

**Bergen Community College
Division of Humanities
Department of English**

**LIT 215: Black Literature in America
Course Syllabus**

**Semester and year
Section Number
Meeting Times
Location**

**Instructor:
Office Location:
Phone:
E-mail:
Office Hours:**

Course Description

This course is a study of major African-American authors. The course provides a literary, historical, and sociological survey of the African-American experience. Students read works by such authors as Wheatley, Douglass, Ellison, Hurston, Baldwin, Malcolm X, Morrison, and Walker. 3 credits. General Education course. Diversity course. Prerequisite: None.

Student Learning Outcomes	Means of Assessment
1. Analyze works of literature written during the periods covered by the course.	Discussion, Writing, Multimodal Presentation
2. Distinguish various literary techniques in the works under study.	Discussion, Writing, Multimodal Presentation

3. Demonstrate, through discussion and writing, an understanding of how the diverse issues of the periods are addressed in the texts selected for the course.	Discussion, Writing
4. Employ a variety of analytical techniques to respond to the texts by African American authors.	Discussion, Writing
5. Characterize, through discussion, writing and presentation, the African American experience as represented in the works of writers of African descent.	Discussion, Writing, Multimodal Presentation.
6. Produce a properly formatted written evaluation of selected works of Black American literature; and demonstrate competency in both research methodologies and literary analysis.	Writing, Multimodal Presentation

Essential Learning Outcomes

SLOs:	EL 1	EL 2	EL 3	EL 4	EL 5	EL 6	EL 7	EL 8	EL 9	EL 10	EL 11
1.	x	x							x		
2.	x	x							x		
3.	x	x							x		
4.	x	x							x	x	
5.	x	x							x		
6.	x	x			x				x		

EL1-Effective Speaking
 EL2-Effective Writing
 EL3-Mathematical Reasoning
 EL4-Scientific Reasoning
 EL5-Technological Competency
 EL6-Information Literacy
 EL7-Social-Behavioral Analysis

EL8-Historical Analysis
 EL9-Humanistic Analysis
 EL10-Intercultural Awareness
 EL11-Moral Literacy

Signature Assignment

Researched Analysis: Students will write a 7-10 paged analysis, using secondary sources, of a primary source text introduced in the course.

Course Content

This course requires you to do a great deal of reading, thinking, discussing and writing. This is a survey course, and this semester, we will broadly cover African American literature written from the 20th century through the 21st century. We will examine a number of writers, issues, genres, styles, and themes. The literature is presented in an historical context as a way of better understanding it within the sociopolitical climate in which it was written.

Course Requirements

You will be required to do the following:

1. Write 10-15 pages or 3000-3750 words for the course. This includes a major paper as well as discussions and reading responses, quizzes, and in-class essays if appropriate. All formal papers must use MLA style and demonstrate effective proofreading and editing. (Meets student learning objectives 1-6.)
2. Read, interpret, discuss, and analyze numerous literary works from the assigned texts. (Meets student learning objectives 1-5.)
3. Learn and apply various literary terms to texts. (Meets student learning objectives 1, 2, 4, and 5.)
4. Write at least one analytic 5-page paper that demonstrates effective proofreading, editing and MLA style. (**Signature Assignment** 1-6.)
5. Participate in conferences to discuss your work, course progress, and any other concerns you may have. (Meets student learning objectives 1-6.)
6. Check Canvas at least twice a week for class announcements, assignments and supplemental material. (Meets student learning objectives 1-6.)

Suggested Texts

All of the course readings are linked on our course site, including but not limited to excerpts from *Between the World and Me* by Ta-nehisi Coates, *The Prentice Hall Anthology of African-American Literature*, *The Warmth of Other Suns* and *Caste* by Isabel Wilkerson. There is no need to purchase a textbook, but you may need to purchase access to the PBS documentary "Slavery and The Making of America" (depending on whether or not you already have Amazon Prime).

Paper Submissions

In order to help you avoid plagiarism and preserve academic integrity, you are required to submit all papers to the Turnitin links embedded in the specific modules of our site. Turnitin alerts you to text that should be put in quotation marks and cited, and/or paraphrased in your own words. **The use of Artificial Intelligence is also plagiarism; it is truly better to think for yourself than ask a computer to think for you.** Papers are flagged for AI use by Turnitin. I will check the originality reports. No paper will be graded unless it has been turned in at the appropriate link. Note that any papers submitted for grading that are determined to be plagiarized will receive a failing grade. If this is the second incident of plagiarism, you may fail the course.

Grading

Participation (Discussions, Assignments, Quizzes and Journals): 40% of final grade

You are expected to be an active and engaged member of the class throughout the semester. Every week, I will post discussion questions about the literary work(s) assigned for that week, and each week you must participate in the discussion. Your initial posts to my questions or a question a classmate posts should be at least 150 words. Since there are often threads of responses, it is helpful if you indicate the student posting to which you are responding. You will be graded on the entries posted. All modules have discussions. Some modules have quizzes, assignments requiring longer responses, and/or journals on the readings.

Literary Cultural Presentations: 30% of final grade

Share a literary selection written, performed or directed by a person of African descent. It may be a poem, lyrics, or an excerpt from a short story, novel, or play. You may recite or read the work, or it may be a recording or clip from a film. It may be set to music and may be recited or sung in your native dialect/language. If the work is in a language other than English, be prepared to translate it. Please avoid using material that contains profanity or sexually explicit language. Ideally the presentation is a video, but you may present an audio presentation or use PowerPoint if you wish. You may use original work if you write poetry, fiction or drama. The written portion of this assignment (submitted separately) should explain why the work you have chosen is important and why you have chosen it. You should indicate how the selection relates to African American culture and its literary canon.

Analytic Paper (5 pages): 30% of final grade

Choose one of the course readings from Modules 1-7 analyze it, positing a thesis that interprets your selection. The paper should be five pages, well-edited, following these conventions:

1. Make an argument about the meaning of the text. Develop a complex thesis that conveys to the reader your interpretation of the text.
2. Describe the context of the reading in the introduction and throughout without merely summarizing the text.
3. Incorporate (brief) quotes from the text to argue points in body paragraphs.

4. Avoid the first and second person (no “I” nor “you”).
5. Include the author/title and a general statement about the text in the first sentence.
6. Do not use secondary sources.

Papers will be graded on organization, thesis, development, evidence, clarity, grammar, and mechanics.

Plagiarism

Bergen Community College, like all institutions of higher learning, is committed to maintaining academic integrity. Plagiarism, the act of trying to pass any part of another person’s writing off as your own without giving them proper credit, is considered one of the most serious academic crimes. **Any instance of plagiarism will result in an automatic 0 for that assignment.**

Examples of plagiarism are:

- Using any material from another source and including it in your writing without attribution. These sources could be from the internet, books, newspapers, or another student. Cutting and pasting without giving credit to the original source is illegal.
- The use of another’s ideas without the proper citations.
- Handing in work, a whole essay, or even one paragraph, that was written by someone else or by Artificial Intelligence, without attribution.

Extra Credit

You may receive extra credit if you attend any of the many cultural programs, plays, and activities on campus. To receive credit, you should write a review or critique that is two full pages long, in which you include the date, time, place of the activity, your reaction to the speaker, presentation, topic, etc., and why you think it is or is not important.

Communication Guidelines

- Remember that behind every name there is a person. Respect the privacy of your classmates and what they share in class.
- Ask classmates for clarification if you find a comment offensive or difficult to understand.
- Do not make sweeping or hasty generalizations about individuals or groups. Back up your stated opinions with facts and reliable sources.
- Understand that we may disagree and that exposure to other people’s opinions is part of the learning experience.
- Remember that you are taking a college class. Something that would be inappropriate in a traditional classroom is also inappropriate in an online

classroom. Proofread your writing for errors before submitting it. Avoid texting abbreviations such as “u” instead of “you”.

- Avoid offensive language of any kind. Language that is—or can be interpreted as racist, sexist, heterosexist and/or bias based on religious beliefs, disabilities or age.
- Avoid “flaming” or extremely emotional opinions or responses which contribute to a hostile or abusive online environment.
- Review all discussion postings before posting your own to prevent redundancy.

Attendance Policy

All students are expected to attend every scheduled meeting. Attendance will be kept. If there are circumstances that prevent you from attending, you must contact me to arrange make-up work.

Keys for Success

- Plan at least 6-9 hours a week for coursework. The work required for an online course is no less than that for a face-to-face course and requires a good deal more discipline.
- Participate in discussions. The discussions will be monitored and are 20% of the final grade. You cannot do well in this course if you do not participate on a regular basis.
- Do all the work (readings, quizzes, papers, journals and postings).
- Take great care to avoid plagiarism. In academic writing, deliberate use of someone else’s ideas or words is considered dishonest and will result in failure for the specific assignment, or if this is a reoccurring offense, may result in failure of the course.
- Check your email several times a week.
- Do not hesitate to ask for assistance.

Accessibility Statement

Bergen Community College is committed to ensuring the full participation of all students in its programs. If you have a documented disability (or think you may have a disability) and, as a result, need a reasonable accommodation to participate in this class, complete course requirements, or benefit from the College’s programs or services, contact the Office of Special Services (OSS) as soon as possible at 201-612-5270 or www.bergen.edu/oss. To receive any academic accommodation, you must be appropriately registered with OSS. The OSS works with students confidentially and does not disclose any disability-related information without their permission. The OSS serves as a clearinghouse on disability issues and works in partnership with faculty and all other student service offices.

Student Support Services

Bergen Community College provides exemplary support to its students and offers a broad variety of opportunities and services. A comprehensive array of student support services including advising, tutoring, academic coaching, and more are available online at <https://bergen.edu/currentstudents/>.



Sidney Silverman Library

BCC's library (2nd floor, Pitkin Educational Center, 201-447-7131, <http://bergen.edu/current-students/student-support-services/library>) is a superb resource for students in all disciplines, but particularly for students in Literature sections. Please visit the library and library for invaluable background information and critical perspectives on all genres of literature, their historical significance, and individual authors.

Sample Course Schedule

Week One Introductions <i>Slavery and The Making of America</i>	Week Two Isabel Wilkerson Maria Stewart	Week Three Frederick Douglass Harriet Jacobs	Week Four WEB DuBois
Week Five Harlem Renaissance Poets and Contemporary Poets Maya Angelou C. Awkward Rich Tracy K. Smith Terrance Hayes Roger Reeves Interpretation Presentation	Week Six Native Son & Native Daughter: James Baldwin and Zora Neale Hurston Baldwin "The Discovery of What It Means to Be An American" and Hurston "How It Feels to Be Colored Me"	Week Seven "Stranger in The Village" Baldwin & Teju Cole Midterm Papers due	Week Eight "Mastery of Fear:" Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. <i>Invisible Man</i> , Prologue: Ralph Ellison
Week Nine	Week Ten	Week Eleven	Week Twelve

<p>“Poetry Is Not A Luxury” Audre Lorde “Honesty: Be True to Love” bell hooks</p>	<p>Thanksgiving “When We All Get to Heaven” Randall Kenan</p>	<p>Toni Morrison “Récitatif” “Strangers” Excerpt from <i>The Origin of Others</i></p>	<p>“Letter to My Son” from <i>Between the World and Me</i> Ta-nehisi Coates Richard Wright Baldwin</p>
<p>Week Thirteen 12/18</p> <p>Literary Cultural Presentations Discussions</p>			