

ENGLISH 211: THE WOMEN OF THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE

Time: Tuesday & Thursday 2:00–3:15 p.m.
 Classroom: Griffin 321
 Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday 11:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m.
 Office: Griffin 250

Instructor: Professor Maria Seger
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COURSE OVERVIEW

The Harlem Renaissance has been a much-studied era of African American culture, but significantly less attention has been paid to black women's vital contributions to this movement. Across the 1920s and 1930s, black women in literature, art, music, and dance furthered the development of this African American cultural tradition in the midst of the Great Migration and Jim Crow. Such women invented new forms of black artistic expression, blending pan-African elements, high and low cultures, and experimental modernist forms, in order to reject pervasive racism and to promote progressive politics, exploring the experience of and imagining a future for black women in the United States in particular. In this course, we'll study these women's works in conversation, including the work of authors such as Jessie Redmon Fauset, Angelina Weld Grimké, Zora Neale Hurston, Georgia Douglas Johnson, and Nella Larsen; artists such as Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller, Lois Mailou Jones, and Augusta Savage; and musicians such as Billie Holiday, Ma Rainey, and Bessie Smith.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Hurston, Zora Neale. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. 1937. New York: Harper Perennial, 2006. Print. ISBN: 9780060838676.

Larsen, Nella. *Passing*. 1929. New York: Penguin, 2003. Print. ISBN: 9780142437278.

SOURCES AVAILABLE ON MOODLE

Please bring a hard copy of these sources to class on the day they're assigned.

English, Daylanne K. "Blessed Are the Barren: Lynching, Reproduction, and the Drama of New Negro Womanhood, 1916–1930." *Unnatural Selections: Eugenics in American Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2004. 117–39. Print.

Fauset, Jessie. "Mary Elizabeth." *The Crisis* Dec. 1919: 51–56. Print.

Fauset, Jessie. "The Sleeper Wakes." *The Crisis* Aug.–Oct. 1920: 168–73, 226–29, 267–74. Print.

Grimké, Angelina Weld. *Rachel*. 1916. *Strange Fruit: Plays on Lynching by American Women*. Ed. Kathy A. Perkins and Judith L. Stephens. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1998. 27–78. Print.

Johnson, Georgia Douglas. *Safe*. c. 1929. *Strange Fruit: Plays on Lynching by American Women*. Ed. Kathy A. Perkins and Judith L. Stephens. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1998. 110–15. Print.

Sherrard-Johnson, Cherene. "The Iconography of the Mulatta." Introduction. *Portraits of the New Negro Woman: Visual and Literary Culture in the Harlem Renaissance*. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2007. 3–20. Print.

Wall, Cheryl A. "Women of the Harlem Renaissance." *The Cambridge Companion to African American Women's Literature*. Ed. Angelyn Mitchell and Danille K. Taylor. New York: Cambridge UP, 2009. 32–49. Print.

Wilson, James F. "It's Getting Dark on Old Broadway." Introduction. *Bulldaggers, Pansies, and Chocolate Babies: Performance, Race, and Sexuality in the Harlem Renaissance*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 2010. 1–10. Print.

Wintz, Cary D. "Harlem and the Renaissance: 1920–1940." *Women Artists of the Harlem Renaissance*. Ed. Amy Helene Kirschke. Oxford: UP of Mississippi, 2014. 3–21. Print.

COURSE COMPONENTS

Reading Quizzes: The texts I've chosen for this semester will be both complex and challenging. I require that you read these texts carefully in order to be prepared to contribute to class discussion and to succeed on course assignments. I will randomly check your attendance in class and reading comprehension of the assigned material in the form of reading quizzes given at five unannounced points across the course of the semester. Reading quizzes cannot be made up at a later date.

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 at least two weeks 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

Reading Quizzes	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
Tuesday 8/27	Syllabus and Wintz, "Harlem and the Renaissance" (Moodle 3–21); selected works of Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller provided in class	
Thursday 8/29	Grimké, <i>Rachel</i> (27–42)	
Tuesday 9/3	Grimké, <i>Rachel</i> (43–61)	
Thursday 9/5	Grimké, <i>Rachel</i> (61–78)	
Tuesday 9/10	Wall, "Women of the Harlem Renaissance" (Moodle 32–49); selected works of Bessie Smith provided in class	
Thursday 9/12	Fauset, "Mary Elizabeth" (Moodle 51–56)	
Tuesday 9/17	Fauset, "The Sleeper Wakes" (Moodle 168–73)	Short Response #1
Thursday 9/19	Fauset, "The Sleeper Wakes" (Moodle 226–29)	
Tuesday 9/24	Fauset, "The Sleeper Wakes" (Moodle 267–74)	
Thursday 9/26	English, "Blessed Are the Barren" (Moodle 117–39); selected works of Ma Rainey provided in class	
Tuesday 10/1	Johnson, <i>Safe</i> (110–15)	
Tuesday 10/8	Sherrard-Johnson, "The Iconography of the Mulatta" (Moodle 3–20); selected works of Augusta Savage provided in class	
Thursday 10/10	Larsen, <i>Passing</i> (9–32)	
Tuesday 10/15		Midterm Examination
Thursday 10/17	Larsen, <i>Passing</i> (33–48)	
Tuesday 10/22	Larsen, <i>Passing</i> (51–74)	
Thursday 10/24	Larsen, <i>Passing</i> (75–97)	
Tuesday 10/29	Larsen, <i>Passing</i> (99–120)	
Thursday 10/31	Wilson, "It's Getting Dark on Old Broadway" (Moodle 1–10); selected works of Lois Marilou Jones and Billie Holiday provided in class	
Tuesday 11/5	Hurston, <i>Their Eyes Were Watching God</i> (1–25)	
Thursday 11/7	No class meeting	Short Response #2
Tuesday 11/12	Hurston, <i>Their Eyes Were Watching God</i> (26–50)	
Thursday 11/14	Hurston, <i>Their Eyes Were Watching God</i> (51–75)	
Tuesday 11/19	Hurston, <i>Their Eyes Were Watching God</i> (75–99)	
Thursday 11/21	Hurston, <i>Their Eyes Were Watching God</i> (100–28)	
Tuesday 11/26	Hurston, <i>Their Eyes Were Watching God</i> (129–53)	
Tuesday 12/3	Hurston, <i>Their Eyes Were Watching God</i> (154–93)	
Thursday 12/5	No class meeting	
Thursday 12/12 11:00 a.m.–1:30 p.m.		Final Examination