece of work. It neither is, nor can it be, a judgment about the person who submitted that work.**
- Finally, your continued enrollment in this course after the first week means that you have read and understand the information contained within this syllabus, and that you agree to follow the procedures and rules explained within it.

**FILL OUT AND RETURN TO THE PROFESSOR IN CLASS ON TUESDAY,  
AUGUST 28. PLEASE PRINT LEGIBLY:**

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**YEAR & MAJOR:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PHONE NUMBER:** \_\_\_\_\_

**E-MAIL (As there may be important messages pertaining to class transmitted over  
e-mail, please list the account that you check regularly, and indicate how often you  
check it):**

\_\_\_\_\_

**NAME OF YOUR CLASS STUDENT PARTNER:**

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