

Dr. Helena Woodard, Associate Professor
E376M, 35245; WRITING SLAVERY-W (Fall 2009)
(Same as AFR 374F; 35845); 10:00-11:00 a.m. (MWF); PAR 105
Office Hours: 12:00-1:00 p.m. MWF & By Apptmt. Parlin 331
Phone: (512) 471-8703; email: hwood@mail.utexas.edu

Contains Substantial Writing Component
Cross-listed with AFR 374

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course proposes two primary objectives rooted in past and present literary representations of slavery. Thematising "the trope of the talking book," (Henry Louis Gates, Jr.'s *The Signifying Monkey*), the course first examines seminal slave narratives, e.g. the literature of the enslaved as discursive strategies, from self-actualization and resistance to early formations of a black literary discourse. The course then explores how slavery is (re)written, controversially in a presentist context by contemporary authors, particularly in historical fiction or neo-slave narratives that seek to restore agency and reclaim subjectivity for enslaved individuals. Ultimately, the course engages larger issues about the different venues that writings about slavery offer for academic disciplines, literary instruction and/or pedagogy.

REQUIRED READINGS:

Elizabeth Alexander, *The Venus Hottentot: Poems*.
Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother*.
Henry Louis Gates, Jr. *Classic Slave Narratives*.
Suzan-Lori Parks, *The America Play and Other Works*.
Toni Morrison, *A Mercy*.
Fred D'Aguiar, *Feeding the Ghosts*.
Edward P. Jones, *The Known World*.
Course Pak (Speedway on Dobie).

***Course Requirements:**

- .75 Three critical essays (25% each; 4-5 pages per essay, typed, double spaced)
- .15 Response papers, based on course reading (1-2 pages); reading quizzes; class participation
- .10 Oral presentations, accompanied by one-page written report

Prerequisites: Rhetoric and Writing 306 and English 316K or their equivalents (e.g. T C 603A and 603B), and three additional semester hours of lower-division coursework in either English or rhetoric and writing. No exceptions.

English Major Area: II. Literary Period or Survey

*The course contains select readings from African American literature since the Harlem Renaissance. Three lecture hours a week for one semester. The subject of each class meeting may be determined from the assigned reading for the day (see course schedule). The instructor retains the right to vary this syllabus.

Attendance:

Regular attendance is required. More than four absences will be sufficient grounds for failure in the course. The four allowed absences will include illness, deaths of relatives, and other emergencies. If you are more than five minutes late or leave before class ends (without permission), you will be counted absent for that class. You are responsible for all work covered in your absence.

Class Policies:

Absolutely no make-up for reading quizzes. In exchange, the lowest quiz grade will be dropped. Except under extreme emergencies, and then only with the permission of the professor, late assignments will not be accepted without a penalty. Students are expected to turn in all required assignments on the agreed upon due date at the beginning of class. Papers turned in during or after class on the due day will be considered late. A five point deduction will be applied for every late day. Use the MLA (Modern Language Association) Stylebook for all papers. Type papers on white, 8.5" x 11" paper, using one side only. Bind pages with a paper clip.

Special Accommodations for Students with a Disability:

Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 471-6259. Please notify the professor of any special accommodations that you may need prior to the end of the second week of class.

Policy on Religious Observance:

A student who is absent from a class or examination due to the observance of a religious holy day may complete the work missed within a reasonable time after the absence if proper notice has been given. Notice must be given at least fourteen days prior to the classes scheduled on dates the student will be absent. For religious holy days that

fall within the first two weeks of the semester, notice should be given on the first day of the semester.

Grading Scale:

Final grades will be determined on the basis of the following rubric. Please note that to ensure fairness, all numbers are absolute, and will not be rounded up or down at any stage. Thus, a B- will be inclusive of all scores of 80.000 through 83.999. The University does not recognize the grade of A+.

A (94-100); A- (90-93); B+ (87-89); B (84-86); B- (80-83); C+ (77-79); C (74-76); C- (70-73); D+ (67-69); D (64-66); D- (60-63); F (0-59).

Plus/minus grades will be assigned for the final grade. This is a writing-intensive course. No final exam is given.

COURSE PACK CONTENTS

1. Chapter 1, "Cultural Trauma and Collective Memory," from Eyerman, Ron. *Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001: 1-22.
2. Chapter 3, "Seduction and the Ruses of Power," from Hartman, Saidiya. *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America.* New York, Oxford University Press, 1997: 79-112.
3. Chapter 2, "The Last Place They Thought Of: Black Women's Geographies," from McKittrick, Katherine. *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006: 37-64.
4. Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire," *Representations*, 26 (Spring) 1989, The Regents of the University of California: 9-25.
5. Chapter 1, "History as Wound," from Peterson, Nancy J. *Against Amnesia: Contemporary Women Writers and the Crises of Historical Memory.* Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001: 1-17.
6. Ryan, Katy. "'No Less Human': Making History in Suzan-Lori Parks's *The America Play*." *Journal of Dramatic Theory & Criticism* 13.2 (1999): 81-94.
7. Chapter 1, "Writing Sex, Writing Difference: Creating the Text on the Hottentot Venus," from Sharpley-Whiting, T. Denean. *Black Venus: sexualized savages, primal fears, and primitive narratives in French.* Durham, Duke University Press, 1999: 16-31.
8. Zelizer, Barbie. "Reading Against the Grain: The Shape of Memory Studies." *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, Vol. 12 (1995): 214-239.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

- W 8/26 Introduction to course; policies, etc.
Some dates subject to change. Any changes (TBA).
- F 8/28 Hartman, *Lose Your Mother*, prologue & chaps 1-2.
"President Obama's Journey to Africa." See
Interview with Anderson Cooper, AC/360 online.
Zelizer, "Reading Against the Grain," course pak.
- M 8/31 Hartman, *Lose Your Mother*, chapters 3-4.
"President Obama at Elmina Castle." See
Interview with Anderson Cooper, AC/360 online.
- W 9/2 Hartman, *Lose Your Mother*, chapter 6. See
Interview with Anderson Cooper, AC/360 online.
- F 9/4 Out-of-class assignment: response paper I:
Review entire transcript (about 40 pages) for
Anderson Cooper interview with President Obama
at Cape Coast Castle in Ghana. AC/360 online;
also copy placed on reserve at PCL under
instructor & course name. Prepare a two-page
response due Wednesday 9/9.
- M 9/7 LABOR DAY.
- W 9/9 Hartman, *Lose Your Mother*, chapter 7.
Alexander, *Poems*, Part I, "The Venus Hottentot."
Sharpley-Whiting, course pack.
- F 9/11 Alexander, Part I, "The Venus Hottentot."
Film clip, *The Life & Times of Sarah Bartman*.
Hartman, *Lose Your Mother*, chapters 8-9.
- M 9/14 Hartman, *Lose Your Mother*, chapters 10-12.
Reading quiz I.
- W 9/16 *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*.
Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History," pak.
- F 9/18 *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*.
- M 9/21 *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*.
CRITICAL ESSAY I: CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES
ON SLAVERY AND CAPE COAST CASTLE
- W 9/23 *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*.

- F 9/25 Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*.
Hartman, from *Scenes of Subjection*, course pack.
- M 9/28 Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*.
Reading quiz II.
- W 9/30 Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*.
McKittrick, from *Demonic Grounds*, course pack.
- F 10/2 Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*.
- M 10/5 Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*.
- W 10/7 Suzan-Lori Parks, *The America Play*.
Katy Ryan, "No Less Human," course pack.
Response paper II: 'sites of memory'
- F 10/9 Suzan-Lori Parks, *The America Play*.
Film clip, "The Lincoln Assassination,"
Ken Burns, *The Civil War, A Documentary*.
- M 10/12 Suzan-Lori Parks, *The America Play*.
Kurt Bullock, "Famous Last Words.
- W 10/14 Suzan-Lori Parks, *The America Play*.
- F 10/16 Suzan-Lori Parks, *The America Play*.
Reading quiz III.
- M 10/19 Toni Morrison, *A Mercy*.
Film clip, *Africans in America*.
- W 10/21 Toni Morrison, *A Mercy*.
John Updike, "New York Times Review."
- F 10/23 Toni Morrison, *A Mercy*.
Nancy Peterson, "History as Wound," course pack.
CRITICAL ESSAY II: 'SITES OF MEMORY'
- M 10/26 Toni Morrison, *A Mercy*.
- W 10/28 Toni Morrison, *A Mercy*.
- F 10/30 Fred D'Aguiar, *Feeding the Ghosts*.
Ron Eyeran, "Cultural Trauma," course pack.
Response paper III.

- M 11/2 Fred D'Aguiar, *Feeding the Ghosts*.
- W 11/4 Fred D'Aguiar, *Feeding the Ghosts*.
- F 11/6 Fred D'Aguiar, *Feeding the Ghosts*.
- M 11/9 Fred D'Aguiar, *Feeding the Ghosts*.
Reading quiz IV.
- W 11/11 E. P. Jones, *The Known World*.
- F 11/13 E. P. Jones, *The Known World*.
- M 11/16 E. P. Jones, *The Known World*.
- W 11/18 E. P. Jones, *The Known World*.
- F 11/20 E. P. Jones, *The Known World*.
CRITICAL ESSAY III: REWRITING SLAVERY
- M 11/23 "The memory studies debate."
Oral group presentations begin.
- W 11/25 Oral group presentations.
- THANKSGIVING BREAK
- M 11/30 Oral group presentations.
- W 12/2 Oral group presentations.
- F 12/4 **LAST CLASS DAY.**
Oral group presentations conclude.
Response paper IV.

Dr. H. Woodard
8/26/09

1. **Obama at Cape Coast Castle on Youtube**
2. **Bush/Clinton at Goree Isle, Senegal (dot cam)**
3. **Assignment; group projects**
4. **Course policies**
5. **Take roll; introduce students**
6. **"The Memory studies debate/controversy"**