**Course description.** What is African American literature? Is it a single thing, or should we speak of it in the plural, as literatures? What is its role in the history of the literature of the United States more broadly? What does it tell us about the US? About the status of people 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 are the current debates in African American literary studies? How does the history of the book in the US relate to African American print culture and book history? What scholarly and literary methodologies enable the richest, deepest readings of African American literature? To which artistic genres (e.g., fiction, poetry, drama, autobiography) do African American authors turn—individually and/or collectively—to establish a racial identity within an oppressive, racist, gender biased and capitalistic society?

**Course goals.** This survey of major texts and criticism in African American literature course is designed to heighten students’ skills in clear and convincing academic writing, critical argumentative reasoning, and defensible and logical literary analysis; to expose students to black literary texts representing multiple literary genres; to enhance students’ knowledge of print cultures and other media production and their contributions to knowledge and expression in US history; to enable students to distinguish between and situate African American creative texts among broader US literary traditions and contexts; to provide students with knowledge about ways that power, class, gender, race, sexuality, and politics are expressed in African American literatures; to expose students to a variety of theoretical approaches to engage African American literature; use Internet and digital resources to expand and express African American literary studies; make cogent comparisons between intellectual matters in this seminar and UTSA other courses; and to develop students’ knowledge of English rhetorical conventions such as synaesthesia, 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.

**Course assignments.**
- Aug 24 - Sep 16 Required individual meeting with Prof. Moody. Schedule immediately!
- Weekly participation in seminar discussions, to which all students are expected to contribute through vocabulary definitions, questions, and/or comments. *If you are shy, prepare and write down a few of each in advance.*
- Weekly definitions (100-200 words) of African American critical or literary terms, preselected one week in advance. Print & e-copies to be distributed to all seminar participants.
- Date tbd: Digital timeline oral presentation on pre-approved topic.
- Sep 14 Self-assessment/educational autobiography. 600-1000 words, single-spaced.
- Oct 19 Newspaper database/archival research analysis of professor-approved topic, 8-10 pp double-spaced. Works Cited must be in MLA format and can start on p 11.
- Oct 27 Two options for topics of critical theories paper (50-100 words)
- Nov 2 Approved topic with hypothesis (100-150 words) for critical theories paper
\begin{itemize}
\item Nov 23 Draft of critical theories paper applying FOUR essays in Napier (or three from Napier and one from black book history unit) to ONE selected & approved literary text, 14-15 pp double-spaced. Works Cited, in MLA format, can begin on p 16.
\item Dec 12 Final version of critical theories paper
\item Dec 12 Final self-assessment. 600-1000 words, single-spaced
\item Dec 14 Optional timed poetry explication, official final exam period: 5-7:30 pm.
\end{itemize}

\textit{NB}: Where word count or time-limit is stipulated in individual assignments, you are expected to practice working within designated constraints. Penalty will be applied to excessive words.

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 definitions. The terms for this assignment will be decided approximately one week before they are due. Print copies are to be distributed to all seminar participants at the beginning of each class session (except Sep 21, Oct 12, and Nov 23), and e-copies must be posted by the midnight following each seminar session.

Digital timeline oral presentations will supplement our literary readings each week. Each student will sign up for a seminar session during which to distribute and present a print version of a timeline developed at \url{http://www.timetoast.com/}. Use the timeline to illuminate key moments surrounding a selected author’s collective works and the historical eras, social movements, legal enactments, and so on, influencing her or his literary production.

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.

Newspaper database/ archival research project paper should analyze an approved topic in 8-10 double-spaced pages. (Your list of Works Cited must be in MLA format and can start on p 11.) Topics for this assignment can be related to a course text or author of your choice. The primary goal is to develop familiarity with archival, digital, multimedia, and/ or print culture resources that enrich studies of African American literature. Your essay should argue a thesis as well as discuss the kinds of materials you analyzed to develop your thesis. We will meet with three archival and digital experts who will inform us of useful strategies and methodologies for this project.

For the critical theories paper project, students will consult with Prof. Moody about possible topics, and submit two different topics for approval no later than Oct 27. Once a topic has been approved, you must generate and submit an argumentative hypothesis about the topic on Nov 2. The draft and the revision of the critical theories paper should both consist of 14-15 double-spaced pages, and apply ideas developed in FOUR relevant essays of your choice in Napier (or three from African American Literary Theory and one or more from the print culture or archival unit) to ONE selected and approved literary text. The Works Cited should be written in MLA format and can begin on p 16.
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 enumerate critical insights you gained into the nature and impact of literary study in English generally or African American literature more specifically.

*Optional* timed final exam, during the scheduled exam period, will require explication of poems by Natasha Trethewey.

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.

**Grading at a Glance:**
Weekly critical definitions 20%
Educational autobiography & Final self-assessments 5
Digital timeline presentation 10
Archival research analysis 20
Critical theories essay topic & hypothesis 5
Critical theories essay draft 20
Critical theories essay revision 20
Total 100%
Optional final exam (poetry explication) 10

**Grades.** Grade points per semester credit hour for the plus/minus grading system for letter grades will be assigned according to the following table:

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<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Grade Points</th>
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UTSA policy mandates: “In addition to other requirements, graduate student will be required to earn a minimum overall UTSA GPA of 3.00 to maintain an academic status of ‘good standing.’”

**Course policies.** This course is designed as a seminar, thus class discussion and participation are paramount to both the success of this course and every student. **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).

Attendance & preparation. Students are responsible for completing all assigned reading before class, preparing discussion questions, and bringing the assigned text(s) to every class. Because class discussion is central to the success of this course, attendance is vital. Thus, students are allowed only two (2) absences (including “legitimate” or “excused”). A third absence as well as excessive tardiness and/or early departures for any reason will negatively affect students’ grades.

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.** Penalties for academic dishonesty may include suspension or expulsion from the university and/or failure of the course. 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.

Questions? Concerns? Suggestions? Please feel free to contact Dr. Moody during office hours or via email if you have questions, need help, or have suggestions about how to improve the learning environment of the class.

**Required course texts:**
Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms  
Winston Napier, *African American Literary Theory*  
Natasha Trethewey, *Native Guard.* 2007

Often I will email you with updated assignments, downloaded resources, or Internet links. Please plan to check your UTSA email account regularly.

**Course calendar.** *Always subject to change.* Please complete assignments *before* the start of seminar session date indicated. **Please do not eat** during class; a short break will be provided during each session except the library sessions.

**Introductions**  
W Aug 24 Introductions.


**Reading (Black) Books in the US**  
W Sep 7 Brooks, “The Early American Public Sphere and the Emergence of a Black Print Counterpublic”; Foster, “Looking Back is Tricky Business”; Foster, “A Narrative of the Interesting Origins and (Somewhat) Surprising Developments of African-American Print Culture”; Warren, *What was African American Lit?* (excerpt); Napier, “Introduction” to *African American Literary Theory*

F Sep 16 Last day for individual visit with Prof. Moody


Resistances, Reconstructions, Resources
W Sep 28 David Walker’s Appeal

W Oct 5 Walker’s Appeal; Cole, “Theresa and Blake: Mobility and Resistance in Antebellum African American Serialized Fiction”; Freedom’s Journal First Editorial


(Black) Women’s Rites sans Black (Women’s) Rights
W Oct 19 DUE: Newspaper database/ archival research project paper. Jacobs, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, chaps 1-25; Peterson, “Subject to Speculation”

W Oct 26 Complete Incidents. Read and prepare questions or observations on any 1-2 documents from the Contexts section and 1-2 more from the Criticisms section.

Th Oct 27 DUE: two possible topics for final project (50-100 words). Last day to drop seminar.

W Nov 2 DUE: topic and hypothesis (100-150 words) of critical theories paper; Toni Morrison, Beloved, pp 1-158

W Nov 9 Complete Beloved.

W Nov 16 Hansberry, A Raisin in the Sun; Nemiroff introduction to Vintage ed.; Michelle Gordon “Somewhat Like War”: The Aesthetics of Segregation, Black Liberation, and A Raisin in the Sun”

W Nov 23 DUE: critical theories paper draft by 5:30 pm.

Th-F Thanksgiving Day: University closed

W Nov 30 The Color Purple; Ann duCille, “Phallus(ies) of Interpretation,” and Evelyn Hammonds, “Black Wholes” in Napier

Retrospections
W Dec 7 UTSA last day of instruction. Rambsy blogs; Trethewey, Native Guard

M Dec 12 DUE (noon): revised critical theories paper
W Dec 14 Optional Official final exam period, 5-7:30 pm