

Department of African American Studies
AAS 4146 Women Writers in Black Literature
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- “Wanna fly, you got to give up the shit that weighs you down.”** – Toni Morrison (*Song of Solomon*)
- “As long as we are not ourselves, we will try to be what other people are.”** --- Malidoma Patrice Somé (*Of Water and the Spirit*)
- “The writer cannot expect to be excused from the task of reeducation and regeneration that must be done. In fact, he should march right in front.”** – Chinua Achebe (*The Novelist as Teacher, New Statesman*)
- “Oppressive language does more than represent violence; it is violence; does more than represent the limits of knowledge; it limits knowledge.”** – Toni Morrison (Nobel lecture, 1993)
- “Mama exhorted her children at every opportunity to ‘jump at de sun.’ We might not land on the sun, but at least we would get off the ground.”** – Zora Neale Hurston (*Their Eyes Were Watching God*)
- “But surely to tell these tall tales and others like them would be to spread the myth, the wicked lie, that the past is always tense and the future, perfect.”** – Zadie Smith (*White Teeth*)
- “Black writers, of whatever quality, who step outside the pale of what black writers are supposed to write about, or who black writers are supposed to be, are condemned to silences in black literary circles that are as total and as destructive as any imposed by racism.”** – Audre Lorde (*Black Women Writers at Work*)
- “You can’t separate peace from freedom because no one can be at peace unless he has his freedom.”** – Malcolm X (Speech, “Prospects for Freedom”)
- “To know how much there is to know is the beginning of learning to live.”** – Dorothy West (*The Richer, the Poorer*)

Course Description

This course will center the Africana woman author as a credible and valuable source within the literary tradition. In doing so, it will incorporate diasporic Africana women authors from various backgrounds to highlight the plight of the authors, their Africana women---focused characters, as well as attempt to apply literary themes to various aspects of contemporary Africana life. Additionally, this course will centralize Afrocentric and Africana literary criticism to critique literature in juxtaposition with Western literary criticism. Literature written by Africana women, in the form of fiction (novels, short stories, etc...) and non---fiction (essays, etc...), will be critically analyzed and engaged.

Course Goals

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- ♫ Recognize ways Africana women authors have contributed to the literary canon;
- ♫ Understand and analyze the use of Afrocentric, Africana and Western literary criticism to assess literature;
- ♫ Identify and explore Africana literary themes;
- ♫ Demonstrate ways that Africana literary themes refer to contemporary life in a practical manner;
- ♫ Produce critically engaged writing that will improve overall writing techniques and structure.

Course Methods

- ♫ Reading assignments
- ♫ Lectures/Guest Lectures
- ♫ Participation in class discussion
- ♫ Written Assignments/Essays
- ♫ Blackboard (BB)
- ♫ Class Presentations/Projects

Required Course Materials

This course requires eight (8) texts for the semester. All materials can be obtained in the Temple University bookstore.

- 📖 **Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. *The Thing Around Your Neck*. New York: Anchor Books, 2009.**
- 📖 **Bambara, Toni Cade. *The Salt Eaters*. New York: Vintage Books, 1992.**
- 📖 **Butler, Octavia E. *Kindred*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1979.**
- 📖 **hooks, bell. *Sisters of the Yam: Black Women and Self---Recovery*. New York: Routledge Books, 2015.**
- 📖 **Marshall, Paule. *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People*. New York: Vintage Books, 1992.**
- 📖 **Napier, Winston (ed.). *African American Literary Theory: A Reader*. New York: New York University Press, 2000.**
- 📖 **Shange, Ntozake. *Sassafrass, Cypress & Indigo: A Novel*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982.**
- 📖 **Temple, Christel N. *Literary Pan---Africanism: History, Contexts, and Criticism*. Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2005.**
- 📖 **Travel Pocket Dictionary OR a reference application (for your device)**

Students may purchase all required course materials at the campus bookstore located in Howard Gittis Student Center. Other required readings will be posted to BB. Students are expected to print required selections and bring them to class in addition to critically read these selections.

Students are expected to read all assigned readings PRIOR to arrival to class. Reading the assignments will fulfill several goals: you will better understand the concepts being taught in the course; you will be able to contribute to more lively and engaging class discussions; and you will be able to remain current when completing your assignments. Students who choose to disregard class expectations should withdraw from the class, for they will not fare well.

Serious scholarship requires procurement of essential course materials. **Students will purchase books and materials required for AAS courses no later than the second week of class.** Sharing of books thereafter is prohibited.

Academic Integrity

Temple University believes strongly in academic honesty and integrity. Plagiarism and academic cheating are, therefore, prohibited. Essential to intellectual growth is the development of independent thought and a respect for the thoughts of others. The prohibition against plagiarism and cheating intended to foster this independence and respect.

Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of another person's labor, another person's ideas, another person's words, and another person's assistance. Normally, all work done for courses – papers, examinations, homework exercises, laboratory reports, oral presentations – is expected to be the individual effort of the student presenting the work. Any assistance must be reported to the instructor. If the work has entailed consulting other resources – journals, books, or other media – these resources must be cited in a manner appropriate to the course.

It is the instructor's responsibility to indicate the appropriate manner of citation. Everything used from other sources – suggestions for organization of ideas, ideas themselves, or actual language – must be cited. Failure to cite borrowed material constitutes plagiarism. Undocumented use of materials from the World Wide Web is plagiarism.





Academic cheating is, generally, the thwarting or breaking of the general rules of academic work or the specific rules of the individual courses. It includes falsifying data; submitting, without the instructor's approval, work in one course, which was done for another; help others to plagiarize or cheat from one's own or another's work; or actually doing the work of another person.

The penalty for academic dishonesty can vary from receiving a reprimand and a failing grade for a particular assignment, to a failing grade in the course, to suspension or expulsion from the university. The penalty varies with the nature of the offence, the individual instructor, the department, and the school or college.

E---Mail Policy

Instructors will reply to student email within **48 hours, Monday through Thursday**. In order to insure a reply, students must use TU email accounts and include student name (no nicknames, please), **course number and section** in the subject line. All messages must be conveyed using Standard English. All e---mails that read like text messaging will be deleted.

All e---mail correspondence must have the following:

-  *Your first and last name; a greeting/ salutation (Ms. Wright, Dear Professor Wright, etc.)*
-  *A clear statement detailing the nature of your concern.*
-  *Use of Standard American English as well as Grammar*
-  *Closing (Sincerely, Kind Regards, Thanks, etc.)*

Educational Etiquette

Students will demonstrate collegial respect for their professors and peers. Any behavior that distracts (e.g. texting during class, talking while others are talking, etc.) or is disrespectful (inattention, personal attacks, studying for other courses during class, etc.) is unacceptable. Differences of opinion should be met with intellectual curiosity and rigor rather than insult, contumely, or discord. Student success in this course depends upon the development of scholarly and collegial habits. Active participation in class discussion and group work is mandatory. Collegial responsibility and respect are also compulsory. Additionally, students are expected to check Blackboard (BB) multiple times, daily to be sure that they receive all correspondence relating to class in a timely manner.

Extra Credit

There is no extra credit in this course.

Timely Submission of Work

All assignments are due on the dates indicated in your syllabus/class/BB. **No late work will be accepted in this AAS course.** Exceptions will be made only in cases of documented medical or family emergency or religious observance. Employment, childcare, computer errors or other academic pressures do not constitute a valid excuse for late work. There is no provision for additional papers or extra credit to substitute for missed course requirements. Students providing appropriate documentation have one week to make up and submit their missing work. Students who fail to submit their missing assignments within the one week timeframe forfeit their opportunity to submit the assignment and will receive a zero (0) for the missed assignment.

Statement on Academic Freedom:

Freedom to teach and freedom to learn are inseparable facets of academic freedom. The University has adopted a policy on Student and Faculty Academic Rights and Responsibilities (Policy # 03.70.02), which can be accessed through the following link: <http://policies.temple.edu/getdoc.asap?policyno=03.70.02>

Attendance and Participation:

The Temple Undergraduate Handbook states that, "Enrollment in a course presupposes intention to attend regularly." Attendance and class participation are very important for your success in this class. Poor attendance and lack of participation will lead to reduction in your final grade. ***Students amassing 3---4 unexcused absences will lose one letter grade at the end of the semester. Students amassing 5 or more unexcused absences will automatically fail the course.***

Cell Phones/Computers:

No use of cell phones, iPads, electronic devices/tablets or computers is allowed in class. This includes the use of text messaging, games, and social networking websites/devices. Hence, students are required to turn off their phones and be respectful of others by maintaining a peaceful learning environment.

Disabilities and Differences

This course is open to all students who meet the academic requirements for participation. Any student who has a need for accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss the specific situation as soon as possible. Contact Disability Resources and Services at 215---204---1280 in 100 Ritter Annex to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. No accommodations will be made later in the semester for students who do not self---identify within the first two weeks of the academic semester. Students who need developmental support should ask their professors for extra help or referral. All students should seek the support services of the Writing Center (Tuttleman Learning Center, rm. 201: <http://www.temple.edu/writingctr/>).

Course Grade Distribution

External Departmental Activities Reflections:	10%
<i>(Students are required to minimally attend 3 throughout the semester)</i>	
Critical Reflection Paper #1:	10%
Critical Reflection Paper #2:	10%
Critical Reflection Paper #3:	10%
Critical Reflection Paper #4:	15%
Critical Reflection Paper #5:	15%
Final Paper/Project	30%

Course Grading Scale

94---100: A
90---93: A---
87---89: B+
83---86: B
80---82: B---
77---79: C+
73---76: C
70---72: C---
67---69: D+
63---66: D
60---62: D---
Below 60: F

Important Semester Calendar Acronyms

BB: Blackboard
M: Monday
T: Tuesday
W: Wednesday
R: Thursday
F: Friday
DB: Discussion Board
TBD: To Be Determined

AAS 4149 Tentative Schedule of Readings:

Date	Concepts	Assignments
Week 1 Aug. 24 th – 28 th	Class Overview	T: Class Introduction: Syllabus, Class Expectations & Worldview R: “Criteria of Negro Art,” DuBois (Napier); “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain,” Hughes (Napier)
Week 2 Aug. 31 st – Sept. 4 th Friday, last day to add/drop		T: “And Shine Swam On,” Neal (Napier); “The Black Writer and His Role,” Gerald (Napier); “What White Publishers Won’t Print,” Hurston (Napier) R: “The Negro---Art Hokum,” Schuyler (Napier); “What is an Author,” Foucault (BB); “Ch. 1: Everything you wanted to know about critical theory but were afraid to ask,” (Tyson, BB)
Week 3 Sept. 7 th – 11 th Monday, Labor Day Holiday	Literary Pan---Africanism	T: Temple, Ch. 1 & Ch. 2 R: Adichie: “On Monday of Last Week,” “The Thing Around Your Neck,” “The American Embassy,” & “The Headstrong Historian”; external article due in class F: Adichie Critical Reflection Paper due Friday, via BB by 11:59pm
Week 4 Sept. 14 th – 18 th	Afrocentric & African American Literary Theory	T: “On the Criticism of Black American Literature,” Baker (Napier); “The Race for Theory,” Christian (Napier) R: “Locating a Text,” (Asante, BB); “Appropriative Gestures: Theory and Afro---American Literary Criticism,” Awkward (Napier)
Week 5 Sept. 21 st – 25 th		T: Butler’s <i>Kindred</i> : Prologue, The River, The Fire R: No Class (ASALH Conference); DB assignment during class time in reference to Butler’s novel

Week 6 Sept. 28 th – Oct. 2 nd		T: Butler’s <i>Kindred</i> : The Fall, The Fight, The Storm R: Butler’s <i>Kindred</i> : The Rope, Epilogue; external article due in class F: Butler Critical Reflection Paper due via BB, 11:59pm
Week 7 Oct. 5 th – 9 th	Post--Colonial Theory	T: “Ch. 12 Postcolonial Criticism,” (Tyson, BB) R: “Can the Sub--Altern Speak?” (Spivak, BB)
Week 8 Oct. 12 th – 16 th		T: Marshall’s <i>Chosen Place</i> : Book I – Heirs & Descendants R: Marshall’s <i>Chosen Place</i> : Book II --- Bournehills
Week 9 Oct. 19 th – 23 rd Tuesday, last day to withdraw from course		T: Marshall’s <i>Chosen Place</i> : Book III --- Carnival R: Marshall’s <i>Chosen Place</i> : Book IV --- Whitsun; external article due in class F: Marshall Critical Reflection Paper due via BB, 11:59pm
Week 10 Oct. 26 th – 30 th	Womanist & Feminist Criticism	T: “Ch. 4 Feminist Criticism,” (Tyson, BB); “Toward a Black Feminist Criticism,” Smith (Napier) R: “Womanism: The Dynamics of the Contemporary Black Female Novel in English,” (Ogunyemi, BB); “Speaking in Tongues: Dialogics, Dialectics, and the Black Woman Writer’s Literary Tradition,” Henderson (Napier)
Week 11 Nov. 2 nd – 6 th		T: Shange’s <i>Sassafrass, Cypress & Indigo</i> : pgs. 1---104 R: Shange’s <i>Sassafrass, Cypress & Indigo</i> : pgs. 105 – 207; external article due in class F: Shange Critical Reflection Paper due Friday, via BB by 11:59pm

<p>Week 12 Nov. 9th – 13th</p>	<p>Psychoanalytic Criticism</p>	<p>T: "Ch. 2 Psychoanalytic criticism," (Tyson, BB) R: "To Open the Question," (Felman, BB)</p>
<p>Week 13 Nov. 16th – 20th</p>		<p>T: Bambara's <i>The Salt Eaters</i> : chs. 1 – 6 R: Bambara's <i>The Salt Eaters</i> : chs. 7 – 12; external article due in class F : Bambara Critical Reflection Paper due Friday, via BB by 11 :59pm</p>
<p>Week 14 Nov. 23rd – 27th</p>		<p>NO CLASS THIS WEEK DUE TO FALL BREAK & THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY</p>
<p>Week 15 Nov. 30th – Dec. 4th University last day of class is M: 12/07/15 but OUR official last day is R: 12/03/15</p>		<p>T: Student Presentations R: Student Presentations</p>

Final Project Directions

Students will complete a culminating multimedia project for the Fall 2015 semester Women Writers in Black Literature course. This project is worth **30% of your Final grade.**

The project is designed to connect themes and concepts from the literature and literary theory we have studied to current issues facing real Black women. The project will consist of an individual research paper accompanied by a visual group presentation. Presentations will be given during Week 15 (Nov. 30 -- Dec. 4). Students will be placed into groups and assigned a presentation date.

GROUP PRESENTATION (10%)

Students will be divided into six groups of 3---4 each. Each group should first choose one (1) of the literary themes of the course to focus on for their project and then perform a “media analysis” that analyzes how the particular literary theme is illustrated in various media. Focusing on different types of media will allow students to engage the various ways that real Black women represent themselves as well as the ways they are represented by others.

Each group must choose a minimum of three (3) media “objects” that relate to the particular literary theme they have chosen. Each "object" must be of a different multimedia type. Groups should choose from the following multimedia types:

- Film: movies, TV shows
- Advertising: paper ads, commercials
- Print: books, articles (magazines, news, etc.)
- Music: lyrics, videos
- Web: articles, blogs, social media

For example, a particular group could choose to analyze *a scene from a movie (film)*, *a television commercial (advertising)*, and a relevant portion of an individual's *Twitter or Instagram feed (web)* that all deal with the theme of Black male/female relationships.

Each group's media analysis should seek to engage and interpret the symbolic concepts and associations regarding Black women that are evoked by each media object. The analysis should consider the interpretations and/or reactions that the object's creators obviously intended to evoke as well as any unintended interpretations. Each group's analysis should also connect the interpretations of their media objects to their chosen literary theme. And finally, each analysis should consider

the relationship between the fictional and real world representations of Black women.

When conducting their analyses, groups should consider the following questions:

- What emotion(s) and/or mental association(s) does the object elicit?
- What image(s) of black women is the object designed to project?
 - Consider surface/conscious/obvious designs
 - Consider less obvious, unintended (“subliminal”) designs
- What, if any, “unintended” image(s) and/or ideas about Black women does the object project?
- How do the intended and unintended reactions enhance or damage the image of Black women as a whole?
- how do the objects illustrate the chosen literary theme?
 - How do the ideas evoked by the media objects reinforce and/or undermine the ideas about Black women reflected in the chosen literary theme?

Each group should use specific examples from the literary text(s) to illustrate its points. Each group should plan to present their media analysis to the class for approximately 20 minutes—15 minutes of presentation and 5 minutes for Q & A. Students are encouraged to be visually creative in their presentations.

INDIVIDUAL PAPER (20%) Due Friday, Dec. 4th, 2015 by 11:59pm via BB

For the individual paper component of the project, each student will write a research paper that connects his or her particular literary theme to real world representations of Black women, relevant literary criticism and scholarly research. The individual paper should do the following:

- Identify what constitutes an Africana woman author using course materials and external sources to explain
- Assume a position, for or against, the responsibility/role of the Africana woman author
- Analyze the relationship between:
 - Real world representations of Black women (as evidenced by your interpretations of media objects from your group presentation) and
 - Interpretations of your specific literary theme (as evidenced in specific texts)
- Consider the writers of the fictional texts and the media creators as “authors” and explain how their responsibilities as “authors” (or lack of responsibility depending on your chosen position) affect your interpretation of their texts/media
- Explain how at least one (1) of the literary criticisms we have studied applies to your discussion of your media objects and chosen literary theme

- Make use of scholarly research

Each paper should reference 2---3 novels and include research from 3---4 scholarly sources. Critical articles used for previous reflection paper assignments can be used in the final research paper. However, students may only use up to two (2) previous scholarly articles from the semester within their final paper. Each student's paper should be written using APA format, be 8---10 pp. in length, double---spaced, in 12 point Times New Roman font and have 1 inch margins all around.