

**ENGL 4093/5093 Studies in Black Literatures: Black Women Writers**  
**Professor J. Saffold**  
**Fall 2020**

In the wake of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement and moments of reckoning like #MeToo, the intersection of race and gender has become one of the most contentious spaces in contemporary times, especially for Black women. Authors, theorists, and critics writing as and in service to Black women over the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have provided critical entrees into the thoughts, hopes, and disappointments that come with being Black and a woman. This course seeks to understand the thoughts, concerns, and words of Black women through literature. A variety of fiction and non-fiction readings by and about Black women will highlight the ways race, class, gender and other socially constructed forms of difference combine, intersect, and complicate narratives of Blackness and femininity. Special attention will be paid to Black women as agents in their lives, Black women as thinkers and theorizers, and the various ways in which Black women in the U.S. have reimagined our world.

**Course objectives:**

- Analyze the relationships between race, class, gender, and sexuality from the 1900s to the present in print
- Consider how race and gender have jointly impacted literature in the African American tradition
- Understand the shared experiences and histories of black women through time and space
- Examine the diversity of Black feminist concepts through time and space

**Required Texts:**

*Sula* by Toni Morrison

*The Coldest Winter Ever* by Sister Souljah

\*All other course material will be provided on Moodle\*

**Course Assignments**

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 welcome 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.

## ENGL 4093/5093 Studies in Black Literatures: Black Women Writers

### Group Presentation (10%)

In groups of 2-3, students will be responsible for presenting a historical framing for the text(s) and authors we will discuss at the beginning of one class. These presentations should be 5-7 minutes long and provide information that will help extend class discussion beyond what all students were required to read.

### Black Woman Writer Profile (60%)

Students will select one Black woman writer (pending approval) to profile over the course of the semester. Using [Scalar](#), the profile will include 3 sections: an annotated bibliography, a biography, and a critical analysis of selected texts from the author. This assignment requires in-class peer editing and will culminate in a final five to ten-minute presentation at the end of the semester.

**Annotated Bibliography:** For each published text by your identified writer, provide an annotation. Annotations are designed to be more than a brief summary of an article, book, or other text (e.g. a collection of poetry or short stories). Rather than providing summative information, strive to be evaluative and critical about the text:

- What does this work add to your author's corpus of work?
- How does the text correlate with that of her contemporaries?
- What are some themes and trends across her body of work?

There is no page expectation for this assignment (the length depends on how many texts your author has). Each annotation, however, should be a minimum of 200 words. The full annotated bibliography should be in **12 point font, Times New Roman, using the 8<sup>th</sup> Edition of the MLA Handbook**.

**Biographical Essay:** In 3-4 pages (for 5093-ers in 5-6 pages), provide a biographical essay on your selected Black woman writer. Your biography should be well organized around a centralizing thesis pertaining to the writer. The essay should include pertinent "life" information such as dates of birth (and death if applicable), marriages, children, education, what they have published etc. **However, your essay should focus on the author's "life in literature" or her life as it relates to the works she produced.** Good sources to include for this assignment are:

- Relevant journal and newspaper articles
- Book reviews
- Interviews with the author
- Scholarly criticisms of the author's work
- Liner notes in their works of literature

**Critical Analysis:** Using 2-4 texts by your author, identify 1-3 themes or trends your author takes up in her writing. The analysis should begin with an arguable thesis statement and include textual examples with short quotations from selected texts. The analysis should be **3-4 pages (5-6 pages for students taking 5093) double-spaced, 12 point font, Times New Roman, using the 8<sup>th</sup> Edition of the MLA Handbook**.

### Black Women Writer Profile Final Presentation (10%)

In 5-10 minutes, students will present their completed Black Women Writer profile on Scalar. This presentation should reflect the depth of research each student has conducted throughout the semester to fully illuminate the work and life of Black women authors.

## ENGL 4093/5093 Studies in Black Literatures: Black Women Writers

### Course Grading

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

### 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).

### 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](#).

## ENGL 4093/5093 Studies in Black Literatures: Black Women Writers

### Due Dates at a Glance

Date	Assignment
Weekly (Due at 11:59 every Sunday)	Discussion Posts
As assigned	Group Presentation for class discussion
September 3	Select a Black woman writer (BWW) to profile
October 2	BWW Profile: Annotated Bibliography
October 30	BWW Profile: Brief Biography
November 20	BWW Profile: Critical Analysis
December 3	Black Women Writer Profile Final Presentation

### Reading Schedule:

*Week of August 19- 21*                      Syllabus Review  
 Semester Goal Setting Activity  
 Sign up for Scalar  
 (No reading or discussion this week)

#### **Black Woman Writings in Slavery**

*Week of August 24- 28*                      Selected poems by Phillis Wheatley  
 Womanhood a Vital Element an the Regeneration and Progress of a  
 Race by Anna Julia Cooper  
 Speeches by Sojourner Truth

*Week of August 31- Sept 4*                      *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl: Written by Herself* by Linda  
 Brent  
**Approved Black woman writer (BWW) to profile due  
 September 3**

*Week of Sept 7- 11*                              *Our Nig; or, Sketches from the Life of a Free Black* by Harriet E.  
 Adams Wilson

#### **Black Women of the New Negro Renaissance**

*Week Sept 14-18*                              Selected Poems from New Negro Renaissance Women

*Week Sept 21-25*                              *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston

*Week of Sept 28- Oct 2*                      Peer review of Annotated Bibliography (in class)  
**BWW Profile: Annotated Bibliography due October 2<sup>nd</sup>**  
 (No reading or discussion this week)

*Week of Oct 5- Oct 9*                              *Passing* by Nella Larson

**ENGL 4093/5093 Studies in Black Literatures: Black Women Writers**

**Modernity & Civil Rights**

*Week of Oct 12-16*

*The Street* by Ann Petry

*Week of Oct 19-23*

*Sula* by Toni Morrison

*Week of Oct 26-30*

BWW Brief Biography Round Robin Peer Review (in class)

**BWW Profile: Brief Biography due October 30<sup>th</sup>**

(No reading or discussion this week)

*Week of Nov 2-6*

*The Coldest Winter Ever* by Sister Souljah

*Week of Nov 9-13*

“Bloodchild” by Octavia Butler

“Coming Apart” by Alice Walker

*Week of Nov 16-20*

BWW Critical Analysis Round Robin Peer Review (in class)

**BWW Profile: Critical Analysis due November 20**

(No reading or discussion this week)

**Final Presentations December 3**