

Syllabus--English 374W-01  
Early African American Writers

Professor Ferguson  
Fall 2008

Students will read closely the writings of early Africans in America and critically evaluate their impact on and interaction with other American racial, ethnic, and cultural literature. The course also has the following general goals to:

- identify and examine types of genre used by early African American authors
- examine the stylistic features of these works--characters, themes, structure, etc.
- examine critical and theoretical approaches to early African American writing
- increase student ability to write organized, coherent, and insightful essays.

Students will read closely and write perceptively about ongoing course assignments and readings. Two five-page course papers, a journal of responses to selected readings, midterm and final exams are required.

#### Required Texts

*Call and Response: The Riverside Anthology of the African American Literary Tradition.* Patricia Hill et al., Eds. Houghton Mifflin. (1998)  
*The Marrow of Tradition.* Charles W. Chesnutt, 1901

#### Tentative Course Reading Schedule

- Aug. 25 Introduction
- 27 "Rabbit Teaches Bear a Song", pp. 61-62; "Tales of Flying Africans," pp. 64-65
- 29 Jupiter Hammon: "An Evening Thought: Salvation by Christ, with Penetential[sic] Cries," pp. 74-76
- Sept. 1 LABOR DAY
- 3 Hammond continued
- 5 Lucy Terry: "Bars Fight," pp. 90-91
- 8 Phillis Wheatley: "On Being Brought from Africa to America," p. 98
- 10 Benjamin Banneker: "Letter to Thomas Jefferson," pp. 156-160; Jefferson's Response, BLACKBOARD
- 12 Briton Hammon: From *Narrative of the Uncommon Sufferings, and Surprising [sic] Deliverance of Briton Hammon etc.*, pp. 110-114
- 15 *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself*, pp. 114-136
- 17 Equiano continued
- 19 David Walker: *David Walker's Appeal*, pp. 245-257; FIRST JOURNAL REVIEW
- 22 RETURN/DISCUSSION OF JOURNALS; Walker continued
- 24 Thomas Gray: *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, pp. 418-432
- 26 Gray continued; Maria Stewart: *Religion and Pure Principles of Morality*, pp. 395-404
- 29 Henry Highland Garnet: "An Address to the Slaves of the United States," pp. 264- 272

- Oct. 1 Frederick Douglass: *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass An American Slave*; *Written by Himself*, pp. 272-319  
 3 Douglass continued  
 6 James Whitfield: *From America and Other Poems, America*, pp. 377-381;  
 FIRST DRAFT FIRST COURSE ESSAY DUE  
 8 RETURN/DISCUSSION FIRST DRAFT OF FIRST COURSE ESSAY; Frances  
 Watkins Harper: "The Two Offers," pp. 357-363; "The Slave Auction," p.  
 350, "A Double Standard," pp. 353-354  
 10 Harper continued; SECOND DRAFT OF FIRST COURSE ESSAY DUE  
 13 RETURN/DISCUSSION SECOND DRAFT FIRST ESSAY; Harriet  
 Jacobs: *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Written by Herself*, pp. 432-464  
 15 Jacobs continued; FINAL DRAFT OF FIRST COURSE ESSAY DUE  
 17 MIDTERM EXAM  
 FALL BREAK  
 22 RETURN/DISCUSSION OF MIDTERM EXAM and FINAL DRAFT OF FIRST  
 COURSE ESSAY;  
 24 Elizabeth Keckley: *Behind the Scenes; or Thirty Years a Slave, and Four  
 Years in the White House*, pp. 500-507  
 27 Keckley continued  
 29 William Wells Brown: *Clotelle: A Tale of the Southern States*, pp. 513-522  
 31 Brown continued  
 Nov. 3 Harriet E. Wilson: *Our Nig: Or, Sketches from the Life of a Free Black*, pp. 525-  
 531  
 5 Pauline Hopkins: From *Contending Forces*: "The Sewing Circle,"  
 pp. 717-724  
 7 Hopkins continued; FIRST DRAFT SECOND COURSE ESSAY DUE  
 10 RETURN/DISCUSSION OF FIRST DRAFT SECOND COURSE ESSAY; Ida B.  
 Wells: "Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases," pp. 724-732  
 12 Ida B. Wells continued; SECOND DRAFT SECOND COURSE ESSAY DUE  
 14 RETURN/DISCUSSION SECOND DRAFT SECOND COURSE ESSAY; Paul  
 Laurence Dunbar: "We Wear the Mask," p. 615  
 17 Dunbar continued; FINAL DRAFT OF SECOND ESSAY DUE  
 19 RETURN/DISCUSSION FINAL DRAFT SECOND COURSE ESSAY; Charles  
 W. Chesnutt: *The Marrow of Tradition*;  
 21 Chesnutt continued  
 24 Chesnutt continued; FINAL JOURNAL REVIEW DUE  
 THANKSGIVING BREAK, NO CLASSES  
 Dec. 1 RETURN/DISCUSSION OF JOURNALS; Booker T. Washington: From  
*Up from Slavery*, pp. 658-660, 673-684  
 3 Washington continued  
 5 W. E. B. DuBois: From *Souls of Black Folk*; pp. 732-748  
 8 DuBois continued  
 15 FINAL EXAM, 8 AM-11 AM

### Evaluation

The final course grade is determined by two five-page essays that counts for 20% each or 40%, a journal that counts for 15%, a midterm exam that counts for 20%, and a final

exam that counts for 25%. All students will prepare three drafts of EACH ESSAY. After all these drafts, those essays failing to receive at least a "C" must be revised further, the final grade being the highest of all the drafts. The topic for the course essay is assigned, but you may suggest a topic, which must be approved. ALL COURSE WORK MUST BE TURNED IN ON TIME, and late papers are dropped one whole letter grade. Makeup exams are rare, except for medical emergency for which the student provides acceptable written documentation. Grades are based on the following scale: A= 4.0; A-= 3.7; B+= 3.3; B= 3.0; B-= 2.7; C+= 2.3; C= 3.0; C-= 1.7; D+= 1.3; D= 1.0; D-= .7; F= 0; WF= 0; S=Satisfactory; U=Unsatisfactory.

Attendance:

Students who have more than three unexcused absences are strongly encouraged to drop the course. Tardy students disrupt class discussion; therefore, the classroom door will be closed promptly at the beginning of the hour. Except for emergencies, please do not open it.

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Office Hours: MW, 12:00 PM-1:00 PM and by appointment.

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