

# ENGL 2071: Survey of African American Literature I

Instructor: Dr. Jacinta Saffold

Fall 2020

## Course Description

This course will introduce students to early African American literature and letters. Beginning with narratives detailing the Middle Passage, moving to impassioned speeches for abolition, and ending with important early twentieth century questions about how to move “Up From Slavery” and what makes the “Souls of Black Folk.” Together, we will explore how people who once were denied the abilities to read and write used paper and pen to advocate for change. We will read poetry, short stories, slave narratives, and explore digital resources like the Slave Voyages database of slave ship records.

The literature in this course will be situated within a social, historical, political, and cultural context as a means to investigate the intersections of literature and culture. We will chronologically journey from the harrowing narratives of bondage to post-Black Reconstruction debates on the intellectual and aesthetic obligations of African American literature.

## Course Objectives

- Develop textual analysis and academic writing skills by analyzing African American literature.
- Consider how social, political, and economic shifts in the United States have impacted African American literature.
- Gain a broad understanding of how the African American literature tradition was created and sustained.
- Understand the shared experiences and histories of African Americans through time and space.
- Examine the diversity of thought produced by African Americans through time and space.

## Required Texts

All required texts are available on Moodle. Some of your assigned reading will require access to UNO’s online library resources. Be sure that you have access in the first week of class. If you have questions or need help, contact [libref@uno.edu](mailto:libref@uno.edu)

## Evaluation of Students

### Weekly Discussion posts (20%)

Write a thoughtful post based on each week’s reading of at least **500 words**. Your posts should be reflective of your understanding of the reading and what your classmates are saying. Specifically, students are expected to read all posts before forming their response, to mitigate redundancies and further the discussion. Students are welcomed and

encouraged to engage further beyond the 1 post weekly requirement. Your posts are **due by 11:59pm on Sunday of each week.**

Scoring rubric:

Points	Traits
1	Submitted a post somewhat based on the week's reading. The post may or may not be at least 500 words. Post includes redundancies from earlier submissions and may or may not encourage further discussion of the topic
2	Submitted a post based on the week's reading. The post meets the 500-word count minimum and is free of redundancies from earlier submissions. The submission somewhat encourages further discussion of the topic.
3	Submitted a post that reflects an understanding of the week's reading. The post not only meets the 500-word count minimum, it succinctly and thoughtfully contributes to the course discussion in such a way that encourages further other students to engage.

#### Alternative Slave Narrative Assignment (20%)

Consider the ways slavery stripped agency from enslaved people and how technology affords us the opportunity to recast these narratives. Using non-linear software, reconceive the plot-driving details of one of the assigned slave narratives imagine an alternative narrative for an ancillary (non-protagonist) character in which they have with more choices or avenues to freedom than slavery afforded.

#### Crosscurrents Assignments (3 parts)

These assignments are designed to aid your thinking against the grain of history. For each unit of this course, consider contemporary issues or events and their connections to the literature we read. How far have we, as the people of the United States (and the world), come since the time of enslavement? What areas of society require additional progress? What can nineteenth century African American literature teach us about the current moment? How can the current moment enhance our understandings of the past?

Crosscurrents will be **2-3 pages in length, using 12-point font, and MLA formatting** (if you are unfamiliar with MLA format or need a refresher visit Purdue Owl). **Be sure to identify at least 3 scholarly sources, properly cite all quotations and summaries of other people's thoughts and proofread your work.**

-Comparing first and current African American letters & literature (10%)

-Comparing slave narratives and current (relevant) issues (10%)

-Comparing early and current African American audio & visual culture (10%)

#### A Social Commentary based on your Crosscurrents assignments (30%)

From your three crosscurrents, weave together a social commentary, either on slavery or our present moment of **7-10 pages, 12-point font, and MLA formatting. Be sure to identify at least 10 scholarly sources (per assignment), properly cite all quotations and summaries of other people's thoughts and proofread your work. For more direction on writing social commentaries, go to:**

<http://www.salernoduane.com/2013/03/01/write-social-commentary-essay>

## University of New Orleans Grading Scale

A = 90-100

B = 80-89

C = 70-79

D = 60-69

F = 59-0

*I reserve the right to edit this syllabus. In the event of any changes, I will notify you in a timely manner.*

### Academic Honesty

Any instances of academic dishonesty will be addressed according to the University's Academic Honesty Policy. Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to:

- *Cheating*- intentional use or attempted use of trickery, artifice, deception, breach of confidence, fraud and/or misrepresentation of one's academic work
- *Fabrication*- intentional and unauthorized falsification and/or invention of any information or citation in any academic exercise
- *Plagiarism*- knowingly representing the words or ideas of another as one's own work in any academic exercise. This includes submitting without citation, in whole or in part, prewritten term papers of another or the research of another, including but not limited to commercial vendors who sell or distribute such materials
- *Facilitating dishonesty*- knowingly helping or attempting to help another commit an act of academic dishonesty, including substituting for another in an examination, or allowing others to represent as their own one's papers, reports, or academic works

Any instances of academic dishonesty will be addressed according to the University's Academic Honesty Policy (See <https://www.uno.edu/media/15321> for additional information).

### Life Happens Policy

Life happens to each of us. If you find you need an extension on an assignment for **extenuating circumstances** please communicate a week in advance. This policy does not apply to routine life occurrences and should be used sparingly, if at all.

### Inclusion Policy

Diversity in the academy means that people from all backgrounds have the right to education. This class will seek to endow students with an understanding of certain principles of inclusivity, which in turn enables them to appreciate the diversity of human experience. All class participants are expected to interact with one another in a manner affirming of any individual's identity. Awareness of social stratification, privilege, and current affairs will be necessary throughout this course.

### **Safety Awareness Facts and Education**

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender is a Civil Rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, etc. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find [the appropriate resources here](#).

### **UNO Counseling Services and UNO Cares**

UNO offers care and support for students in any type of distress. [Counseling Services](#) assist students in addressing mental health concerns through assessment, short-term counseling, and career testing and counseling. First-year students often have unique concerns, and UNO Cares is designed to address those students' needs. Contact [UNO Cares](#).

### **Emergency Procedures**

Sign up for emergency notifications via text and/or email at [E2Campus Notification](#). All emergency and safety procedures are explained at the [Emergency Health and Safety Office](#).

### **Learning and Support Services**

Help is within reach in the form of learning support services, including tutoring in writing and math and other supplemental instruction. Visit the [Learning Resource Center](#).

### **Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity**

UNO is an equal opportunity employer. The Human Resource Management department has more information on UNO's compliance with federal and state regulations regarding EEOC in its [Policies and Resources website](#).

### **Due Dates at a Glance**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Assignment</b>
Weekly (Due at 11:59 every Sunday)	Discussion Posts
September 3	Crosscurrents: Comparing first and current African American letters & literature
October 2	Alternative Slave Narrative Assignment
October 30	Crosscurrents: Comparing Slave and Current (relevant) Narratives
November 20	Crosscurrents: Comparing early and current African American audio & visual culture
December 7	Final Paper: Crosscurrents Social Commentary

### **Reading Schedule:**

*Week of August 19- 21*      Syllabus Review  
Student Introductions  
(No reading this week)

First African American Letters & Literature

*Week of August 24- 28* Selected poems by Phillis Wheatley  
Selected poems by George Moses Horton  
“Why Sit Ye Here and Die?” by Maria Stewart

*Week of August 31- Sept 4* Crosscurrents: Comparing first and current African American letters & literature **Due September 3<sup>rd</sup>**  
(No reading or discussion forum this week)

### Slave Narratives

*Week of Sept 7- 11* Excerpts from *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* (Chapters 1-4)

*Week Sept 14-18* Excerpts from *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (Preface; I. Childhood; II. The New Master and Mistress; V. The Trials of Girlhood; X. A Perilous Passage in the Slave Girl's Life; XII. Fear of Insurrection; XIV. Another Link to Life; XVII. The Flight; XXI. The Loophole of Retreat; XXIX. Preparations for Escape; XL. The Fugitive Slave Law; XLI. Free at Last)

*Week Sept 21-25* *The Narrative Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself* (read the entire narrative)

*Week of Sept 28- Oct 2* **Alternative Slave Narrative Assignment due October 2<sup>nd</sup>**  
(No reading or discussion forum this week)

### African American History & Culture in the 1900s

*Week of Oct 5- Oct 9* Explore the “Runaway Quilt Project”  
Explore the Library of Congress’ Spirituals (songs)

*Week of Oct 12-16* Excerpts from *David Walker’s Appeal* (Preamble and Article I)  
Excerpts from *Blake; Huts of Our America* by Martin L. Delany (Chapters 1-9)

### Post-Emancipation Letters & Literature

*Week of Oct 19-23* Excerpts from *Cane* by Jean Toomer (“Karintha,” “Becky,” “Beehive,” and “Box Seat”)  
“The Goophered Grapevine” and “Mars Jeems’s Nightmare” from *The Conjure Woman Tales and Other Conjure Stories* by Charles Chestnutt

*Week of Oct 26-30* Crosscurrents peer review Round Robin Peer Review **Due October 26<sup>th</sup>**

**Crosscurrents: Comparing Slave and Current (relevant) Narratives due October 30<sup>th</sup>**

(No Reading this week)

*Week of Nov 2-6*

Explore the Destruction of Black Wall Street  
“Of Our Spiritual Strivings” from *The Souls of Black Folks* by W.  
E. B. Du Bois

Week of Nov 9-13

Slavery by Another Name- A PBS documentary based from  
Douglas A. Blackmon’s text (of the same name)

*Week of Nov 16-20*

**Crosscurrents: Comparing early and current African  
American audio & visual culture due November 20**  
(No Reading this week)

**Final Paper: Crosscurrents Social Commentary due December 7**