

ENGL 4092/5092 #BlackVoicesMatter: Literary Responses to Enduring Injustices
Professor J. Saffold

Course Description:

#BlackVoicesMatter sits in the wake of the recent surge of born digital protest movements spurned by a highly polarized America. Our current era, marked by #BlackLivesMatter, #MeToo, #SayHerName, and numerous other causes with digital roots, builds upon longstanding protest traditions in African American history. This history has indelibly influenced some of the greatest pieces of African American literature.

Together, we will use African American literature to consider how Black writers have chosen to respond to enduring injustices. We will critically engage fiction and nonfiction texts, paying close attention to how socio-economic and historical moments have impacted what and how African Americans write. #BlackVoicesMatter will draw literature from four moments of great civil or social unrest in African American history; the late slave period, the New Negro Renaissance, the Civil Rights Movement, and the current digital rights moment.

Course Objectives:

Generally, this course seeks to:

- Establish a literary history of protest in the African American tradition
- Explore the intersections of African American literature, history culture, and digital technologies
- Pioneer twenty-first century techniques in Afro-digital storytelling
- Provide non-traditional writing assignments geared towards improving digital writing skills
- Provide opportunities for each student to practice hosting course discussions

Specifically, at the end of this course, students should:

- Have a nuanced understanding of the African American tradition of resistance
- Gain familiarity with how to create data visualizations based on literature data
- Have a mastery of basic webhosting skills.
- Produce complex written arguments with multi-modal media evidence
- Have an understanding of scholarly and documentary peer editing
- Know the new approaches and trends in literature studies

Course Assignments:

Class Participation (15%)

This class is primarily discussion based, making class participation and active involvement paramount. Students will receive a participation credit for every class meeting. Class discussions are meant to move us closer to the text. When contributing to the discussion be sure to have a thoughtful contributive comment that is grounded in the text. Class participation constitutes contributing to discussions in session and completing all in-class assignments.

Discussion Lead (15%)

In ENGL 4092-5092: #BlackVoicesMatter, we will engage in a lively discussion of the week's assigned literature. On select **Thursdays**, one student enrolled in the course will take the lead in the discussion. You will have **one** opportunity to facilitate the discussion throughout the semester. Your facilitations will be evaluated using the Presentation Rubric.

When it is your turn, you should prepare enough class content to facilitate a critical and constructive for **the entire class period**. You are encouraged to do research on the literature and its subject matter outside of the assigned and suggested readings to help provide context for your peers and help the discussion along. In the weeks you are not leading the discussion, you are encouraged to prepare well to support your colleagues in class.

Please note: These facilitated discussions are designed to work in tandem with your required weekly discussion questions. You are encouraged to use your reading questions in your discussion facilitation

Weekly Discussion Questions (20%)

Each week, course participants will prepare **3-5 questions** based on the week's reading to help guide class discussion. These questions are designed to spark critical conversations and therefore should be well conceived and substantive. Students are encouraged to reference (and share via hyperlink) any additional resources that may have helped generate the question or have proven useful to the course. If the question is in reference to a specific passage, please provide a parenthetical quote or text citation information along with the question.

Questions are due each Monday by 5pm. No late question submissions will be accepted.

Scalar Project (50%):

This class focuses on the many ways African Americans have resisted injustice in every sector of life. Often this resistance has come through the form of innovation—from recently freed slaves who paved the way for compulsory education, to musicians carving out new traditions like Jazz and Hip Hop, to the current final frontier—the world wide web. To mirror this spirit of resistance through innovation, students will write a non-linear digital book in lieu of traditional research papers.

- Scalar Project Proposal (Due March 2) 10%
- Scalar Project—Part I (Due March 21) 20%
- Scalar Project—Part II (Apr. 25) 20%
- Scalar Project—Part III (May 11) 20%
- *Please note: Part III is due at the time of your Scalar presentation
- Scalar Project—Peer Reviews (2x) 20%
- Scalar Presentation (May 11) 10%

See Scalar Project Instructions on Moodle for details

University of New Orleans Grading Scale

A: 90-100
B: 80-89
C: 70-79
D: 60-69
F: 59-0

Required Texts:

Murder at Montpelier by Douglas B. Chambers

- ISBN-10: 1604732466
- ISBN-13: 978-1604732467

Blake; or The Huts of America by Martin Delany

- ISBN-10: 0674088727
- ISBN-13: 978-0674088726

Jesse B. Semple Stories by Langston Hughes

- ISBN-10: 0374521336
- ISBN-13: 978-0374521332

Arc of Justice by Kevin Boyle

- ISBN-10: 0805079335
- ISBN-13: 978-0805079333

The Spook Who Sat by the Door by Sam Greenlee

- ISBN-10: 0814322468
- ISBN-13: 978-0814322468

Meridian by Alice Walker

- ISBN-10: 0156028344
- ISBN-13: 978-0156028349

Black Panther: A Nation Under Our Feet by Ta-Nehsi Coates

- ASIN: B01EBE78O6

Just Mercy by Bryan Stevenson

- ISBN-10: 9780812984965
- ISBN-13: 978-0812984965

Academic Honesty

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). 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

Reading Schedule

Feb. 2 Welcome and Syllabus Review

Unit I: Resisting Slavery

Feb. 4 Excerpts from *David Walker’s Appeal*

Feb. 9 *Murder at Montpelier* By Douglas Chambers (Chapters 1, 4, 6, 7)

Feb. 11 *Murder at Montpelier* By Douglas Chambers (Chapters 8, 9, Conclusion)

Feb. 16 **Mardi Gras (No Class)**

Feb. 18 **Mardi Gras (No Class)**

Feb. 23 Chapters 1-9, 27- 32 From *Blake; or The Huts of America* by Martin Delany

Feb. 25 “The Goophered Grapevine” and “Mars Jeems’s Nightmare” From *The Conjure Woman and Other Conjure Tales* by Charles Chestnut

Unit II: The New Negro

Mar. 2 Chapters 1-5, 13, 14, 19- 21 From *The Miseducation of the Negro* by Carter G. Woodson

Scalar Project Proposal Due

Mar. 4 Foreword, “There Ought to be a Law,” “Bop,” “Bones, Bombs, Chicken Necks,” “Jazz, Jive, and Jam” from *The Best of the Simple* by Langston Hughes

Mar. 9 *FIRE!!! Devoted to Younger Negro Artist* (Foreword to Three Drawings)

Mar. 11 *FIRE!!! Devoted to Younger Negro Artist* (“Wedding Day, A Story” to end)

Mar. 13 “Of Our Spiritual Strivings” and “Of the Coming of John” from *The Souls of Black Folk* by W. E. B. Du Bois

Mar. 16 **Scalar Project Peer Review II (No Class)**

Unit III: Civil Rights

Mar. 18 *Arc of Justice* by Kevin Boyle (Prologue-chapter 4)
 Mar. 23 *Arc of Justice* by Kevin Boyle (Chapter 5- 7)
 Mar. 25 *Arc of Justice* by Kevin Boyle (Chapter 8- Epilogue)
 Mar. 30 **Self-care Day**
 Apr. 1 Self-care Day
 Apr. 6 *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* by Sam Greenlee (Chapters 1-11)
 Apr. 8 *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* by Sam Greenlee (Chapters 12-20)
 Apr. 13 *Meridian* by Alice Walker (Pages 1-134)
 Apr. 15 *Meridian* by Alice Walker (Pages 135-241) Intro, Chapters 3 and 5 from
 Apr. 20 **Scalar Project Peer Review II** (No Class)
 Apr. 22 *Liberated Threads* by Tanisha Ford

Unit IV: Neo-Slave Narratives, Afro-Futures & the Black Present

Apr. 27 *Just Mercy* by Bryan Stevenson (Intro, Chapters 1, 3, 5)
 Apr. 29 *Just Mercy* by Bryan Stevenson (Chapters 7, 9, 11, 13, 15)
 May 4 “Necropolis: The Bronx and the Politics of Abandonment” from *Can’t Stop, Won’t Stop* by Jeff Chang
 May 6 Excerpt from *Black Panther: A Nation Under Our Feet* by Ta-Nehsi Coates
 May. 11 **Scalar Project Presentations** *including Scalar Project III*