



The Lester and Sally Entin הפקולטה למדעי הרוח
Faculty of Humanities ע"ש לסטר וסאלי אנטין
Tel Aviv University אוניברסיטת תל אביב

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND AMERICAN STUDIES החוג לאנגלית ולימודים אמריקניים

African American Literature

0626-2355-01

Spring 2019

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Office: Web 503

Office Hours: By Appointment

Class hours: Monday-Thursday, 14-16, Gilman 278

Course Descriptions

How does a literary tradition emerge within an oppressed group deliberately kept illiterate? How do slavery, prejudice, discrimination and racism inform and influence the evolving tradition throughout the years? How are African American writers influenced by: the ideologies, allure, expectations, criticism and gaze of the white world? We will explore these questions in reference to canonic texts of the African American literary tradition (slave narratives, autobiographies, short stories, essays, novels), while reflecting on identity and racism, blues and jazz, language and the vernacular, form and voice, gender and sexuality.

The course will emphasize visual aspects of African American culture and will explore ways in which African American writers dealt with diverse representations of 'blackness', both thematically, as they contended with the 'meanings' of images and the manner in which they could be 'used', and formally, as photography shaped the way they 'saw' and wrote about the world.

Course Requirements:

Attendance is compulsory. Come prepared (read!).

In-class Midterm (18%)

Take Home Final Paper (82%)

Schedule

February 28 - Introduction

March 4 – Frederick Douglass & Harriet Jacobs

March 7 – Reconstruction, Booker T. Washington and Charles Chesnutt

March 11 – W.E.B. DuBois

March 14 –James Weldon Johnson

March 18 –JWJ

March 21 Purim Vacation

March 25 – Harlem Renaissance and Langston Hughes

March 28 – Claude McKay

April 1 – Claude McKay

April 4 – Zora Neale Hurston

April 8 – *Interlude with: GB Tran* – Reading TBA

April 11 – Zora Neale Hurston

April 15 – Richard Wright

Passover Break

April 29 – Midterm

May 2 – Lynching

May 6 – Ralph Ellison

May 9 – Yom HaAtzmaut

May 13 – Baldwin

May 16 – Civil Rights

May 20 – Nation of Islam

May 23 – Yom Hastudent

May 27 – Black Power, Black Nationalism, Black Art

May 30 – Toni Morrison

June 3 – Toni Morrison

June 6 – Colson Whitehead

June 10 – Colson Whitehead

June 13 - Nafissa Thompson

TEXTS

Required reading (in green)

Optional reading (in black)

1. Introduction

- Zora Neale Hurston: *Barracoon: The Story of the Last “Black Cargo”* (2018)
- Phillis Wheatley & The Question of Literacy: Henry Louis Gates, “Writing, ‘Race’ and the Difference it Makes” (1992).
- Ta-Nahisi Coates: *Between the World and Me* (2015)
- Segregation, Assimilation and Racism: Ibram X. Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas* (2016).
- “What the Dead Know by Heart” - Donte Collins

2. The Slave Narrative 1: Literacy, Identity and Freedom

Frederick Douglass, The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass (1845). Chapters 1, 6

- Houston Baker, “Autobiographical Acts and the Voice of the Southern Slave.” *The Slave’s Narrative*, ed. Charles T. Davis and Henry Louis Gates (1990).
- James Olney, “‘I was born’: Slave Narratives, their Status as Autobiography and as Literature.” *The Slave’s Narrative*, ed. Charles T. Davis and Henry Louis Gates (1990).
- Sarah Blackwood, “Fugitive Obscura: Runaway Slave Portraiture and Early Photographic Technology” (2009).
- John Stauffer, Zoe Trodd, Celeste Marie Bernier. *Picturing Frederick Douglass: an illustrated biography of the nineteenth century’s most photographed American*

3. The Slave Narrative 2: The Cult of True Womanhood
Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861). Chapters 1, 5, 10
 - Hazel Carby, "Slave and Mistress." In *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist* (1987).
 - Jean Fagan Yellin, "Text and Contexts of Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl: Written by Herself*." *The Slave's Narrative*, ed. Charles T. Davis and Henry Louis Gates (1990).

4. Reconstruction and the Rise of Jim Crow/Racial Segregation
Booker T. Washington, "The Atlanta Address," *Up From Slavery* (1901)
Charles Chesnutt, "The Wife of His Youth" and "The Passing of Grandison." *The Wife of His Youth and Other Stories of the Color Line* (1898)
 - Tess Chakkalakal, *Novel Bondage: Slavery, Marriage, Freedom in Nineteenth Century America* (2011).
 - John Edgar Wideman, "Charles Chesnutt and the WPA Narratives: The Oral and Literate Roots of Afro-American Literature." *The Slave's Narrative*, ed. Charles T. Davis and Henry Louis Gates (1990)

5. Redrawing the Color Line
W.E.B Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk* (1903)
Chapter 1, "Of Our Spiritual Strivings," Chapter 14, "The Sorrow Songs"
 - Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones), "African Slaves, American Slaves and Their Music," in *Blues People: The Negro Experience in White American and the Music that Developed from It* (1963).
 - Shawn Michelle Smith, "The Art of Scientific Propaganda." *Photography on the Color Line: W.E.B Du Bois, Race and Visual Culture* (2004).

6. Passing & Racial Identity
James Weldon Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912).
 - Werner Sollors, "Passing," *Neither Black Nor White Yet Both* (1997).
 - Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones), "Afro-Christian Music and Religion;" "Primitive Blues and Primitive Jazz," "Classic Blues," in *Blues People: The Negro Experience in White American and the Music that Developed from It* (1963).

7. The Harlem Renaissance: Ideological Confluences

Alain Locke, *The Survey Graphic, Harlem Issue, "Forward to The New Negro" 1925*

Langston Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" (1926); "The Blues I'm Playing." *The Ways of White Folk* (1933)

- Jeffrey B. Ferguson, "The Harlem Renaissance and History, Memory and Myth," *The Harlem Renaissance a Brief History with Documents* (2008)
- James De Jongh "The Legendary Capital." *Vicious Modernism: Black Harlem and the Literary Imagination* (1990).
- Martha Nadell, "Introduction" & "Fy-ah," *Enter the New Negroes: Images of Race in American Culture* (2004).

8. Jazz Subculture and Literary Cosmopolitanism

Claude McKay, *Home to Harlem* (1928)

Part 1 & chapter 17 (He Also Loved)

- Borst Allan G. "Signifyin(g) Afro-Orientalism: The Jazz-Addict Subculture in Nigger Haven and Home to Harlem." (2009).
- Ludz, Tom. "Claude McKay: Music, Sound and Literary Cosmopolitanism." *Black Orpheus: Music in African American Fiction from the Harlem Renaissance to Toni Morrison*. (2000).
- Heise, Thomas. "Degenerate Sex and the City: The Underworlds of New York and Paris in the Work of Djuna Barnes and Claude McKay, 1910s-1930s." *Urban Underworlds: A Geography of Twentieth Century American Literature and Culture*. (2010).

9. Signifying, Language and Empowerment

Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937)

Chapters 1-8

- Alice Walker, "Looking for Zora" (1975).
- Zora Neale Hurston, "Introduction," *Mules and Men* (1935).
- Zora Neale Hurston, Rendition of a Folktale: "How to Write a Letter"
- Zora Neale Hurston, "Characteristics of Negro Expression" (1930).
- Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "The Signifying Monkey and the Language of Signifyin'(g): Rhetorical Difference and the Orders of Meaning." *The Signifying Monkey* (1988).
- CCarla Kaplan, "The Erotics of Talk: 'That Oldest Human Longing' in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*" (1996).

10. The Warmth of Other Suns

Richard Wright, *Black Boy, Selections* (1945)

- Ralph Ellison, "Richard Wright's Blues" (1945).
- Richard Wright, "Blueprint for Negro Writing" (1937).
- Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration* (2010).

11. Lynching

Richard Wright, "Big Boy Leaves Home" (1938)

Ralph Ellison, "Down By the Square" (circa 1940)

- Shawn Michelle Smith, "Spectacles of Whiteness: The Photography of Lynching." *Photography on the Color Line: W.E.B Du Bois, Race and Visual Culture* (2004).
- Amy Louise Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America, 1890-1940* (2009).

12. Invisibility

Ralph Ellison, *The Invisible Man* (1955), Prologue and Chapter 1

- Ellison, Ralph. "Harlem is Nowhere" (1948). *Shadow and Act*.
- Blair, Sara. "Ellison, Photography, and the Origins of Invisibility." *Cambridge Companion to Ralph Ellison*. (2005).
- Wirth-Nesher, Hana. "Ralph Ellison's New York, Invisible Man." *City Codes: Reading the Modern Urban Novel*. (1996).

13. James Baldwin, A Dream Deferred

James Baldwin, *Remember This House*

Raoul Peck, *I Am Not Your Negro* (2016)

An American documentary based on James Baldwin's unfinished manuscript *Remember This House* and narrated by actor Samuel L. Jackson.

14. Visualizing Civil Rights

Martin Luther King, "I Have a Dream" (1963)

- Leigh Renee Raiford, *Imprisoned in a Luminous Glare: Photography and the African American Freedom Struggle* (2011).
- Martin A. Berger, *Seeing Through Race: A Reinterpretation of Civil Rights Photography* (2011).

15. The Nation of Islam & Malcolm X

Malcolm X, "Saved," *Autobiography of Malcolm X*; "The Ballot or the Bullet" (listen to recording)

- Manning Marable, "Prologue: Life Beyond the Legend" & "Epilogue: Reflections on a Revolutionary Vision." *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention* (2011).

16. Black Power: Black Nationalism and Black Art

Amiri Baraka, "Black Art" (1965)

Etheridge Knight, "The Idea of Ancestry," "Hard Rock Returns to Prison from the Hospital of the Criminally Insane."

Kali Grosvenor, *Poems by Kali* (1970)

- Larry Neal, "Black Arts" (1968)

17. The Site of Memory

Toni Morrison – *Jazz* (1992)

- Scheiber, Andrew Joseph. "Jazz and the Future Blues: Toni Morrison's Urban Folk Zone" (2006).
- Paquet-Deyris, Anne-Marie. "Toni Morrison's *Jazz* and the City." (2001).
- Barnes, Deborah H. "Movin' on Up: The Madness of Migration in Toni Morrison's *Jazz*." In *Toni Morrison's Fiction: Contemporary Criticism* Ed. David L. Middleton. (1997).
- Toni Morrison, "The Site of Memory" (1995).

18. Reimagining History: The Direction of the Bizarre

Colson Whitehead, *The Underground Railroad* (2016)

Chapters: first six – from Ajarry to North Carolina (included)

- Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (1995).
- Saldívar, Ramón. "Historical Fantasy, Speculative Realism, and Postrace Aesthetics in Contemporary American Fiction" (2011).

19. **Nafissa Thompson, *Heads of the Colored People* (2018)**

The syllabus, like everything in life, is subject to change