

Harlem Renaissance

African-American, Ethnic American, or Global Anglophone



Professor: Ryan James Kernan ryanjameskernan@gmail.com

Class Meetings: 4:30pm to 5:50 pm

Office Hours: Wednesdays, by appointment, from 3:00-4:00pm and from 8:00-9:00 pm

NOTE: Students who cannot make one of these times may make appointments for others, provided they can prove that their schedule prohibits them from attending regularly scheduled office hours.

Course Description

This course provides students with both exposure to some of the seminal texts of the Harlem Renaissance and with the interpretive tools needed 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:

1. a) to create “more sophisticated” African American Literary works
2. b) to create “authentic black texts”
3. c) to create texts that negotiated the demands of representing an heterogeneous community with 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 20th 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 20th century literary works written in English at the time?

Students are expected to actively engage in class discussion, take regular reading quizzes, write one short midterm paper, and one longer final paper.

Departmental Learning Goals

1. Gain knowledge of literatures in English, as well as their historical, cultural, and formal dimensions and diversity.
2. Develop strategies of interpretation, including an ability to use critical and theoretical terms, concepts, and methods in relation to a variety of textual forms and other media.
3. Develop the ability to engage with the work of other critics and writers, using and citing such sources effectively.
4. Develop the ability to write persuasively and precisely in scholarly and, optionally, creative forms.

Academic Integrity

Students and instructors have a duty to each other and to our community to abide by norms of academic honesty and responsibility. To present something as your own original writing when it is not is plagiarism. Plagiarism and other forms of cheating are serious violations of trust. Academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, will have severe consequences, in accordance with the University Policy on Academic Integrity and the Code of Student Conduct. For details about the University's academic integrity policies, please see <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>.

Requirements

Participation (35%)

Includes attendance, regular quizzes, and discussion. Students are expected to attend each class session ready to participate. This means not only having done the assigned reading, but also being prepared and willing to contribute. Discussion requires every student to take the intellectual risk of offering observations, ideas, and arguments in class in response to one another and to the instructor. Lateness, lack of preparation, or disruptive behavior – including non-class use of computers or phones – will affect your participation grade. Failing to bring the assigned texts to class will impact your participation grade for that day. Attending office hours also counts toward participation.

Remember, you are not supposed to know all the answers in advance. You are, however, required to make your best effort to figure things out as we go along, and to work with your classmates to help them do so as well.

Reading Quizzes (15%)

Short "pop" reading quizzes will be given at the beginning of class at least once a week.

Paper 1 (20%)

Three to four pages on a single text. Topics distributed in advance.

Paper 2 (30%)

Seven to eight pages, developing your first paper into a comparative analysis.

General Policies

Attendance

Attendance at all classes – with the texts we are discussing in-hand – is expected. You may miss two classes without penalty. If you miss three classes, your overall grade for the semester will drop by half a letter (i.e. if you are absent three times, the best grade you could receive is a B+). If you miss six classes, you automatically fail the class regardless of work completed. Lateness of twenty minutes or more will count as half an absence. Lateness of forty minutes or more will count as a full absence. If you expect to miss one or two classes, please use the RU absence reporting website, which automatically sends an email to the instructors. The site can be found here: <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/>.

Discussion and Office Hours

Class discussion offers you a place for exploration, a space where – if you come prepared – all can benefit from your insights and from those of others. Exploring texts can be difficult, and fascinating discussions depend on a variety of opinions. Discussion is also meant to clear up any confusion you might have about lectures, our texts or the essays we'll be writing. You should NEVER be afraid to ask a question. There are stupid professors, but there are no stupid questions.

Most of the time, we'll be able to stay after lecture to answer brief questions, and you should also (in all of your classes for the rest of your academic life) take advantage of our office hours! Office hours allow you to get one-on-one help with any difficulties you may encounter, and your visitation keeps professors from getting too lonely and spiteful in their offices.

Etiquette

Your classmates are your colleagues, and therefore we expect you to behave toward each other in a professional, courteous, and helpful manner. Mutual respect will better enable us to discuss and develop diverse opinions and create a dynamic intellectual community.

Late Work

Essays submitted after the due date will lose half a letter grade for every day they are late. We will consider extensions on a case-by-case basis, provided you have a compelling reason for requiring the extension and you speak to one of us at least 72 hours before the essay is due.

Formatting

Work should be formatted according to MLA standards. If these are unfamiliar, refer to MLA guidelines as explained via the [Purdue OWL](#) style guide. Ensure that your margins are set to 1" on all sides; that you do not exceed 12-point font; that you use between one-and-a-half and double spacing; that you provide page numbers; and that you use a clear, legible typeface (such as Garamond, Palatino, or Times New Roman). All written work will be submitted via the "Assignments" tab on Sakai, in Word document format (.doc or .docx) when possible. Otherwise, submit via PDF. Other formats (.pages, Google doc links, etc.) are not acceptable.

Students with Disabilities

All reasonable accommodation will be given to students with disabilities. Students who may require accommodation should speak with one of us at the start of the semester. You may also contact the [Office of Disability Services](#) (848.445.6800).

Grading Standards

A range:	Outstanding. The student's work demonstrates thorough mastery of course materials and skills.
B range:	Good. The student's work demonstrates serious engagement with all aspects of the course but incomplete mastery of course materials and skills.
C range:	Satisfactory. The student's work satisfies requirements but shows significant problems or major gaps in mastery of course material.
D:	Poor or minimal pass. The student completes the basic course requirements, but the student's work is frequently unsatisfactory in several major areas.
F:	Failure. Student has not completed all course requirements or turns in consistently unsatisfactory work.

The final grade will be based on a numerical score but is subject to instructor discretion. Unsatisfactory work in all areas of the course will result in an F even if the numerical score corresponds to a passing grade. It is not possible to pass the course without completing all response papers and essays.

Required Readings

Print readings for this course are available through all major retail outlets. Given the nature of this course, which is devoted to the close reading and discussion of our texts, it is important for us all to be working from the same editions. For this reason, electronic copies of the following texts are not permitted. The remaining readings for the course, though, will be available via Sakai.

Books to purchase (in the order in which we will read them):

Johnson, James Weldon. *Autobiography of an Ex Colored Man* (Dover Thrift Additions)
ISBNL 9780486111155

Toomer, Jean. *Cane* W. W. Norton & Company 2011.
ISBN: 9780871403124

Hurston, Zora Neale. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. 1937. (Harper, 2006)
ISBN: [9780061120060](https://www.isbn-international.org/details/9780061120060)

List of Due Dates

Paper 1:	Friday, October 20th
Paper 2:	Wednesday, December 14th

Schedule of Reading

- Week 1 **Wednesday, September 6**
4. Introduction
- Week 2 **Monday, September 11**
5. Essays
 • Du Bois, W.E.B. “Criteria of Negro Art” (1926) [SAKAI]
- Wednesday, September 13**
 • Locke, Alain. “Introduction” The New Negro (1925) [SAKAI]
- Week 3 **Monday, September 18**
6. Schuyler, George “Negro Art Hokum” (1926 [SAKAI]
- Wednesday, September 20**
7. Hughes Langston, “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain” (1926) [SAKAI]
- Week 4 **Monday, September 18**
8. Hurston, Zora Neal. “The Characteristics of Negro Expression” (1934) [SAKAI]
- Wednesday, September 20**
9. Du Bois, W.E.B. Selections from *The Souls of Black Folk* (1901) [SAKAI]
- Week 5
- Monday, September 25**
10. Johnson, James Weldon. *Autobiography of an Ex Colored Man* (1912/27)
- Wednesday, September 27**
11. Johnson, James Weldon. *Autobiography of an Ex Colored Man* (1912/27)

Week 6

Monday, October 9

12. Johnson, James Weldon. *Autobiography of an Ex Colored Man* (1912/27)

Wednesday, October 11

13. Johnson, James Weldon. *Autobiography of an Ex Colored Man* (1912/27)

Week 7

Monday, October 16

14. Johnson, James Weldon. *Autobiography of an Ex Colored Man* (1912/27)

Wednesday, October 18

15. Johnson, James Weldon. *Autobiography of an Ex Colored Man* (re-reading and review)

Week 8

Monday, October 23

16. Toomer, Jean. *Cane* (1923)

Wednesday, October 25

17. Toomer, Jean. *Cane* (1923)

Monday, October 30

18. Toomer, Jean. *Cane* (1923)

Week 9

Wednesday, November 1

19. Toomer, Jean. *Cane* (1923)

Monday, November 6

20. Toomer, Jean. *Cane* (1923)

Week 10

Wednesday, November 8

21. Toomer, Jean. *Cane* (1923)

Week 11

Monday, November 13

22. Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937)

Wednesday, November 15

23. Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Week 12

Monday, November 20

24. Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

25. Writing Workshop

26. Wednesday November 22

27. NO CLASS: Thanksgiving Break

Week 13

Monday, November 27

28. Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Wednesday, November 29

29. Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Week 14

Monday, December 4

30. Hughes, Langston *Mulatto* (1930)

Wednesday, December 6

31. Hughes, Langston *Mulatto* (1930)

Week 15

Monday, December 12

32. Hughes, Langston *Mulatto* (1930)

Wednesday, December 14

33. Conclusion

— *Paper 2 due on Wednesday, December 20* —