ENG 4973 Senior Seminar Neoslavery Narratives

Instructor: Dr. Joycelyn Moody  
Office Location: MB 2.306C  
Office Hours: Thurs 1:30-3:30 pm

Class Time: Mons 2:00-4:45 pm  
Class Location: MB 1.204  
Office Phone: 210.458.6857

Course description. The English Department defines this course as an “undergraduate seminar, limited to English majors in their senior year, [that] offers the opportunity to study a genre, author, or period in English or American literature” (UTSA 2010-2012 Course Catalog). The seminar provides an opportunity to develop advanced writing skills, discipline-specific vocabulary, and insightful and informed literary and cultural interpretations. This particular English senior seminar examines a variety of “neoslavery” or freedom narratives produced by African American women writers since the latter years of the twentieth century. We will investigate ways that these authors retell—and re-vise the telling of—antebellum US slavery more than 100 years after emancipation in 1865. The seminar traces literary, cultural, sociopolitical, ideological, and historical developments in black texts, and explores free black voices and subjectivities.

Central to our explorations of black women’s freedom narratives are broader questions about African American literature. What is its role in the history of the literature of the United States? What does it tell us about the US? About the status of women of African descent within US borders? Of the roles of race, class, region, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and ethnicity in their lives? Of political movements, cultural traditions, and artistic trends? What scholarly methodologies yield informed readings of African American literature? To which rhetorical devices (e.g., diction, imagery, point of view) do African American authors turn—individually and/ or collectively—to describe the lives of enslaved women within an oppressive, racist, gender biased and capitalistic society?

Course goals. This seminar requires active class participation. The main goals are to heighten students’ skills in clear and convincing academic writing, critical argumentative reasoning, and defensible and logical literary analyses; to expose students to black literary texts representing US slavery and its aftermath; to enhance students’ knowledge of black writers’ expressions of US history; to provide students with knowledge about ways that power, class, gender, race, sexuality, and politics are expressed in African American women’s literatures; to expose students to a variety of Internet and digital resources to expand African American literary studies; to make cogent comparisons between intellectual matters in this seminar and other UTSA courses; and to develop students’ knowledge of English rhetorical conventions such as performativity, diction, and irony, as well as to cultivate knowledge of particular African American literary terms and tropes such as double consciousness, minstrelsy, and racial passing.

ENG 4973 Course assignments:

- Weekly participation in seminar discussions, to which all students are expected to contribute through critical definitions, questions, and/ or comments. If you are shy, prepare and write down a few of each in advance.
- Weekly quizzes on reading or critical and literary terms.
- Date tbd: Digital timeline oral presentation on pre-approved topic.
- Sep 12 Self-assessment/ educational autobiography. 600-1000 words, single-spaced. Also, last day to sign up for timelines presentation date.
- Sep 26 Two options for topics of timelines argumentative essay. 50-100 words. Also, last day to participate in online inter-University exchange about *Kindred*.
- Oct 3—Nov 23 Optional extra credit online inter-University exchange re timelines essay.
- Oct 10 Approved topic with hypothesis (100-150 words) for timelines argumentative essay.
- Oct 24 Bibliography of 10 multimedia resources for timelines argumentative essay.
- Nov 7 Draft of timelines argumentative essay, 10-12 pp. Works Cited (and appendices) can begin on p 13.
- Nov 28 Revised timelines argumentative essay.
- Dec 12 Final self-assessment. 600-1000 words, single-spaced.
- Dec 15 Final exam.

**Self-assessment/ educational autobiography** should consist of 600-1000 words, single-spaced. Write a personal narrative of your academic history to date, with particular emphasis on the role your racial identification(s) has played in your education.

**Weekly quizzes** will focus on assigned readings and designated literary terms.

**Digital timeline oral presentations** will supplement our literary readings each week. Each student will sign up for a seminar session during which to present a timeline using [http://www.tiki-toki.com/](http://www.tiki-toki.com/) that illuminates key events surrounding a selected author’s collective works and the historical/temporal era, social movements, legislations, and so on, influencing her or his writing.

Your timeline should critically and creatively summarize relevant events and data. It should be created and posted online, complete with a list of Works Cited and consulted to produce it. You’ll be expected to discuss the relevance of items in your timeline and to share its URL with the class at least 48 hours before the class session to which it pertains. I will need to be able to access your timeline later for evaluation. It is possible *but not guaranteed* we’ll be able to project the timelines during class.

For the **timelines argumentative essay project**, students will consult with Prof. Moody about possible topics, and submit two different topics for approval. The second step will be to produce a hypothesis focused on the approved topic. Before drafting the essay, students will submit a bibliography of 10 or more multimedia resources to be used in developing the thesis of the timelines argumentative essay. The paper will be submitted twice: first as a draft, and finally a revision based on the marked and graded first draft.

**The final self-assessment essay** will be a counterpart to the educational autobiography you produce at the outset of the course. It should consist of 1-2 typed, single-spaced pages. This essay might be a narrative about your overall intellectual experience in this seminar—why you took it, what problems and challenges it presented to you along the way, and how you addressed them. Or it might focus specifically on your writing for the course, what you learned from generating the particular texts that you produced, what you now understand to be your strengths and weaknesses as a scholar. You might “reflect” on your growth in this seminar across the semester by choosing one of the broad themes we covered and apply your thoughts about that
theme to a few of the course texts. Or you might discuss critical insights you gained into the nature and impact of literary study in African American literature.

The final exam, during the scheduled exam period, will require an explication of poems in Native Guard.

Optional extra credit (10%): Online conversation about Kindred with students in English 4680 African American Literature, taught by Dr. Bryan Carter at Central Missouri University. Must be completed by Sept. 26.

Optional extra credit (10%): [http://bit.ly/mTuNe](http://bit.ly/mTuNe) Sign up for online exchange about the timeline argumentative essay assignment with students in English 4680 African American Literature, taught by Dr. Bryan Carter at Central Missouri University. Exchange must occur between Oct 3 and Nov 23.

Researched items for all assignments should be cited in MLA documentation style. While you might consult Wikipedia as a rapidly accessed resource, it is absolutely unacceptable as a credible scholarly resource because it is often uninformed, misinformed, and unreliable. NEVER cite Wikipedia in academic work.

Course policies. This course is designed in a combination lecture/seminar fashion, thus class discussion and participation are paramount to both the success of this course and every student. This course has a significant reading load; students must read assignments before they come to class.

Because class discussion is central to the success of this course, attendance significantly affects a student’s grade. Thus, students are allowed only two (2) absences (including “legitimate” or “excused”). Your third absence could result in lowering your final grade by one-half. Excessive tardiness and/or early departures will negatively affect students’ grades as well.

To pass this course, students must complete ALL assignments. Missing one assignment, even if its weight is minimal, will result in a failing grade—even if you have an “A” average. Late work: All work is due at the date and time specified on the calendar below. Late work will be penalized one full letter grade per calendar day late (with extensions given only in cases of documented serious emergency). Incompletes will be given only in documented cases of extreme emergency.

Students are responsible for completing all the assigned reading before class and bringing the pertinent texts to every class. You will be asked to leave the classroom if you do not have the texts assigned for that class period. In fact, completing the reading is such a significant part of this course that points will be deducted from the final weekly quizzes score when a student comes to class unprepared. If a student is called on and demonstrates that s/he has not read the texts assigned for the day, that student will have points deducted from her/his final course grade.

Violations of academic integrity include but are not limited to plagiarism (i.e., representing the words, data, works, ideas, computer program or output, or anything not generated in an
authorized fashion, as one's own). Students are responsible for knowing the rules governing the use of another's work or materials and for acknowledging and documenting the source appropriately.

Students who require accommodations or services related to a documented disability must be registered with the Office of Disability Services, which will assist you in completing the process of a formal request for accommodations. Please notify me immediately of your disability so all necessary accommodations can be made in an appropriate and timely manner.

Cell phones, iPods/mp3 players, and other electronic communications devices must be turned off or set for silence during class time. If you do not adhere to this policy, you may be asked to leave the class for the remainder of the session.

**UTSA Academic Honor Code.** All students are expected to read and understand the specific provisions of the Academic Honor Code: The University of Texas at San Antonio community of past, present and future students, faculty, staff, and administrators share a commitment to integrity and the ethical pursuit of knowledge. We honor the traditions of our university by conducting ourselves with a steadfast duty to honor, courage, and virtue in all matters both public and private. By choosing integrity and responsibility, we promote personal growth, success, and lifelong learning for the advancement of ourselves, our university, and our community.

**The Roadrunner Creed.** The University of Texas at San Antonio is a community of scholars, where integrity, excellence, inclusiveness, respect, collaboration, and innovation are fostered. Students are expected to pledge to “live with honor and integrity,” and to

- Uphold the highest standards of academic and personal integrity by practicing and expecting fair and ethical conduct;
- Respect and accept individual differences, recognizing the inherent dignity of each person;
- Contribute to campus life and the larger community through my active engagement; and
- Support the fearless exploration of dreams and ideas in the advancement of ingenuity, creativity, and discovery.

**Grading at a Glance:**

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<th>Assignment</th>
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<td>Weekly quizzes</td>
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<td>Educational autobiography &amp; Final self-assessments</td>
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<td>Digital timeline presentation</td>
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<td>Timelines argumentative essay topic &amp; hypothesis</td>
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<td>Timelines argumentative essay bibliography</td>
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UTSA mandates that “Undergraduates will be required to earn a minimum overall UTSA grade point average of 2.00 to maintain an academic status of ‘good standing.’ … Undergraduates will be required to achieve an overall GPA of at least 2.00 in all work attempted at UTSA and a GPA of at least 2.00 in all work included in the major to receive a bachelor’s degree from UTSA.”

**Grades and grade points** per semester credit hour will be assigned using to the following:

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**Required course texts:**

| Natasha Trethewey, *Native Guard*, 2007 |

Recommended course text:


**Bring three books to each class session:** *They Say, I Say; ODLT;* and the assigned literary text.

**ENG 4973 Course Calendar.** *Always subject to change.*

**Introductions**

M Aug 29 Introductions.

M Sep 5 Labor Day: UTSA closed.

F Sep 9 Census Day: Are you officially enrolled? If so, are you coming to class regularly?

**Ancestors, Sisters, Strangers.**

M Sep 12 **DUE:** Last day to sign up for timelines presentation date. *Kindred*, pp. 9-188.

M Sept 26 **Research tutorial.** Meet in JPL. **DUE:** Two options for topics of timelines argumentative essay. Last day to participate in online inter-University exchange about *Kindred.*

M Oct 3 *The Color Purple*, pp.1-101

M Oct 10 **DUE:** Approved topic with hypothesis. *The Color Purple*, pp. 102-192

M Oct 17 *The Color Purple*, pp. 193-294

M Oct 24 **DUE:** Bibliography for timelines essay. *Beloved* pp. xi-100

**Lovers, Mothers, Devils**
M Oct 31 *Beloved* pp.101-195

M Nov 7 **DUE:** Draft of timelines argumentative essay, 10-12 pp. Works Cited (and appendices) can begin on p 13. *Beloved*, pp. 199-324

M Nov 14 *Dessa Rose*, “Author’s Note”- p.120

M Nov 21 *Dessa Rose*, pp. 121-236

W Nov 23 Last day for optional extra credit via online exchange with CMU students about your timelines paper.

Th-F Thanksgiving Day: University closed.

**Warriors, Soldiers, Retrospections**
M Nov 28 **DUE:** Revised timelines argumentative essay. Rambsy blogs (especially on Hayden’s “Frederick Douglass”); *Native Guard*

M Dec 5 Last day to withdraw; last day of instruction; *Native Guard*

M Dec 12 **DUE** at noon: Final self-assessment.

Th Dec 15 Final exam 1:30 PM - 4:00 PM