

Fall 2008

Eng 319/519—African American Literature:
Harlem, “The New Negro,” and Narrative
TTH 11:30-1:00, Clow 129

Liz Cannon

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And by appointment—Please don't hesitate to set up an appointment.

Course Description:

This course will explore Twentieth Century African American literature, focusing on literature either about Harlem or written by authors from the Harlem Renaissance (the cultural movement of the 1920s). The 1920s also introduced the political movement, the New Negro Movement, whose purpose was to define the African American man and dismantle the racist definitions perpetuated by white America. This course expands that question—looking at how these authors construct an African American identity and asking how they use their narrative style to do so. We will also situate each novel in the cultural context from which it was written—the intellectual climate in the 1920s, for example, differed from that of the 1940s or the 1970s. Some of the novels do expand beyond Harlem: *Quicksand* takes us from Harlem, to the Netherlands, to the rural South during the 1920s while *The Wedding* takes us to Martha's Vineyard in the 1950s.

Required Texts:

Nella Larsen, *Quicksand* (1928)

Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (1947)

Toni Morrison, *Jazz* (1992)

Chester Himes, *Cotton Comes to Harlem* (1965)

Dorothy West, *The Wedding* (1995)

Articles on e-reserve*

Course Requirements (Undergrad):

1 4-5 page paper on one text—15%

1 2-page summary of critical article—15%

Final paper, 6-8 pages, on 2-3 texts—do not use text 1st paper was on—20%

Oral Presentation of final paper—5%

Leading group discussion—5%

Journal (please type)—30%

Participation: attendance, class discussion—10%

Attendance is also required—you must be here mentally as well as physically. You are allowed one free absence. After that, absences will lower your participation grade.

Course Requirements (Grad)

1 5-7 page paper on texts—10%

5 2-page summaries of critical articles (1 for each text)—25% (5% each)

Final paper using secondary sources (@ 15-20 pages)—20%

Oral Presentation of final paper—5%

Journal (please type)—25%

Cultural lecture—10% (event or movement in AfAm 20th century history)

Participation—5%

Please do not hesitate to come see me if you have any questions or problems with this class. My office hours are listed above, but we can make an appointment if these are not convenient for you. Students with disabilities needing a reasonable accommodation should inform me as soon as possible.

Calendar

Sept 4 Th: Introduction

Background: *Literature of the Harlem Renaissance*

9 T: James de Jongh, from *Vicious Modernism: Black Harlem and the Literary Imagination**

Larsen, 1-46 (Chpts. One-Eight)

11 Th: Larsen, 47-93 (Chpts. Nine-Sixteen)

Lead Discussion: Group E

16 T: Larsen, 94-135 (Chpts. Seventeen-Twenty-Five)

Critical Summaries: Group A

18 Th: W.E.B. Du Bois, "Of Our Spiritual Strivings"*

Ellison, Prologue – Chapter One

23 T: Ellison, Chapter Two – Chapter Five

25 Th: Ellison, Chapter Six – Chapter Nine

30 T: Ellison, Chapter Ten – Chapter Twelve

Lead Discussion: Group C

Oct 2 Th: Ellison, Chapter Thirteen – Chapter Sixteen

7 T: Ellison, Chapter Seventeen – Chapter Twenty

9 Th: Ellison, Chapter Twenty-One – Chapter Twenty-Three

14 T: Ellison, Chapter Twenty-Four – Epilogue

Critical Summaries—Group B

16 Th: Toni Morrison, "Romancing the Shadow" in *Playing in the Dark**

Morrison, 3-24

21 T: Morrison, 27-51

SHORT PAPER DUE

23 Th: Morrison, 53-87

Lead Discussion—Group D

28 T: Morrison, 89-135

30 Th: Morrison, 137-184

Nov 4 T: Morrison, 187-229

Critical Summaries—Group C

6 Th: Himes, 5-55 (Chpt 1-7)

Stephen Soitos, from *The Blues Detective**

11 T: Himes, 55-110 (Chpt 8-15)

Lead Discussion—Group A

13 Th: Himes, 110-159 (Chpt 16-22)

Critical Summaries—Group D

18 T: West, 1-55 (Chpt 1-6)

20 Th: West, 56-134 (Chpt 7-9)

Lead Discussion—Group B

25 T: Zora Neale Hurston, "How It Feels to Be Colored Me"
Dorothy West, "The Typewriter"*
Langston Hughes, "Income Tax"*
27 Th: THANKSGIVING BREAK

Dec 2 T: West, 135-240 (Chpt 10-17)
4 Th: Critical Summaries—Group E

9 T: Presentations
11 Th: Presentations
FINAL PAPER DUE
