

ENG 314: African American Literature II

Dr. Scott Challener (scott.challener@hampton.edu)

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:00 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.

Armstrong Hall 220

Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 9:30 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Office Location: Armstrong Hall 217A

<https://calendly.com/challener-scott/office-hours-spring-2023>

“...transgression inheres, however unarticulated, in every aspect of the black writer’s career in America.”

—Samuel Delany, “[Racism and Science Fiction](#)” (*New York Review of Science Fiction*, 1998)

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Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 9:30 a.m.-11 a.m., Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:45 a.m. – noon.

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Per the course catalog: “Survey of African American literature from its origins to the present, based on selected works and their relation to their artistic, historical and philosophical contexts. Prerequisites: ENG 101-102, ENG 208, or permission of department chair.”

OBJECTIVES

As a required course in the English major and as an elective for all majors, ENG 314 reflects the goals of the HU department of English and Foreign Languages. Examples include the following.

- Assist students in developing an appreciation of and competency in literature
- Provide opportunity for independent study and scholarship
- Sponsor courses which give students the opportunity to discuss values and attitudes as an important component of intellectual growth, social awareness, and moral responsibility
- Offer courses which focus on ethnic and cultural diversity

The following objectives address three sequential activities and are expressed in terms of what students should be able to do as a result of taking the course: 1) read a text accurately; 2) interpret the text; and 3) critique the text from a variety of possible standpoints.

REQUIRED COURSE TEXTS (can be purchased via the [University bookstore](#); if purchasing online, please consider using [Bookshop](#) to purchase printed editions)

- *Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, Third Edition, Two Volume Set, ed Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Valerie Smith, et. al. ISBN: 9780393911558. *Note*: we will be drawing from Volume II.
- James Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*. Any edition.
- Richard Wright, *The Man Who Lived Underground*, Library of America, 2021. ISBN: 9781598536768.
- Raven Leilani, *Luster: a novel*, Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2020. ISBN: 9780374194321.

COURSE WEBSITE

Our class has a Blackboard site that contains the syllabus, assignments, and other course-related materials. You can log in to our Blackboard site at courses.hampton.edu.

REQUIREMENTS

25% PARTICIPATION

Regular attendance and energetic, thoughtful participation are required. Discussion requires every student to take the intellectual risk of offering observations, ideas, and arguments in response to one another and to the instructor. You aren't supposed to know all the answers in advance, but you are required to come to class prepared to join in a communal effort to figure things out. If you are apprehensive about speaking in class or have a special situation that will affect your participation, please see me during office hours at the start of the term. If you fall ill or miss class for a family emergency, please contact me as soon as possible. Lateness, lack of preparation, and disruptive behavior will affect the participation grade.

GROUPME

Our course has a GroupMe. Our GroupMe will function as an informal space for “uncritical” responses that zero in on what is typically left out of traditional “critical” interpretation. See the assignment sheet for details on this difference.

25% ESSAY

A 5-7 page interpretive essay making an argument about one text. See [assignment sheet](#) for details.

25% CRITICAL BLOG POSTS (approx. 250 words each)

Weekly critical reading responses due Sundays by midnight to our course blog on Blackboard. Graded complete / incomplete. See the [assignment sheet](#) for details.

25% FINAL TAKE HOME EXAM

The final take home exam. Students will write five 250-500 word analyses in response to seven questions.

CORE COMPETENCIES

Below you will find the core competencies identified by the department for this course. Students will be able to:

1. Distinguish passages from texts studied and construct an explication placing passages in context.
2. Identify and construct a literary analytical thesis; compose a coherent essay that supports that thesis; compare and judge the ideas of the theorist or critic in terms of the literary analytical thesis.
3. Define three periods of literature and apply characteristics of literature to new texts.

The competencies listed above reflect the following university-wide core competencies:

1. **Critical Thinking** is the ability to identify how to act after careful evaluation of the evidence and reasoning presented in a communication.
2. **Ethics** is the ability to identify ethical ideas, issues and apply ethical principles relating to personal, professional and academic conduct.
3. **International Diversity** is the ability to understand the social customs, traditions, and artifacts of a culture.
4. **Information and Technology Literacy** is the ability to use electronic media to support research activities and the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information and its sources.
5. **Oral Communication** is the ability to deliver a spoken message of depth and complexity in a way that elicits a response from an audience of understanding, appreciation, assent or critical inquiry.
6. **Written Communication** is the ability to develop and express complex ideas clearly, coherently, and logically in a style appropriate for both purpose and audience and demonstrate mastery of accepted standards of written communication.

GRADING

Hampton University uses the following grade scale:

A+ 97-100	A 93-96	A- 90-92	B+ 87-89
B 83-86	B- 80-82	C+ 77-79	C 73-76

C- 70-72	D+ 67-69	D 66-63	D- 60-62
F 59-below			

As outlined in the [Student Handbook](#) (p. 43), Hampton uses a four-point grading system. The general standards for grades are as follows:

A range: Outstanding work, demonstrating thorough mastery of course materials and skills.

B range: Good work, demonstrating serious engagement with all aspects of the course but incomplete mastery of course materials and skills.

C range: Satisfactory work, meeting requirements but indicating significant problems mastering the course materials and skills.

D range: Poor or minimally passing work, meeting the basic course requirements, but frequently unsatisfactory in several major areas.

F: Failure due to unmet course requirements or consistently unsatisfactory work.

RECORDING OF CLASS LECTURES & DISCUSSIONS

Students may not record class lectures and discussions without permission. Permission will be granted on a case-by-case basis.

TUTORING & WRITING RESOURCES CENTER

Hampton offers a [Tutoring Center](#) and a [Writing Resources Center](#). The WRC offers consultations for students to discuss their work with well-trained writing consultants. Consultants will work with you at any stage in your writing process. They will work with you to break the writing process into small steps. They will help you do your own best work, so you should expect to be actively involved in your session. The WRC is a resource for all Hampton students. Whether you consider yourself to be a strong writer or a weak one, you can benefit from meeting with a writing consultant. I encourage you to reserve an appointment in advance.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity is at the heart of the university, and we all are responsible to each other and to our community for upholding the ideals of honor and integrity. Your full participation and observance of [Hampton's Code of Conduct](#) is expected. To present something as your own original writing or thinking when it is not is plagiarism. Plagiarism and other forms of cheating are serious violations of trust. Academic and intellectual dishonesty, including plagiarism, will have severe consequences, in accordance with the student-led honor system. For details about your responsibilities as a student, please see the [Student Handbook](#).

STATEMENT ON DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, & BELONGING

You are welcome regardless of status, documentation, gender, race, ethnicity, class position, or ability. This classroom is a safe space, but it is not a hermetically sealed environment. Rather, it is a microcosm of our larger community. To begin to make the classroom an equitable space you have to follow a few basic guidelines. You are expected to be respectful in your speech and actions. Intentions matter. Effects do too. Practice self-reflexivity. Consider the positions you inhabit and the positions you take. Recognize the impact you have on others.

Active participation does not necessarily mean that you talk; it means that you listen. It means that you recognize both the spaces you occupy and move through and the structures that organize them. Be aware of how much airtime you take up. Practice critical compassion. Whether you agree or disagree, acknowledge and respond in turn. Justify your perspective with textual evidence; and pose questions from your experience. Be curious. Learn the names of your peers. And finally, accept and sit with your feelings, whether “bad” or “good” or otherwise. Embrace and explore the full range of intellectual and affective possibilities at hand—including discomfort, confusion, anxiety, insecurity, pleasure, delight, gladness, joy, and all the mixtures thereof, for which we may not have a language.

CHOSEN NAME & GENDER PRONOUNS

This course aims to be an inclusive learning community that supports students of all gender expressions and identities. Please let me know if you would like to be addressed by a different name or set of pronouns than those listed in the official class roster. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

I assume that all of us learn in different ways. If there are circumstances that may affect your performance in this course, please talk to me as soon as possible so that we can work together to develop strategies for accommodations that will satisfy both your learning needs and the requirements of the course. Whether or not you have a documented disability, Hampton provides many support services that are available to all students.

Hampton accommodates students with disabilities in accordance with federal laws and university policy. Any student who feels they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a learning, psychiatric, physical, or chronic health diagnosis should contact Compliance and Disability Services staff at 757-727-5493 or at disabilityservices@hamptonu.edu to determine if accommodations are warranted and to obtain an official letter of accommodation.

[Compliance and Disability Services](#) is the office responsible for assisting students with disabilities. If you have a disability that interferes with your learning (whether visible or invisible, physical or mental), you are encouraged to register with this office. Compliance and Disability Services will work with you to determine appropriate accommodations for your

SCHEDULE (subject to change)

I. REALISM, NATURALISM, MODERNISM, 1940-1960

Week 1:

Thursday, January 12. Class canceled. Do the reading and write a blog post responding to the prompt below. Note: blog posts are due Sunday by midnight EDT to Blackboard.

Reading: “Realism, Naturalism, Modernism, 1940-1960,” *Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, Third Edition, Volume 2, pages 93-107.

Sunday, January 15. Blog Post #1 due. Prompt: Tomorrow is Martin Luther King, Jr. day. Read the entry in the anthology (pages 592-606), which includes “Letter from Birmingham Jail” and **at least one** of the readings listed below, and write a response to these readings. Memories are not only intimate; they’re political. What should we remember about MLK, Jr.? What don’t we talk about, think about, or *do* enough when we engage MLK, Jr.’s legacy? What, if anything, shouldn’t we remember or talk about?

- [MLK Now](#), *Boston Review* - an excellent 2018 forum on MLK.
- Barbara Ransby, “[A Black Feminist’s Response to Attacks on Martin Luther King, Jr.’s Legacy](#),” *New York Times* (3 June 2019)
- Jenn M. Jackson, “[Martin Luther King, Jr. Was More Radical Than We Remember](#),” *Teen Vogue* (31 May 2020)
- Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, “[King was a Critical Race Theorist before There Was a Name for It](#),” *Los Angeles Times* (17 January 2022)
- Colbert I. King, “[Martin Luther King, Jr.’s Words on Voting Rights Resonate All Too Well Today](#),” *Washington Post* (14 January 2022)

Week 2: Introductions & Preliminaries

Monday, January 16. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.

Tuesday, January 17. Introductions, syllabus.

Reading: Melvin B. Tolson, *Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, Third Edition, Volume 2, 107-113. Editor’s introduction and all poems. “[Dark Symphony](#).”
Richard Wright, 119-132. Editor’s introduction and “[Blueprint for Negro Writing](#)” (1937).

Thursday, January 19. Black realism, Black naturalism, Black modernism.

Reading: Richard Wright, *The Man Who Lived Underground*, Library of America, 2020, Part One, pages 1-54.

Sunday, January 22. Blog Post #2 due. Prompt: A response to Richard Wright's "Blueprint" and Melvin Tolson's poems. Quote and analyze at least one passage; ask at least one question for us to discuss.

Week 3:

Tuesday, January 24.

Reading: Richard Wright, *The Man Who Lived Underground*, Library of America, 2020, Part Two, I-V, pages 55-105.

Thursday, January 26.

Reading: Richard Wright, *The Man Who Lived Underground*, Library of America, 2020, Part Two, VI-end, pages 106-159.

Recommended:

- Richard Wright, "Memories of My Grandmother," Library of America, 2020, pages 163-207.
- Ralph Ellison, "Richard Wright's Blues" and "Remembering Richard Wright," *NAAAL*, 247-257; 307-318.

Sunday, January 29. Founder's Day. No blog post this week.

Week 4:

Tuesday, January 31.

Reading: Alice Childress, editor's introduction and *Trouble in Mind*, Act 1, *Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, Third Edition, Volume 2, pages 180-203.

Thursday, February 2.

Reading: Alice Childress, *Trouble in Mind*, Act 2, *Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, Third Edition, Volume 2, pages 203-225.

Sunday, February 5. Blog Post #3 due. Prompt: Respond to and analyze the ending of *Trouble in Mind*.

Week 5:

Tuesday, February 7.

Reading: Robert Hayden, introduction and selected poems, *Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, Third Edition, Volume 2, pages 225-243.

Thursday, February 9.

Reading: Margaret Walker, editor's introduction and poems, *NAAAL*, 318-323.
Gwendolyn Brooks, editor's introduction (324-325) and poems, *NAAAL*, pages 326-343.
Larry Neal, "Malcolm X—An Autobiography," *NAAAL*, pages 781-783.
Lucille Clifton, "Malcolm," *NAAAL*, 1127.
E. Ethelbert Miller, "[Malcolm X, February, 1965](#)"

Recommended: Malcolm X (El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz), editor's introduction, 565-566 and "The Ballot or the Bullet."

Sunday, February 12. Blog post #4 due. A comparative analysis of Malcolm X poems by Walker, Brooks, and Neal.

Week 6:

Tuesday, February 14.

Reading: Gwendolyn Brooks, [Maud Martha](#), *NAAAL*, pages 344-369 (section 21).

Thursday, February 16.

Reading: Gwendolyn Brooks, *Maud Martha*, *NAAAL*, 369-389 (section 22-end).

Sunday, February 19. Blog post #5 due. An analysis of *Maud Martha*.

Week 7:

Tuesday, February 21. **Essay problem statement and working thesis and title due.**

Reading: James Baldwin, editor's introduction, *NAAAL*, 390-394.
James Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, Part One.

Thursday, February 23. Class canceled. Kiki Petrosino visit.

Sunday, February 26. No blog post due. Work on your drafts.

Week 8:

Tuesday, February 28.

Reading: James Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, complete.

II. THE BLACK ARTS ERA, 1960-1975

Thursday, March 2. **Draft of Essay due.**

Reading: "The Black Arts Era," *NAAAL*, 533-561.
Larry Neal, "The Black Arts Movement" *NAAAL*, 784-787.

Carolyn M. Rodgers, editor's introduction and poems, *NAAAL*, 850-858.
Haki R. Madhubuti, editor's introduction and poems, *NAAAL*, 858-872.
Nikki Giovanni, editor's introduction and poems, *NAAAL*, 879-886.
Nikki Giovanni, "[Martin Had Faith in the People](#)" *The Atlantic*, 2018.
June Jordan, "[In Memoriam: Martin Luther King, Jr.](#)"

Recommended: Howard Ramsby II and James Smethurst, "Reform and revolution, 1965–1976: the Black Aesthetic at work," *The Cambridge History of African American Literature* (course website). Listen: [Anthony Reed on Jordan's poem](#).

Sunday, March 5. No blog post due. Work on revisions.

Week 9:

Tuesday, March 7.

Reading: Raymond Patterson, editor's introduction and poem, *NAAAL*, 607-611.
Terrance Hayes, "[Snow for Wallace Stevens](#)."
Wallace Stevens, "[Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird](#)," "[The Snow Man](#)."

In Class: Wallace Stevens and the Rooms We Are In.

Thursday, March 9.

Reading: Etheridge Knight, editor's introduction and poems, *NAAAL*, 612-616.
Etheridge Knight, "[Feeling Fucked Up](#)."

Recommended: Henry Dumas, editor's introduction and "Black Star Line" (654-655) and "The Zebra Goes Wild Where the Sidewalk Ends" (659-660).

Friday, March 10. **Essay due** to Blackboard by midnight EDT.

Sunday, March 12. No blog post due.

Week 10 Spring Vacation.

Week 11

Tuesday, March 21.

Reading: Audre Lorde, editor's introduction and selections, *NAAAL*, 637-651.

Thursday, March 23.

Reading: Amiri Baraka, editor's introduction and selections, *NAAAL*, 660-688.

Sunday, March 26. Blog post #6 due. An analysis of Lorde or Baraka's poetry or plays.

Week 12

Tuesday, March 28.

Reading: Amiri Baraka, editor's introduction and selections, *NAAAL*, 689-708.

III. THE CONTEMPORARY PERIOD

Thursday, March 30.

Reading: "The Contemporary Period," *NAAAL*, 913-929.
June Jordan, editor's introduction and selections, *NAAAL*, 751-769.

Sunday, April 2. Blog post #7 due. An analysis of Jordan's poetry.

Week 13

Tuesday, April 4.

Reading: Walter Rodney, "[Black Power: A Basic Understanding](#)" (1968)
Ishmael Reed, *The Haunting of Lin Manuel Miranda* (pdf in GroupMe); editor's introduction (798-800); "Beware: Do Not Read This Poem" (806-807)

Recommended: Ishmael Reed, "Neo-Hoodoo Manifesto" (808-813).
Lyra D. Monteiro, "[Race Conscious Casting and the Erasure of the Black Past in Lin Manuel Miranda's *Hamilton*](#)" (2016).

Thursday, April 6.

Reading: Roxane Gay, from *Hunger*.

Zadie Smith, “The Embassy of Cambodia” (2013, *New Yorker*, pdf in GroupMe); “Something to Do” (pdf in GroupMe); “[Contempt as a Virus](#)” (*Intimations*, 2020).

Recommended: Zadie Smith, “[Two Paths for the Novel](#)” (*New York Review of Books*, 2008).

Sunday, April 9. Blog post #7 due. An analysis of students’ chosen text(s).

Week 14

Tuesday, April 11.

Reading: Raven Leilani, *Luster: a novel* (FSG, 2020), pages 3-41.

Thursday, April 13.

Reading: Raven Leilani, *Luster: a novel* (FSG, 2020), pages 43-102.

Sunday, April 16. Final blog post (#8) due. An analysis of and response to *Luster*.

Week 15

Tuesday, April 18.

Reading: Raven Leilani, *Luster: a novel* (FSG, 2020), pages 103-150.

Thursday, April 20.

Reading: Raven Leilani, *Luster: a novel* (FSG, 2020), complete.

Friday, April 21. Early registration for Fall 2023 courses ends.

Sunday, April 23. Honors Projects due (Jordan).

Week 16

Tuesday, April 25. Last day of classes for seniors graduating in May.

Reading: Gwendolyn Brooks, “[Riot](#)” (Broadside Press, 1968). Listen [here](#).
Toni Cade Bambara, “[What It Is I Think I’m Doing Anyhow.](#)”

Week 17

Tuesday, May, 2 10:10 a.m.-12 p.m. noon. Final Take Home Exam due to Blackboard by 12 p.m. EDT.