

Professor Ryan James Kernan  
ryanjameskernan@gmail.com

## Harlem Renaissance

350:368

### Syllabus

**Course Description:** The goal of this course is to provide students with both exposure to the constitutive texts of the Harlem Renaissance, and also to situate those texts in their respective contemporary contexts: literary, political, and international. We will consider issues like: How did the contemporary politics and material conditions of production that surrounded the creation of Harlem Renaissance texts inform their aesthetics? How did Africa-American authors to the “triple demand” of Harlem Renaissance authorship: to create “more sophisticated” African American Literary works; to create “authentic black texts”; to create texts that negotiated of representation, the racial uplift of an heterogeneous community, and the goal of forging, in and through the act of writing, a new Black identity. As part and parcel to paying special heed to the manner in which our texts answer to these political, aesthetic, person, and communal dictates, we will consider questions like: How did early 20<sup>th</sup> century “Worldwide Negro Voyage” inform the well-springs of the Harlem Renaissance? What is the significance of so-called white-patronage in the Harlem Renaissance? How did the Comintern’s 1926 “Solution to the Race Problem” inform the great works of thus particular period? What features, other than time period, distinguish Harlem Renaissance texts from other early 20<sup>th</sup> century literary works written in English at the time? Students are expected to: actively participate in class and in the class’s Facebook study group, to write a midterm and final paper (five pages each), and to take midterm and final exams

**Week 1:** **Short story selections** Selections from Joel Chandre Harris’ “The Uncle Remus Stories,” selections from poetry of Paul Lawrence Dunbar, selections from Charles Chesnutt’s “The Conjure Woman” and watch (in-class) video clips from “Birth of a Nation” (on facebook.)

**Week 2:** W. E. B. DuBois “Criteria for Negro Art,” George Schulyer, ‘The Negro Art Hokum,’ Langston Huges, “The Negro Artist and The Racial

Mountain,” Zora Neal Hurston “The Characteristics of Negro Expressionism.”

**Week 3:** Selections from Alain Locke’s The New Negro and Nancy Cunard’s Negro.

**Week 4:** W.E.B. DuBois, The Souls of Black Folk and selections from Booker T. Washington’s Up From Slavery.

**Week 5 & 6:** Jean Toomer, Cane.

**Week 7:** Langston Hughes’s “The Weary Blues” and Countee Cullen’s “Shadows”

**Week 8 & 9:** Claude McKay, Selected Poems and Home to Harlem.

**Week 10:** Nella Larsen, Quicksand.

**Week 11:** George S. Schuyler Black No More.

**Week 12 & 13:** Zora Neale Hurston “Mule Bone” and Their Eyes Were Watching God.

**Week 14:** James Weldon Johnson “Autobiography of an Ex Colored Man”

**Week 15:** Selected Poetry and Prose from Jessie Fausset (on the web)

**Grade Breakdown:** Your grade for this class will be calculated accordingly:

Participation: 20% (Engaged attendance in class and on-line)

Papers: 50% - (Your midterm paper will be worth 15% and your final paper will be worth 35% of your grade)

Midterm Exam: 15%

Final Exam: 15%

**Plagiarism:** If you are using someone else’s ideas in your papers (whether you paraphrase or not) you are plagiarizing. This is a very serious offense. Please see me immediately if you have any questions regarding this issue.

**Additional Requirements:** Students must join and actively participate in the class study group located on Facebook.

**Required Books:** Given the current economic crisis, I urge you to buy your books online, any by any means possible (all are readily available on-line at reduced rates or for free.)I will not be placing an order through Rutgers University, and (Picking up after and) and you are responsible for bringing each of the assigned works to lecture with you (electronic formats and laptops are welcome.)

**Required Secondary Sources:** Nathaniel Huggins Key Issue in the African Experience Volumes 1, and Nathaniel Huggins, The Harlem Renaissance.

**Policy on Late Papers:** No late papers will be accepted.

**Title of the Class:** The Harlem Renaissance.

**Office Hours:** You should – for the entirety of your academic career – take extensive advantage of office hours and the one-to-one attention they provide. Plus, if you visit your professors during office hours it makes them feel less lonely and more popular! I am available to meet both during my regularly scheduled office hours and by appointment.