

I, TOO, SING AMERICA

African American Literature from Revolutionary Poetry to Contemporary Black Fiction

Lecturer: PD Dr. Stefan L. Brandt, Guest Professor

Room and time: Raum 6, Wednesdays 12-14

Course number and type: 123250 – Arbeitsgemeinschaft (interactive LV)

First session: October 12, 2011



Course description: The course will deal with representative texts by African American authors from the revolutionary years to postmodernity. What contributions have black voices made to the genealogy of U.S. literature and culture in general? Which strategies, patterns, and specific genre elements seem typical of this important discourse within American literature? We will trace the genealogy of African American literature back to revolutionary poetry in the mold of Phillis Wheatley's verse and the first 'slave narratives' (Olaudah Equiano, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Jacobs). Special attention will be paid to the following phases: the genre of emancipatory black literature in the Reconstruction Era (Charles Chesnutt, Pauline Hopkins); the Harlem Renaissance (Alain Locke, Langston Hughes, Nella Larsen); and Expatriate Literature (Richard Wright, James Baldwin). The course will end with a look at a few classics of black postmodern literature (Alice Walker, Toni Morrison). While mainly discussing poetry, autobiographies, and fictional texts (in the form of short stories and novels), we will also take a glance at key works of black non-fiction (Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois) and drama (Amiri Baraka).

Credit requirements: I. Regular attendance & participation in discussions, at least nine entries in the discussion forum (1/3); II. Oral presentation as part of an expert group, with 2-page handout & fact file (1/3); III. Final paper of 8-10 pages.

Deadline for Final Papers: Friday, January 13, 2012. Note: There is no extension of this deadline! Please throw papers into the institute mailbox or send them in postal form. Do not send papers via email.

Syllabus

Oct. 12 Introduction – 'I, Too, Sing America': The Emergence of the African American Voice

Basic texts (recommended):

Stephen Matterson, "African American Literature" (2003) (encyclopedic definition).¹

Maria Diedrich, "Afro-amerikanische Literatur", from: *Amerikanische Literaturgeschichte* (2004), 415-440.

Kwame Anthony Appiah, "Race" (1995) (definition).

Werner Sollors, "Ethnicity" (1995) (definition).

Oct. 19

The Revolutionary Years: Phillis Wheatley and Early Black Poetry

Main text (required):

Phillis Wheatley, "To His Excellency, George Washington" (1776).

Additional materials (optional):

Henry Louis Gates, Jr., et al, "The History of Slavery and Freedom, 1746-1865" (2004) (historical overview).

Oct. 26

No class!

Relax and enjoy!

Nov. 2

No class!

Relax and enjoy!

Nov. 9

'The Pen in the Gashes': Frederick Douglass and the Black Slave Narrative

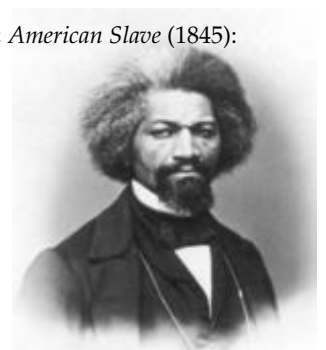
Main text (required):

Frederick Douglass, excerpts from *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (1845):

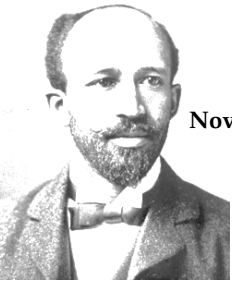
"Preface", ch. I – VI; XI & Appendix.

Additional materials (optional):

Frederick Douglass, "The Heroic Slave" (1853).



¹ All main texts for this course are available at Moodle: <https://moodle.univie.ac.at/>.



Nov. 16

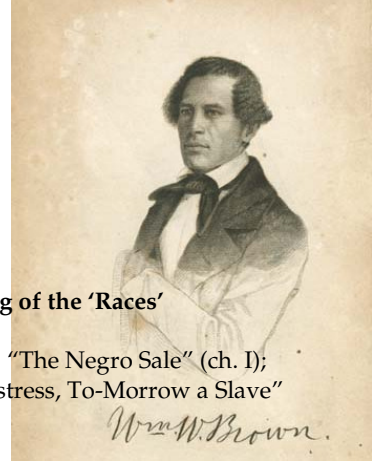
Fugitive Slave Narratives: William W. Brown, Transculturation, and the Mixing of the 'Races'

Main text (required):

William Wells Brown, excerpts from *Clotel, or, The President's Daughter* (1853): "The Negro Sale" (ch. I); "The Negro Chase" (ch. III); "The Quadroon's Home" (ch. IV); "To-Day a Mistress, To-Morrow a Slave" (ch. XV); "Escape of Clotel" (ch. XIX); "Death Is Freedom" (ch. XXV).

Additional materials (optional):

William Wells Brown, preface to *Clotel & Narrative of the Life and Escape of William Wells Brown* (1853).



Nov. 23

The Black Declaration of Independence: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Problem of the Color-Line

Main text (required):

W.E.B. Du Bois, excerpts from *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903): "Forethought"; "Of Our Spiritual Strivings" (ch. I); "Of the Sorrow Songs" (ch. XIV).

Additional materials (optional):

Henry Louis Gates, Jr., et al, "Literature of the Reconstruction to the New Negro Renaissance, 1865 - 1919" (2004) (historical overview).

Nov. 30

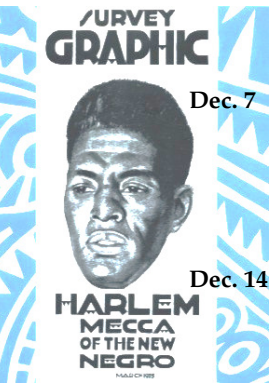
The Jim Crow Years: James Weldon Johnson and the Outcry against Social Injustice

Main text (required):

James Weldon Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912), Preface, ch. I - III & XI.

Additional materials (optional):

Henry Louis Gates, Jr., et al, "Literature of the Reconstruction to the New Negro Renaissance, 1865 - 1919" (2004) (historical overview).



Dec. 7

The 'New Negro': Alain Locke and the Harlem Renaissance

Main text (required):

Alain Locke, "The New Negro" (1925).

Additional materials (optional):

Henry Louis Gates, Jr., et al, "Harlem Renaissance, 1919-1940" (2004) (historical overview).

Dec. 14

Novels of Passing: Nella Larsen and the Challenges of Hybridity

Main text (required):

Nella Larsen, excerpts from *Quicksand* (1928): ch. I-IV, VII-XIII & XXI-XXV.

Additional materials (optional):

Henry Louis Gates, Jr., et al, "Harlem Renaissance, 1919-1940" (2004) (historical overview).

Jan. 11

The Civil Rights Era: James Baldwin Fighting Against Racial Violence

Main text (required):

James Baldwin, "Going to Meet the Man" (1965).

Additional materials (optional):

Henry Louis Gates, Jr., et al, "The Black Arts Era, 1960-1975" (2004) (historical overview).

Jan. 18

The Age of Militant Activism: LeRoi Jones and the Battle of the Sexes

Main text (required):

LeRoi Jones (aka 'Amiri Baraka'), *Dutchman* (1964).

Additional materials (optional):

Henry Louis Gates, Jr., et al, "The Black Arts Era, 1960-1975" (2004) (historical overview).

Jan. 25

Black Contemporary Literature: Toni Morrison and the Reconstruction of History

Main text (required):

Toni Morrison, excerpts from *Beloved* (1987): pp. 3-27, 86-105, 263-275.

Additional materials (optional):

Henry Louis Gates, Jr., et al, "Literature since 1975" (2004) (historical overview).

