ENGLISH 609.01
Ethnicity in America: The African American Experience (20th century)
“Jazz Literature”
Hamilton Smith/Room 18
Monday & Wednesdays (4:10-5:30 p.m.)

who reads
Incessantly, and to his reading brings not
A spirit and judgment equal or superior,
(And what he brings, what needs he elsewhere seek)
Uncertain and unsettled still remains,
Deep verst in books and shallow in himself,
Crude or intoxicate, collecting toys,
And trifles for choice matters, worth a sponge;
As Children gathering Pibbles on the shore.
(John Milton, Paradise Regained Book 4:322-329)

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Office Hours: Wednesdays (1:15-2:15 p.m., 5:45-6:45 p.m., and by appointment)
Virtual Office Hours: 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. via e-mail (Mondays-Fridays)
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REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS @ DURHAM BOOK EXCHANGE

Baldwin, James. The Amen Corner
Ellison, Ralph. Living with Music: Ralph Ellison’s Jazz Writings (Modern Library Classics)
Hajdu, David. Lush Life: A Biography of Billy Strayhorn
Harmon, William and Hugh Holman. A Handbook to Literature (any of the following editions: 8-12)
Jones, Leroi. Blues People: Negro Music in White America
Marsalis, Wynton et. al. Jazz ABZ: An A to Z Collection of Jazz Portraits with Art Print
Morrison, Toni. Jazz
Shakespeare, William. Antony and Cleopatra. (Signet Classic edition)
Shange, Ntozake. For Colored Girls who have Considered Suicide...
Young, Kevin. Jazz Poems

Sound Recordings on Compact Disc (Please purchase independent of the Book Store)

Ellington Suites (Duke Ellington)
Black, Brown, & Beige (Duke Ellington)
New Orleans Suite (Duke Ellington)
Billie Ella Lena Sarah (Various Artists) (Columbia Jazz Masterpieces)
*Additionally, you are expected to utilize your Writers Handbook from your English 419 course. If you no longer possess your textbook from that class, I strongly recommend Lynn Quitmann Troyka and Douglas Hesse’s *Simon and Schuster Handbook for Writers*. 9th ed., New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2009.

(Additional Administrative handouts posted on Blackboard)

Students should also invest in a well organized 3-ring binder for storing the syllabus, additional administrative forms, handouts, formal and informal writings, and detailed notes pertinent to reading selections and class discussions.

I. INTRODUCTION

Locating the content of the course within the discipline

This section of English 609 invites students to complement their understanding of African American culture through the fascinating world of jazz literature. In this course, we will invest in the academic project of examining the philosophical complexity of jazz as represented in various literary texts ranging from several anglo-British and American texts as well those in African American literature, music, photography, film, and dance. In addition to acquainting ourselves with jazz’s origins and a brief survey of its philosophical and aesthetic attributes, we will practice tenets of cognitive science toward reading the music in literature and *vice versa*. Our application of theory to a broad variety of jazz texts will aid us in the intellectual endeavor of becoming “born again” through literature and African American culture more specifically. Stimulated by this intellectual rebirth and an “entrepreneurial spirit of discovery,” we will also seek and cultivate interpretive opportunities to critically engage and practice our nuanced understandings of jazz as a medium for harvesting a deeper appreciation for the music, African American culture, and the embedded codes of black expression and representation within the English language.

As is customary in all of my courses, I’m committed to teaching the “beautiful science” of literary studies, my interdisciplinary pedagogy for promoting strong critical thinkers, readers, and writers. My hope is that you will study, apply, and utilize these skill sets toward confidently and effectively articulating cogent analytical thoughts in unified and coherent academic prose. In this 600-level course, we will perfect student writing by focusing on the analytical essay in preparation for the final research paper. By semester’s end, students will complete a 10-12-page research paper of original investigative inquiry and examination that further reflects the “beautiful science” of academic writing. Most important, I regard each of my students as an “engaged” academic scholar. For this reason, it is expected that you will apply effort to every aspect of your studies. Grades will not be determined based on student effort. You will earn all grades in this course based on your working mastery of the components outlined in the Writer’s handbook, the grading rubric, and this contractual syllabus.
Resisting the tendency to sustain passive reading habits will strongly affect your grade in this course. I require students to dialogue with all texts. In my student and teaching experiences, I have found that this practice provides students with insightful “field notes.” These notes ultimately lead to the production of cutting-edge theories that you will articulate during our classroom discussions and in your writing submissions. Please study and use your field notes, as they will certainly inspire thought-provoking critical arguments. You should also know that I will always approach and value your compositions as artistic productions of literary analysis. Art requires reflection, rehearsal, and an enthused commitment to recursive revision. Therefore, my expectation is that you will approach each academic assignment with a spirit of scholarly devotion and dedication demanded of the artistic enterprise.

II. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE COURSE

1. A primary goal of this course endeavors to provide students with a premium education. I intend to meet this goal by providing a rigorous yet motivating atmosphere, one that fosters an admiration for the demanding and intellectually satisfying work of “performing academia.”

2. A secondary goal aims to cultivate a respect for diversity/multiculturalism through literature and culture while also perfecting students’ interpretive, analytical, and persuasive argumentative skills with respect to the intersections of race, class, gender, and sexuality. I believe these goals will assist you in generating a gifted second sight of the world through “intuitive means of reading” that are informed by your cultural awareness of experiences within and beyond the veil of racial interpretation. We will meet this goal by studying and applying the phenomenon of “white ignorance” and its cultural relationship to beauty norms and black female identities.

3. A third goal endeavors to sharpen students’ interpretive, analytical, persuasive, and argumentative writing. Students will achieve these academic skills by dialoguing with texts, explicating them responsibly, and by making distinctions among summary, analysis, and argumentation. Moreover, original and thought-provoking writing prompts, engaged evaluative feedback on writing submissions, as well as your spirited class discussion will further aid you in meeting this goal.

4. A final goal of this course seeks to cultivate an atmosphere where each student may affirm the power of her/his critical voice. This skill will especially empower students to construct meaning and logically defend any analytical positions they make pursuant to their interpretive claims. This goal is especially important to me, for I value the power of my students’ analytical voices as foundations for the roles of leadership they will occupy throughout their undergraduate careers and beyond. I aim to help you achieve a strong critical voice by demanding a consistent level of engaged participation. Oral assignments will be used to facilitate this goal as well. Most important, our classroom shall be regarded as a safe-space. We shall respect our peers’ philosophical and educated opinions, and we should all become comfortable with producing wrong
answers throughout the semester. Doing so is profitable for stimulating further investigative inquiry in the hope of ultimately arriving at so-called right conclusions.

You can expect to acquire these skills if **and only if** you honor all course policies, attend class promptly, complete your assignments timely, and maintain a scrupulous spirit of academic honesty and decorum.

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Requirement 1: Readings and Quizzes

Completed readings and writing assignments are due at 4:10 p.m. I expect you to read materials **deliberately and certainly more than once**. It is also mandatory that you responsibly dialogue with your texts. I regard a well annotated text as a responsibly read one. Throughout the semester, I will administer a series of announced and unannounced quizzes at the beginning of class. Quizzes relative to reading assignments and/or dialoguing with your text are designed to measure your **basic** reading comprehension of assigned texts. Make-up quizzes will not be offered under any circumstances.

Requirement 2: Papers

Formal and informal writing assignments will substantively aid you in strengthening your literary analytical skills and persuasive compositions. I will assign a total of four formal papers. Students are strongly encouraged to utilize my office hours in conjunction with the following academic resources: the writing center, and discussions in our assigned writer’s handbook. **Only papers meeting the following requirements will be accepted and eligible for grading.**

1. All papers must be typed in Times New Roman 12-point font, with standard 1 inch margins on all sides.

2. All papers must bear a cover page where text is centered midway on the page. Include the title of your essay, your name, my title/name, and the submission date. Essay titles should reflect intellectual thought and a sense of personal pride in one’s submission. They should not give the appearance that they have been tacked on as if they were an afterthought.

3. Excluding your cover page and page 1, include your name and the page number on every page in the upper right-hand corner. Additionally, page one of your essay should not contain a heading. Simply begin your essay.

4. A properly formatted Works Cited page (pursuant to MLA standards) must accompany all submissions. Consult your *Simon and Schuster* for clarification. **DO NOT OPERATE FROM WHAT YOU THINK CONSTITUTES A WELL-FORMATTED WORKS CITED PAGE. USE**
AN MLA HANDBOOK EVERY TIME YOU COMPOSE A WORKS-CITED PAGE.

5. Late papers will not be accepted (In other words, papers submitted after 4:10 on the due date are late and will not be accepted). Should you have any extenuating emergencies that might conflict with your ability to meet your deadlines, it is your responsibility to make suitable arrangements with me prior to the deadline.

6. A series of critical reflection papers and/or blackboard postings will be assigned over the course of the semester. Students are expected to concentrate on a passage in the context of a given author's intellectual idea(s). Critical reflection papers, when assigned, should consist of a well-developed paragraph totaling 2 typed pages (double-spaced). Blackboard postings will consist of a sustained paragraph containing no less than three supporting ideas. These assignments are designed to facilitate students' abilities to critically and effectively respond to authors' philosophical ideas. Most important, they will serve as rehearsals for any of the formal academic essays assigned throughout the semester. Please note the pedagogical value of these papers serve as "low-stakes" rehearsals for assigned formal writing. Please feel free to bring formal/informal writing to our conferences in the interest of aiding us in further identifying your writing strengths and weaknesses.

7. Requirement 3: Office Hours and Individual Meetings

Because I value you and your intellectual development, I will always welcome an opportunity to meet with you and discuss your analytical writing so long as you make suitable arrangements in advance. Again, my office hours provide an opportunity for us to specifically review and address the major strengths and weaknesses of your analytical submissions. Since I treat every student as an adult, it is important that you conduct yourself accordingly by taking pro-active measures to meet with me. **It is not my responsibility to make you come see me. Because you are an adult, a professional, and a scholar, the onus is on you to set as many appointments with me as you deem necessary.** All appointments should be confirmed with me via e-mail. When you meet with me to discuss your writing, please bring your organized 3-ring binder. You should be prepared to discuss your writing strengths and weaknesses pursuant to our grading rubric. Should my regularly scheduled office hours conflict with your timetable, please feel free to propose more suitable arrangements.

Requirement 4: Attendance, Class Participation, and Classroom Decorum

I will take attendance at the beginning of class. Absences will obviously affect your classroom participation and will, therefore, jeopardize your grade. When permissible, you may secure my written permission to be excused from a class provided you grant me
at least twenty-four hours' advance notice. Tardiness and unexcused early departures from class will not be tolerated.

Your spirited classroom participation is expected in every class meeting. By participation, I mean contributing insightful criticisms and observations, asking problematizing and/or thought-provoking questions that are either textually or theoretically based, or sparking edifying, constructive debate of your peers or the professor's analytical contributions.

Men may not wear hats in the classroom. Sunshades are not permitted, and students may not consume food and beverages in the classroom. All members will treat the classroom as a professional space and will conduct themselves accordingly.

**Requirement 5: Courtesy**

While an aim of this course aspires to help students affirm the power of their critical voices, this goal does not entitle students to make disparaging, insensitive, and hostile remarks. In order to ensure that our classroom is a "safe space" of intellectual exchange, all members of the class shall treat everyone with equal respect. In instances where students disagree with others' insights, we shall either challenge the philosophical content of those contributions or else civility agree to disagree. Uncivil or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Most important, men are expected to be mindful of their male privilege and any verbal/non-verbal speech acts that may consciously or unconsciously silence and oppress their female peers. Additionally, cell phones and the like must be deactivated during class.

**GRADING SCHEME**

- Quizzes/assignments/reflection papers: 20%
- Papers 1 & 2: 20%
- Final Essay: 40%
- Group Presentation 10%
- Final Exam: 10%

**Note:** Should you submit an essay and receive a grade below C-, you must meet with me immediately and make plans for revision as circumstances may warrant.

**WARNING ABOUT PLAGIARISM/ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT**

Plagiarism as defined in the UNH Student Rights, Rules, and Regulations Handbook shall not be tolerated. All instances will result in a grade of F for the assignment and the course. I will also report all such instances to the Dean of Academic Affairs for further appropriate action.

Plagiarism is the unattributed use of the ideas, evidence or words of another person, or the conveying of the false impression that the arguments and writing in a paper are the student's own. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to the following:
1. The acquisition by purchase or otherwise of a part of the whole of a piece of work which is represented as the student’s own.
2. The representation of the ideas, data, or writing of another person as the student’s own work even though some wording, methods of citation, or arrangement of evidence, ideas, or arguments have been altered.
3. Concealment of the true sources of information, ideas, or argument in any piece of work.

According to the definition above, plagiarism is copying, purchasing, or otherwise appropriating someone else’s work and using it as your own without the acknowledgment and/or permission of the author[s]. It means replicating, or substituting for your own, not only the writing of professional authors, but also the work of your classmates or other students. This means either works in their entirety or "just" bits and pieces. Plagiarism also includes handing in a paper that has been done for another class without talking it over with your instructor first. While it may save you some time to borrow, steal, or copy someone else’s words or essay, doing so will not help you gain the skills you would acquire by writing on your own.

STATEMENT REGARDING DISABILITY SERVICES

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. Throughout my teaching career, several of my students have expressed a reticence to use the service for fear that it meant they were receiving an undue advantage over their peers. I do not subscribe to such logic and invite all of my students to recognize medically documented disabilities as realities that may significantly impact one’s academic ability at any given time. Thus, we shall agree as a community of ethically driven scholars to support our peers and the Office of Disability Services in the faithful execution of its mission. Should you require their assistance or support, please contact the Office for Disability Services for Students at 862-2607 in room 118 of the Memorial Union Building, to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.
My Profile

Because I am committed to your development as a scholar and as a critical thinker, reader, and writer, I expect no less of a commitment from you in your overall academic approach to my course. You should know that I will not reward a passing grade to submitted work that does not strictly adhere to the grading rubric; that is executed in a half-done fashion; that does not critically engage assigned literature with in-depth analysis; or poorly highlights students’ responsibility to “perform academia.” I invite and expect students to consult with me as often as they wish whether it is to arrange writing conferences, discuss personal grievances associated with my course, or any other difficulties that might affect their ability to successfully navigate the course. **Should a student have ANY difficulties with me or aspects of the course, I expect you to consult me first that we might arrive at a suitable resolution together. Should you remain dissatisfied with the result of our meeting, it is then perfectly acceptable to petition your dissatisfaction with Andrew Merton, chair of the English department. Students should not, however, disrespect my role as their educator and abuse the chain-of-command by meeting with others prior to seeking a resolution with me first.**

Pedagogy

Drawing upon Audre Lorde’s “Uses and the Power of the Erotic,” I classify my teaching pedagogy as an “erotic pedagogy of liberation.” This philosophy is rooted in feminist pedagogy and (1) challenges students to recognize and affirm the power of their individual critical voices; (2) subordinates the “banking concept” of education in favor of privileging students’ life experiences, ways of knowing, and areas of expertise/specialization as testing grounds for their interpretations of literature and culture; (3) emphasizes the vital significance of “oppositional consciousness,” (especially in terms of race, class, gender, and sexuality), in any and all responsible assessments of literature, culture, and critical reflection; and (4) promotes what I call “thinking readers” and “thinking writers.” You may expect to be challenged on the philosophical content of your ideas by me as well as your peers. Such challenges will never resort to personal attack or insult but will always endeavor to advance critical thinking from multiple perspectives.

Expectations

I expect you to conduct yourself as a scholar in all aspects of my course. This means you arrive to class diligently prepared to learn, contribute, and grow as an astute critical thinker. I expect you to adhere to all policies contained in my syllabus and to read and study all handouts that I provide (i.e. grading rubric; “counter-productive trends/basic guidelines for academic writing; and written feedback pertaining to your writing). Over the course of the semester, many of you will be made aware of individual writing deficiencies. It is your responsibility to make effective use of the *Simon and Schuster Handbook for Writers*. I will hold you personally accountable for those weaknesses I identify in your submissions. Please make effective use of me, your handbook, and the writing center. It is my goal that everyone will pass this course; however, you must earn the grade you receive. You will earn your grade based on your ability to satisfactorily execute the tenets specified in our syllabus.