Dr. Helena Woodard, Associate Professor (Fall 2009)

E 376S, 35255; AFRICAN AMERICAN LITERATURE SINCE THE HARLEM

**RENAISSANCE-W** 

(Same as AFR 374F; 35855); 11:00-12:00 noon, (MWF) PAR 204 Office Hours: 12:00-1:00 p.m. (MWF) & By Appointment; Parlin 331

Phone: (512) 471-8703; email: hwood@mail.utexas.edu

# Contains Substantial Writing Component Cross-listed with AFR 374

E 376M (Topic 2: *African American Literature: 1940 to Present*) may not also be counted.

# **Description:**

Is the problem of the 21<sup>st</sup> century *still* the color line—as W.E.B. Du Bois (<u>The Souls of Black Folks</u>) termed it a century ago? Or have we reached a so-called "post racial" or racially transcendent phase or era in which race has significantly declined—ideas foregrounded in writings by Julius Wilson and Paul Gilroy, among others? How is the color line implicated in a postmodernist framework differently than in a modernist one? Utilizing select, post Harlem Renaissance novels, poetry, and plays by African-American authors, this course engages the increasingly eclectic turn that encompasses or characterizes contemporary African-American literature. The course thematizes the novel as "speakerly text" (Hurston), as naturalism in a gendered context in urban America (Petry), as historical fiction (Morrison), and as speculative fiction (Parks). It further features blues ideology as literary trope (Wilson) and poetry as memoir (Jordan).

# **Required Readings:**

Zora Neale Hurston, <u>Their Eyes Were Watching God</u>
Ann Petry, <u>The Street</u>
August Wilson, <u>The Piano Lesson</u>
A. Van Jordan, <u>MacNolia</u>: Poems
Suzan-Lori Parks, <u>Getting Mother's Body</u>
Toni Morrison, <u>Beloved</u>
Course pack (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 readings (1-2 pages per paper); reading quizzes; class participation
- .10 Oral presentations, accompanied by one-page 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. 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 that follows). 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 quizzes. In exchange, the lowest quiz grade (excluding response papers) 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 fo 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, 471-6359. Please notify the professor of nyi special accommodations sthat 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 dafes the student will be absent. For religious holy days that fall within the first two weeks of the semeser, 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 will be given.

### CONTENT OF COURSE PACK

- 1. Hazel Carby. "The Politics of Fiction, Anthropology, and the Folk." In Awkward, Michael ed., *New Essays on Their Eyes Were Watching God* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990): 71-93.
- 2. Maria Johnson. "The World in a Jug and the Stopper in [Her] Hand": *Their Eyes* as Blues Performance," in *African American Review*, Vol. 32, number 3 (1998): 401-414.
- 3. Keith Clark. "A Distaff Dream Deferred? Ann Petry and the Art of Subversion," in African American Review, Vol. 26, number 3 (1992): 495-504.
- 4. Walter Benn Michaels. "You who never was there": Slavery and the New Historicism, Deconstruction and the Holocaust. *NARRATIVE*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (January 1996): 1-16.
- 5. Devon Boan. "Call-and-Response: Parallel 'Slave Narrative' in August Wilson's *The Piano Lesson*." *African American Review*, Vol. 32, Number 2 (Summer 1998).
- 6. J. Brooks Bouson. Chapter 6, "The Dirtied and Traumatized Self of Slavery in *Beloved*." In *Quiet As It's Kept*: shame, trauma, and race in the novels of Toni Morrison. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000: 131-162.
- 7. Charles H. Rowell. "The Poem is Smarter Than the Poet." An Interview with A. Van Jordan. *Callaloo*, Vol. 27, number 4 (2004): 908-919.

# **TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE**

W	8/26	Introduction to course; policies.  Some dates subject to change; any changes will be announced.
F	8/28	Zora Neale Huston, <i>Their Eyes Were Watching God</i> Richard Wright, Review. Their Eyes, course pack. Film clip, Their Eyes Were Watching God, Harpo Productions.
M	8/31	Zora Neale Hurston, <i>Their Eyes Were Watching God</i> Maria Johnson, "The World in a Jug," (course pack.) "Bumblebee Song," Memphis Minnie.
W	9/2	Zora Neale Hurston, <i>Their Eyes Were Watching God</i> Film clip, Their Eyes Were Watching God.
F	9/4	Out-of-class assignment; Response paper I; due 9/9. Hazel Carby, "The Politics of Fiction" (course pack.)
M	9/7	LABOR DAY.
W	9/9	Zora Neale Hurston, Their Eyes Were Watching God
F	9/11	Zora Neale Hurston, <i>Their Eyes Were Watching God</i> Oral group presentations I: The blues as discourse
M	9/14	Hurston, <i>Their Eyes Were Watching God</i> Film clip, <i>Their Eyes Were Watching God</i>
W	9/16	Ann Petry, <i>The Street</i> Keith Clark, "A Distaff Dream Deferred?" (course pack.) CRITICAL ESSAY I: (TBA)
F	9/18	Ann Petry, The Street
M	9/21	Ann Petry, The Street
W	9/23	Ann Petry, <i>The Street</i>
F	9/25	Ann Petry, <i>The Street</i>
M	9/28	Ann Petry, <i>The Street</i>
W	9/30	Oral group presentations II: Contemporary representations

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F	10/2	August Wilson, The Piano Lesson
M	10/5	August Wilson, <i>The Piano Lesson</i> Charles Rowell, "The Poem is Smarter Than the Poet," (course pack.)
W	10/7	August Wilson, <i>The Piano Lesson</i> Devon Boan, "Call-and-Response" (course pack.)
F	10/9	August Wilson, The Piano Lesson
M	10/12	August Wilson, The Piano Lesson
W	10/14	Response paper II (in-class) TBA.
F	10/16	Toni Morrison, <i>Beloved</i> <u>Critical Essay II</u> (TBA).
M	10/19	Toni Morrison, <i>Beloved</i> Walter Benn Michaels, "You Who Never Was There": Slavery and the New Historicism, Deconstruction, and the Holocaust (course pack).
W	10/21	Toni Morrison, <i>Beloved</i>
F	10/23	Toni Morrison, Beloved
M	10/26	Toni Morrison, <i>Beloved</i>
W	10/28	Toni Morrison, <i>Beloved</i>
F	10/30	Oral group presentations III: The Margaret Garner story
М	11/2	A. Van Jordan, <i>MacNolia</i>
W	11/4	A. Van Jordan, <i>MacNolia</i>
F	11/6	A. Van Jordan, <i>MacNolia</i>
М	11/9	A. Van Jordan, <i>MacNolia</i>
W	11/11	A. Van Jordan, <i>MacNolia</i>

F	11/13 Response paper III (TBA)
M	11/16 Suzan-Lori Parks, Getting Mother's Body
W	11/18 Suzan-Lori Parks, Getting Mother's Body
F	11/20 Suzan-Lori Parks, Getting Mother's Body
M	11/23 Suzan-Lori Parks, <i>Getting Mother's Body</i> <u>CRITICAL ESSAY III</u> (TBA)
W	11/25 Suzan-Lori Parks, Getting Mother's Body
	THANKSGIVING BREAK
M	11/30 Oral group presentations IV: (TBA)
W	12/2 Oral group presentations V: (TBA)
F	12/4 LAST CLASS DAY.  Responses to presentations IV