

ENGL 6090: Black Romance in Popular Imagination—UPDATED

Instructor: Dr. Jacinta Saffold

Course Description:

Have you seen #BlackGirlsRock, #BlackBoyJoy, or #BlackGirlMagic floating around on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook and pondered their significance? In this course we will use virtual and classroom space to critically engage how contemporary culture producers are re-imagining black love. Hashtags, memes, and GIFs are endemic of a wider effort to combat negativity being associated with people of color during this racially turbulent national moment. We will consider the utility of contemporary theoretical frameworks aimed at conceptualizing the present moment by applying them to novels, audiovisual albums, films, and poetry. This course specifically pulls from African American Studies, Women and Gender Studies, and English to glean a better cultural understanding on how African Americans are creatively envisioning love and romance in the aftermath of the Great Migration.

Course Objectives:

Generally, this course seeks to:

- Establish a literary history of romance in twentieth century African American literature and culture
- Explore the intersections of African American literature, American popular culture, and digital storytelling
- Provide opportunities for each student to practice hosting course discussions

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

- Have a better understanding of how romance is framed in African American literature and popular culture
- Gain familiarity with how African American storytelling evolves across media
- Improved skills in critical thinking and engaged discourse
- Produce complex written arguments with multi-modal media evidence

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 6090: Black Romance in Popular Imagination, we will engage in a lively discussion of the week's assigned literature. Each week, one student will lead a 45-minute discussion based on that week's assigned reading. 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 discussion that will begin at 8pm and last through the end of class. You are encouraged to do research on the literature and its subject matter outside of the assigned 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 Wednesday by 5pm. No late question submissions will be accepted.

Romance-Research Tabloid (50%):

Together, students will create a digital publication in response to the major themes and discussion questions that arise from exploring Black romance in popular imagination. Students will publish four issues of the tabloid throughout the semester. The due dates are as follows:

Romance-Research Tabloid I (Due Oct. 3)
Romance-Research Tabloid II (Due Oct. 24)
Romance-Research Tabloid III (Due Nov. 14)
Romance-Research Tabloid IV (Due Dec. 5)

Each issue of the Romance-Research Tabloid will include a featured article based on original research and is collaboratively written by 3 students. Each student responsible for contributing to one (1) featured article. The featured articles should total 2,000-3,000 words, adhere to MLA format, and include a minimum of three (3) primary and three (3) secondary scholarly sources.

Additionally, students will be responsible for identifying a copy editor, a layout designer, and a content manager for each issue (note: each issue must have different editors, designers, and managers). All remaining students will be responsible for generating the remainder of the tabloid's content. Such content may include (but is not limited to): 500-1,000 word articles, creative writing (poetry, short stories, plays, etc.), audiovisual content, and visual art. Therefore, each issue should include one feature article and 4-6 additional content pieces.

Required Texts:

Disappearing Acts by Terry McMillan
Sport of the Gods by Paul Laurence Dunbar
A Raisin in the Sun by Lorraine Hansberry
Beloved by Toni Morrison
Their Eyes Were Watching God by Zora Neale Hurston
Americanah by Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche

University of New Orleans Grading Scale

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). 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

Aug. 19	Welcome and Syllabus Review Watch <i>Eve's Bayou</i>
Aug. 26	<i>Disappearing Acts</i> by Terry McMillan
Sept. 2	
Sept. 9	
Sept. 16	<i>The Sport of the Gods</i> by Paul Laurence Dunbar
Sept. 23	<i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> by Lorraine Hansberry Watch <i>Carmen: A Hip-Hopera</i> (in class)

Sept. 30 *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston
Oct. 7 *Beloved* by Toni Morrison ~~Watch *Jason's Lyric* (in class)~~
Oct. 14 Watch *Carmen: A Hip Hopera* (in class) **Fall Break**
Oct. 21 Student Curated Black Romance music and/or video playlists
Oct. 28 Watch *A Vampire in Brooklyn* (in class)
Nov. 4 *Americanah* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche (part I)
Nov. 11 *Americanah* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche (part II)
Nov. 18 Watch *Love Jones* (in class)
Dec. 2 Watch *Jason's Lyric* (in class)