



Professor: Ryan James Kernan (rjkernan@english.rutgers.edu)

Office Hours: Tuesdays from 5:00 pm to 6:30 by appointment in 024 Murray Hall

Class Meetings TTH7 CAC Scott Hall 101

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

Course Description

The Literary Afterlife of *The Souls of Black Folk*

In his work *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), W.E.B. Du Bois famously declared that the “the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line. Moreover, he characterized the “history of the American Negro” as a history of strife that stemmed, in part, from a psychological condition that he identified as “double consciousness”:

“After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, **born with a veil**, and gifted with second-sight in this American world,—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this **double-consciousness**, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife,—this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self.” (*Forethought*)

This course is dedicated to what might be labeled the literary legacy of Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk*. In other words, we will begin with an in-depth analysis of Du Bois's text and then proceed to examine the extent to which several ‘canonical’ works penned by African American authors—including (but not limited to) James Weldon Johnson, Langston Hughes, Amiri Baraka, Lorraine Hansberry—can be fruitfully read as participants in the ‘afterlife’ of Du Bois's arguments. We will consider questions like: How have African American artists portrayed concepts like “double consciousness”? How has African American fiction echoed, augmented, or troubled many of Du Bois's central claims? How have African American writers used art itself as a means to destroy (or remedy) the condition of “double consciousness.” In addition to their engaged participation, students are required to take weekly reading quizzes, to complete a midterm examination, and to submit one 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.

Midterm (30%)

Short answer take-home Exam

Final Paper (35%)

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, I'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 my 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

Reviews 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 guide- lines 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 me at the start of the semester. You may also contact the [Office of Disability Services](#) (848.445.6800).

Grading Standards

A- Outstanding. Demonstrates thorough mastery of course materials and skills.

B- Good. The student's work demonstrates serious engagement with all aspects of the course but incomplete mastery of course materials and skills.

C- 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.

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.

Reading Schedule

Part I Writing in the Wake of the Failure of Reconstruction: The Gilded Age

Week 1)

Jan 16th Introductory Lecture: The Rules of the Game and Getting to Know One Another

Jan 18th Du Bois, W.E.B. *The Souls of Black Folk* "Forethought" and Hegel, W.G.F. Selections from *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (The Dialectic of Lordship and Bondage) [On Sakai]

Week 2)

Jan 23rd Du Bois, W.E.B. *Criteria of Negro Art* [on Sakai] and Plato. Selections from *The Symposium*.

Jan 25th Du Bois, W.E.B. *The Souls of Black Folk* [Chapters 1-6]

Week 3)

Jan 30th Du Bois, W.E.B. *The Souls of Black Folk* [Chapters 7-11]

Feb 1st Du Bois, W.E.B. *The Souls of Black Folk* [Chapters 11-16 and "Afterthought"]

Week 4)

February 6th Recap and Hughes, Langston *Selected Poems* [On Sakai]

February 8th Hopkins, Pauline *Contending Forces* [Chapters 1-4]

Week 5)

February 13th Hopkins, Pauline *Contending Forces* [Chapters 5-15]

February 15th Hopkins, Pauline *Contending Forces* [Chapters 16-22]

Week 6)

February 20th Midterm Review

February 22nd MIDTERM EXAM

Part II The Harlem Renaissance

Week 7)

February 27th Johnson, James Weldon *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* [Preface, Chapters 1-4]

March 1st Johnson, James Weldon *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* [Chapters 5-8]

Week 8)

March 6th Johnson, James Weldon *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* [Chapters 9-11]

March 8th Johnson, James Weldon *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* [Entire Book and Recap]

Spring Break March 10th -18th

Week 9)

March 20th Hughes, Langston *Mulatto* [Acts I-II]

March 22nd Hughes, Langston *Mulatto* [Act III]

Week 10)

March 27th Hughes, Langston *Mulatto*

March 29th NO CLASS

PART III- THE BLACK ARTS MOVEMENT

Week 11)

April 3rd Baraka Amiri, "Black Art," Neal, Larry, Selected Essays, and in-class screening of *Dutchman*, (Act I)

April 5th In-class screening of *Dutchman* (Act 2) Baraka, Amiri *Dutchman*

Week 12)

April 10th Baraka, Amiri *Dutchman* [Act I]

April 12th Baraka, Amiri *Dutchman* [Acts I and II]

Week 13)

April 17th Fuller, Charles *A Soldier's Play* [Act I]

April 19th Fuller, Charles *A Soldier's Play* [Acts I and II]

Week 14)

April 24th Recap-Fuller, Charles *A Soldier's Play*

April 26th Final Lecture

KEY DATES AND DEADLINES

FEBRUARY 22nd MIDTERM EXAM

APRIL 30th FINAL PAPER DUE

Required Texts for Purchase:

Du Bois, W.E.B. *The Souls of Black Folk*
GOOGLE BOOKS: DOVER THRIFT EDITION

Hopkins, Pauline *Contending Forces*
[ISBN-13: 978-0195063257](https://www.amazon.com/dp/0195063257)

Johnson, James Weldon. *Autobiography of an Ex Colored Man* (Dover Thrift Additions)
[ISBNL 9780486111155](https://www.amazon.com/dp/0486111155)

*All other texts are available for download on Sakai or via Alexander Library's Black Drama Collection
https://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/indexes/black_drama