

AAS202 – Great Afro-American Literature

Fall 2005

Course times: Mondays 3:00-5:45 p.m.

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Name: Roger L. Noyes, M.A.

Office: Ward 217c

Office Hours: Mondays, 2-3 p.m.

E-mail: noyesrl@plattsburgh.edu

REQUIRED TEXTS (available at the college bookstore)

- Douglass, Frederick; Jacobs, Harriet. Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass & Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl
- Dubois, W.E.B. Souls of Black Folk
- Hurston, Zora Neale. Their Eyes Were Watching God
- Ellison, Ralph. Invisible Man
- Walker, Alice. The Color Purple

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this course is to provide students with an introductory survey of the black literary tradition in America. We will focus mainly on fiction, poetry, and autobiographical works, beginning with slave narratives and finishing the course with more contemporary literature.

Along with these readings, we will also examine critical and theoretical currents that provide the intellectual context for much of the literature. As the semester progresses, students will become familiar with such concepts as "Double Consciousness," the relationship between art and feminist criticism (as it pertains to the black experience) and the role of the novel in black politics (i.e. the Black Power Movement, the protest tradition).

METHODS OF EVALUATION

Course grading: how your overall course grade is calculated

Midterm essay (5-7 pages)	25%
Frequent reading quizzes (quiz dates are listed on the course schedule below).	25%
Final essay-type exam	25%
Attendance	10%
Class participation*	15%

* By class participation, I mean thoughtful and frequent contributions to in-class discussions and attentiveness. Class participation grades are determined at the end of the semester. Students who do not participate in class may receive as much as a full letter grade reduction by the end of the semester.

Paper grades:

Your midterm and final in-class essays will be graded according to a number of criteria. I expect your writing to contain a clear argument (thesis statement) as well as correct grammar and strong organization. Prior to the midterm essay due date, you will receive a “paper-grading rubric” that spells out exactly what I am looking for in student writing.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS AND POLICIES

- Students are expected to read all assigned materials and prepare for weekly discussion of this material.
- Attendance will be taken every week. Each class is the equivalent of a full week's course work, therefore no more than one absence will be allowed during the semester. The table below describes the penalties for missed classes.

Absences	Attendance Grade	Explanation
0-1	100%	If you miss only one class, then you will not be penalized at all. Your attendance grade will be 100% – an easy A that counts for 10% of your overall grade.
2	60%	If you miss two classes, then your attendance grade will be 60%. The effect on your overall course grade? A loss of four points.
3 or more	Student may be withdrawn from the course, or could receive an attendance grade of 0%	Missing three once-a-week classes means missing three entire weeks of a fifteen-week semester, which is unacceptable. Students who miss three or more classes may be withdrawn from the course or may get an attendance grade of 0% (course of action is taken on a case-by-case basis). An attendance grade of 0% amounts to a ten-point reduction to your overall grade.

Please note: coming to class late constitutes one-half of an absence, so if you come to class late twice, it counts as one complete absence (I consider these deductions on a case-by-case basis. Obviously, coming five minutes late to class is not as serious as coming 15 minutes late unless the five-minute lateness becomes a recurring problem). Whenever possible, please tell me in advance when and why a class must be missed. Absences are excused only for health reasons or a family emergency.

- **Late papers:** paper grades will be reduced three points for **every day** late. Papers should follow MLA format and use a traditional 12-point font (i.e. Times New Roman). Please note that I do not accept unsolicited e-mailed papers. In other words, unless otherwise indicated, I expect that a paper copy of all written assignments be handed to me during class on the date due. E-mail attachments containing student papers will not be opened unless I have solicited the e-mail from you.
- Please turn off all cell phones before entering the classroom.
- All quizzes will be graded, so if you miss a quiz, you get a zero on it – no makeups. Sounds harsh, I know, but it's not as bad as it seems. I do realize that you may miss a class or two throughout the course of the semester. Therefore, **I will only count the five highest of the six quiz grades**, in case you missed class on the day of a quiz or were unable to get the reading done in time.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

Plagiarism is unacceptable in this and in any other course. Using another writer's exact words without proper citation — or even paraphrasing another person's writing without citation — constitutes plagiarism. Please refer to the Campus Handbook for details on the college's academic honesty policies.

Students who are caught plagiarizing are given a zero on the assignment for the first infraction and receive a failing grade for the course if caught a second time. Please note that I am extremely web savvy and subscribe to an extensive web database that makes it easy for me to find plagiarized material from the Internet.

If you have questions or concerns about an assignment, just ask. I am very sympathetic to students who need assistance or who want to do a paper revision to improve a grade, but I am unsympathetic to those who intentionally plagiarize. In the end, plagiarism will be harder for you than if you were to have discussed your concerns with me ahead of time.

TENTATIVE COURSE OUTLINE (subject to minor changes):

Week 1 (8/29)

Introduction to the course

Week 2 (9/5)

Douglass, Narrative of the life of Frederick Douglass

Douglass Quiz

Week 3 (9/12)

Jacobs, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl

Jacobs Quiz

Week 4 (9/19)

Du bois, Souls of Black Folk

Du Bois Quiz

Week 5 (9/26)

Hurston, Their Eyes Were Watching God

Hurston Quiz

Week 6 (10/3)

Hurston, Their Eyes Were Watching God (continued)

Short workshop – writing about literature

Week 7 (10/10)

No class

Week 8 (10/17)

Packet of Harlem Renaissance poetry

Midterm papers due

Week 9 (10/24)

Wright, The Man Who Lived Underground (handout)

Week 10 (10/31)

Ellison, Invisible Man

Ellison Quiz

Week 11-12 (11/7-11/14)
Ellison, Invisible Man (continued)

Week 13 (11/21)
Walker, The Color Purple
Walker Quiz

Week 14 (11/28)
Walker, The Color Purple (continued)

Week 15 (12/5)
Wrap-up, prepare for final exam

We will meet for the final exam on the date scheduled by the University.