

ENGLISH 210: BLACK POETRY NOW!

Time: Tuesday and Thursday 2:00–3:15 p.m.
 Classroom: Griffin 202
 Office Hours: Wednesday 11:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m.
 Office: Griffin 250

Instructor: Professor Maria Seger
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COURSE OVERVIEW

Poetry has always been important to the African American literary and cultural imaginary. According to Alice Walker, “poetry is the lifeblood of rebellion, revolution, and the raising of consciousness.” However, the rapidly changing racial climate nationwide has generated an unexpected explosion of interest in contemporary black poetry. In this course, we’ll examine the triumphant resurgence of this body of work, considering how it represents race, resistance, and radicalism in the United States as well as the political and historical implications at the intersection of race and poetry as genre. In doing so, we’ll engage the critical keywords of poetics and discuss a variety of theoretical approaches to African American literary studies, including methods from American cultural studies, gender studies, queer studies, critical race and ethnic studies, and performance studies.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Ewing, Eve L. *Electric Arches*. Chicago: Haymarket, 2017. Print. ISBN: 978-1-60846-856-0.

Monet, Aja. *My Mother Was a Freedom Fighter*. Chicago: Haymarket, 2017. Print. ISBN: 978-1-60846-767-9.

Parker, Morgan. *There Are More Beautiful Things Than Beyoncé*. Portland: Tin House, 2017. Print. ISBN: 978-1-941040-53-9.

Smith, Clint. *Counting Descent*. Los Angeles: Write Bloody, 2016. Print. ISBN: 978-1938912-65-8.

Smith, Danez. *Don’t Call Us Dead*. Minneapolis: Graywolf, 2017. Print. ISBN: 978-1-55597-785-6.

Willis-Abdurraqib, Hanif. *The Crown Ain’t Worth Much*. Minneapolis: Button Poetry, 2016. Print. ISBN: 978-1-943735-04-4.

SOURCES AVAILABLE ON MOODLE

Please bring a hard copy of these sources to class.

Browne, Simone. “Introduction, and Other Dark Matters.” *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness*. Durham: Duke UP, 2015. 1–29. Print.

Hirsch, Edward. “How to Read a Poem.” *Poets.org*. Academy of American Poets, 27 Nov. 2007. Web.

Holland, Sharon Patricia. “The Last Word on Racism.” Introduction. *The Erotic Life of Racism*.

Durham: Duke UP, 2012. 1–15. Print.

McKittrick, Katherine. “Geographic Stories.” Introduction. *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2006. ix–xxxi. Print.

Oluo, Ijeoma. “Is It Really about Race?” *So You Want to Talk about Race*. New York: Seal, 2018. 8–22. Print.

Sharpe, Christina. “The Wake.” *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*. Durham: Duke UP, 2016. 1–22. Print.

Snorton, C. Riley. Introduction. *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2017. 1–14. Print.

Warren, Calvin L. “The Free Black Is Nothing.” *Ontological Terror: Blackness, Nihilism, and Emancipation*. Durham: Duke UP, 2018. 1–25. Print.

COURSE COMPONENTS

Cultural Artifact Presentation: During one class this term, you’ll present a cultural artifact that provides context for the primary text reading we have completed for that day. You may choose any related cultural object or text, such as a song, visual art, newspaper or magazine article, etc. You may wish to distribute a handout or use the classroom’s multimedia equipment, and you should plan to speak and field questions for roughly ten minutes. A sign-up sheet will be circulated on the first day of class.

Short Responses: Because academic writing is the main method by which scholars share research and advance knowledge, you’ll complete two short writing assignments over the course of the term. These 500- to 750-word writings are designed to develop your skills of close reading primary texts and synthesizing and responding argumentatively to primary and secondary texts. I’ll distribute a prompt for each assignment in class in advance.

Examinations: There will be both a midterm and a final examination. The midterm examination will cover texts and concepts from the first half of the course, and the final examination will be cumulative. Because they are composed primarily of essay questions, you’re welcome to use hard copy course texts and notes during the examinations. We’ll discuss what to expect and how to prepare for the examinations in more detail as they approach.

GRADE BREAKDOWN

Cultural Artifact Presentation	15%
Short Response #1	20%
Short Response #2	20%
Midterm Examination	20%
Final Examination	25%

GRADE SCALE

A: 100%–90%

B: 89%–80%

C: 79%–70%

D: 69%–60%

F: 59%–0%

While individual assignments may receive half letter grades (pluses or minuses), final grades are calculated according to the above scale.

COURSE POLICIES

Cancellations/Weather: Please check your email regularly in case of class cancellations. If class is canceled, I will send alternate directions via email.

Disabilities: I am committed to ensuring that students have access to the conditions that they need to succeed in my course. If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, please contact me as well as the Office of Disability Services as soon as possible. More information can be found at <https://disability.louisiana.edu>.

Late Assignments: I don't generally accept late assignments. That being said, life happens. If you have a situation, please contact me as soon as possible so that we can make alternate arrangements.

Participation/Class Behavior: This course will be conducted in a seminar style, meaning that participation from each student will be vital to everyone's success. Class discussion is a collective enterprise from which we all grow and from which we individually benefit on class assignments, so I expect that you will strive to be on time to and present in class, meaningfully contribute to our communal inquires and discussions, comport yourself with appropriate behavior and mutual respect for your classmates, and come to class with the assigned materials and having done the assigned reading. If electronic devices are fundamental to your learning process, please feel free to use them in seminar. That being said, please be mindful of your ability to distract yourself and others when using electronics for other purposes during class time.

Plagiarism: Because academic writing purports to create new knowledge, plagiarism is considered a serious ethical violation. For this reason, plagiarism of any kind will result in, at a minimum, a failing grade for the assignment, and, at a maximum, dismissal from the University. The University's official definition of plagiarism is as follows: "Plagiarism is a specific type of cheating. It occurs when a student claims originality for the ideas or words of another person, when the student presents as a new and original idea or product anything which in fact is derived from an existing work, or when the student makes use of any work or production already created by someone else without giving credit to the source. In short, plagiarism is the use of unacknowledged materials in the preparation of assignments." If you have any questions or concerns about plagiarism, please contact me.

Writing Center: The Writing Center employs tutors who can help students with their writing at any stage of the process—from brainstorming to polishing their final drafts. This service is free, and I recommend it for even the most confident writers. More information can be found at <http://english.louisiana.edu/about-us/publications-centers/writing-center>.

COURSE SCHEDULE

DATE	READINGS	DEADLINES
Thursday 1/17	Syllabus, Hirsch, “How to Read a Poem” (Moodle), and Oluo, “Is It Really about Race?” (Moodle)	
Tuesday 1/22	Smith, <i>Counting Descent</i> (9–29)	
Thursday 1/24	Smith, <i>Counting Descent</i> (30–50)	
Tuesday 1/29	Smith, <i>Counting Descent</i> (51–70)	
Thursday 1/31	Holland, “The Last Word on Racism” (Moodle)	
Tuesday 2/5	Parker, <i>There Are More Beautiful Things Than Beyoncé</i> (1–26)	
Thursday 2/7	Parker, <i>There Are More Beautiful Things Than Beyoncé</i> (27–53)	Short Response #1
Tuesday 2/12	Parker, <i>There Are More Beautiful Things Than Beyoncé</i> (54–81)	
Thursday 2/14	Snorton, Introduction (Moodle)	
Tuesday 2/19	Smith, <i>Don’t Call Us Dead</i> (3–22)	
Thursday 2/21	Smith, <i>Don’t Call Us Dead</i> (25–52)	
Tuesday 2/26	Smith, <i>Don’t Call Us Dead</i> (55–82)	
Thursday 2/28		Midterm Examination
Thursday 3/7	No class meeting	
Tuesday 3/12	McKittrick, “Geographic Stories” (Moodle)	
Thursday 3/14	Ewing, <i>Electric Arches</i> (1–25)	
Tuesday 3/19	Ewing, <i>Electric Arches</i> (28–46)	
Thursday 3/21	Ewing, <i>Electric Arches</i> (49–89)	
Tuesday 3/26	Browne, “Introduction, and Other Dark Matters” (Moodle)	
Thursday 3/28	Willis-Abdurraqib, <i>The Crown Ain’t Worth Much</i> (“On Hunger” and 3–25)	
Tuesday 4/2	Willis-Abdurraqib, <i>The Crown Ain’t Worth Much</i> (26–56)	Short Response #2
Thursday 4/4	Willis-Abdurraqib, <i>The Crown Ain’t Worth Much</i> (57–102)	
Tuesday 4/9	Sharpe, “The Wake” (Moodle)	
Thursday 4/11	Monet, <i>My Mother Was a Freedom Fighter</i> (ix–xiii, 1–39)	
Tuesday 4/23	Monet, <i>My Mother Was a Freedom Fighter</i> (ix–xiii, 41–95)	
Thursday 4/25	Monet, <i>My Mother Was a Freedom Fighter</i> (ix–xiii, 97–147)	
Tuesday 4/30	Warren, “The Free Black Is Nothing” (Moodle)	
Thursday 5/2		
Tuesday 5/7 11:00 a.m.– 1:30 p.m.		Final Examination