

**CUYAMACA COLLEGE**  
COURSE OUTLINE OF RECORD

**English 238 — Black Literature**

3 hours lecture, 3 units

**Catalog Description**

This course introduces students to a survey of Black literature, focusing on the early oral tradition, literature of slavery and freedom, the Harlem Renaissance, Modernism, the Black Arts Era, and the contemporary period. Reading selections may consist of poetry, short stories, plays, novels, and nonfiction prose, including essays, letters, political tracts, autobiographies, speeches, and sermons. Students analyze the literature and apply critical theory to describe critical events in the histories, cultures, and intellectual and literary traditions, with special focus on the lived experiences, social struggles, and contributions of African Americans in the United States. *Also listed as ETHN 238. Not open to students with credit in ETHN 238.*

**Prerequisite**

None

**Recommended Preparation**

Placement into ENGL C1000 (formerly ENGL 120) or ESL 122

**Entrance Skills**

Without the following skills, competencies and/or knowledge, students entering this course will be highly unlikely to succeed:

- 1) Ability to effectively read and compose college-level texts.

**Course Content**

- 1) Black literature from the following intellectual and aesthetic movements:
  - a. Oral Tradition, including Spirituals, Gospel, Blues, Ballads, Work Songs, Songs of Social Change, Jazz, Rhythm and Blues, Rap, Hip Hop, Sermons, Speeches and Folktales (i.e., “Go Down, Moses,” “This Little Light of Mine,” “Good Morning Blues,” “No More Auction Block,” “The Signifying Monkey,” “We Shall Overcome,” Gil Scott-Heron, Public Enemy, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X).
  - b. Literature of Slavery and Freedom, 1746-1865 (i.e., Jupiter Hammon, Lucy Terry, Phillis Wheatley, Sojourner Truth, Harriet Jacobs, Elizabeth Keckley, Frederick Douglass, Frances E. W. Harper).
  - c. Literature of the Reconstruction to the Harlem Renaissance, 1865-1940 (i.e., David Walker, Henry Highland Garnet, Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois, Claude McKay, Zora Neale Hurston, Anna Julia Cooper, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Charles Chesnutt, Sterling A. Brown, Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen).
  - d. Realism, Naturalism, Modernism, 1940-1960 (i.e., Dorothy West, Richard Wright, Margaret Walker, Robert Hayden, Gwendolyn Brooks, James Baldwin, Lorraine Hansberry, Ann Petry).
  - e. The Black Arts Era, 1960-1975 (i.e., Amiri Baraka, June Jordan, Lucile Clifton, Ishmael Reed, Michael S. Harper, Nikki Giovanni, Quincy Troupe, Sonia Sanchez).
  - f. Contemporary period, 1975-present (i.e., Maya Angelou, Toni Morrison, Ernest J. Gaines, Sherley Anne Williams, Alice Walker, August Wilson, Ntozake Schange, Rita Dove, Jessica Care Moore, Saul Williams, Patricia Smith, Suzan-Lori Parks, Octavia Butler).

- 2) Introduction to the terms, methodologies and conceptual models used to study African American Literature in the United States, including race and ethnicity, racialization, equity, ethno-centricism, white supremacy, self-determination, liberation, decolonization, and anti-racism.
- 3) Literary theories (which may include Critical Race Theory, Critical Gender and Sexuality Theory, American Studies, New Historicism, Formalism, and Marxist Theory) and how they can be used to analyze the literature, with special focus on the lived experiences and social struggles of African Americans.
- 4) The intersection of race and ethnicity, as expressed in the literature and in the lived experiences of writers, with other forms of difference affected by hierarchy and oppression, such as class, gender, sexuality, religion, spirituality, national origin, immigration status, ability, and/or age.
- 5) The struggle, resistance, social justice, solidarity, and liberation, as expressed in the literature and experienced by African American communities, and how these topics are relevant to current issues.
- 6) The ways in which African American literature and its authors have actively engaged with anti-racist issues, practices, and movements to build a diverse, just, and equitable society.

### **Course Objectives**

Students will be able to:

- 1) Analyze, interpret, and evaluate Black literary works within the social, political, historical, cultural and aesthetic contexts that have formed Black experiences in the United States.
- 2) Evaluate the literary and intellectual contributions Black writers have made to American culture, as well as the linguistic, historical, philosophical, social, political, and aesthetic impact of Black literature on American culture and society.
- 3) Apply literary theory (which may include Critical Race Theory, Critical Gender and Sexuality Theory, American Studies, New Historicism, Formalism, and Marxist Theory) to analyze the literature, with special focus on the lived experiences and social struggles of Black Americans.
- 4) Analyze and articulate concepts of ethnic studies, including but not limited to race and ethnicity, racialization, equity, ethno-centricism, white supremacy, self-determination, liberation, decolonization, and anti-racism.
- 5) Critically discuss the intersection of race and ethnicity, as expressed in the literature and in the lived experiences of Black writers, with other forms of difference affected by hierarchy and oppression, such as class, gender, sexuality, religion, spirituality, national origin, immigration status, ability, and/or age.
- 6) Describe how struggle, resistance, social justice, solidarity, and liberation, as expressed in the literature and experienced by Black communities in the United States, are relevant to current issues.
- 7) Analyze the ways in which Black literature and its authors have actively engaged with anti-racist issues, practices, and movements to build a diverse, just, and equitable society.

### **Method of Evaluation**

A grading system will be established by the instructor and implemented uniformly. Grades will be based on demonstrated proficiency in the subject matter determined by multiple measurements for evaluation, one of which must be essay exams, skills demonstration or, where appropriate, the symbol system.

- 1) Summaries
- 2) Annotated bibliographies
- 3) Academic Essays
- 4) Reader responses/journals
- 5) Quizzes
- 6) Analysis, interpretation, and discussion of literature
- 7) Student reports and/or oral presentations on selected topics or authors
- 8) Group and individual projects
- 9) Reviews of literary arts activities
- 10) In-class exams, including the final exam
- 11) Out-of-class evidence-based analytical essays (prepared in standard MLA format)

**Special Materials Required of Student**

- 1) Collegiate dictionary and thesaurus.
- 2) Access to a computer, the Internet, and a printer (available on campus).

**Minimum Instructional Facilities**

Standard lecture classroom with moveable chairs, whiteboards, overhead projector, and permanent smart cart.

**Method of Instruction**

- 1) Lectures and presentations by the instructor and visiting writers and/or speakers.
- 2) Facilitation of student analysis, interpretation, and discussion of literature.
- 3) Student reports and/or oral presentations on selected topics or authors.
- 4) Films and audio recordings.
- 5) Individual conferences.
- 6) Field trips to appropriate cultural and literary activities.

**Out-of-Class Assignments**

- 1) Read assigned texts.
- 2) Write academic essays, annotated bibliographies, and a variety of other short assignments.
- 3) Research various assigned readings and/or authors.
- 4) Maintain journals or other types of unstructured prose.
- 5) Attend literary events and readings on campus and in the greater community.
- 6) Individual and group projects.

**Texts and References**

- 1) Required (representative examples):
  - a. Gates, Henry Louis, Jr., ed. *The Norton Anthology of African-American Literature* (with CD). 3rd ed. New York: W.W. Norton, 2013.
  - b. Jarrett, Gene Andrew. *The Wiley Blackwell Anthology of African American Literature: Volume 1, 1746 to 1920*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2014.
  - c. Jarrett, Gene Andrew. *The Wiley Blackwell Anthology of African American Literature: Volume 2, 1920 to present*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2014.
- 2) Supplemental:
  - a. Abrams, M.H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Boston: Cengage Learning, 2011.
  - b. Barnet, Sylvan and William E. Cain. *A Short Guide to Writing About Literature*. 12th ed. New York: Longman Publishers, 2011.
  - c. Hurston, Zora Neale. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2006.
  - d. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. 7th ed. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2009.
  - e. Morrison, Toni. *The Bluest Eye*. New York: Vintage, 2007.
  - f. Smith, Patricia. *Blood Dazzler*. Minneapolis: Coffee House Press, 2008.
  - g. Trethewey, Natasha. *Thrall*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012.
  - h. Wright, Richard. *Black Boy*. New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2008.
  - i. As selected by the instructor.

**Student Learning Outcomes**

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- 1) Use literary terminology and basic critical theory to discuss, analyze, synthesize, and interpret Black literary works in various genres.
- 2) Write evidence-based literary analyses of Black literature demonstrating close reading and interpretive skills, logical reasoning, and argumentative strategies.
- 3) Analyze how Black literary texts portray struggle, resistance, social justice, solidarity, and/or liberation, and how the texts engage with anti-racist issues, practices, and movements to build a diverse, just, and equitable society.