

## ENGLISH 371: NINETEENTH-CENTURY BLACK RADICAL THOUGHT

Time: Tuesday & Thursday 2:00–3:15 p.m.

Classroom: Griffin 304

Office Hours: Monday & Wednesday 12:00–1:00, 2:15–4:15 p.m.

Office: Griffin 250

Instructor: Professor Maria Seger

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### COURSE OVERVIEW

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This course traces nineteenth-century Black radical thought in the United States through an examination of a wide range of literary genres including political pamphlets and speeches, manifestos, and speculative and utopian fiction. In doing so, it considers how and why Black radical thinkers responded to the oppressions of their historical moment by imagining an entirely different world and persuading others to help them build it. Investigating notions of Black freedom—as opposed to liberal freedom—from chattel slavery through Jim Crow, this course asks students to reflect on the legacies and lessons of nineteenth-century Black radicalism for today’s social justice movements.

How did Black radicalism develop across the course of the nineteenth century in response to and anticipating legal and extralegal subjection in the United States? What kinds of Black freedom and Black worlds did it imagine? And how and why do Black radical strategies and appeals resonate in the current moment? These are just some of the questions we’ll explore in this class as we develop skills of literary and cultural analysis and read primary texts with a variety of methodological lenses.

### COURSE TEXTS TO ACQUIRE

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Delany, Martin. *Blake; or, the Huts of America*. 1859, 1861–62. Ed. Jerome McGann. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2017. Print. ISBN: 9780674088726.

Griggs, Sutton. *Imperium in Imperio*. 1899. New York: Modern Library, 2003. Print. ISBN: 9780812971606.

Walker, David. *Walker’s Appeal, in Four Articles: Together with a Preamble, to the Coloured Citizens of the World, but in Particular, and Very Expressly, to Those of the United States of America*. 1829. 3rd ed. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2011. Print. ISBN: 9780807869475.

Wells-Barnett, Ida B. *On Lynchings*. 1892–1900. Mineola: Dover, 2014. Print. ISBN: 9780486779997.

### COURSE TEXTS ON MOODLE

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Garnet, Henry Highland. “An Address to the Slaves of the United States of America.” 1843. *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*. Vol. 1. 3rd ed. Ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Valerie Smith. New York: Norton, 2014. 291–96. Print.

Hartman, Saidiya V. “The Burdened Individuality of Freedom.” *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*. New York: Oxford UP, 1997. 115–24. Print.

Keeling, Kara. Selections from “Black Futures and the Queer Times of Life: Finance, Flesh, and the Imagination.” *Queer Times, Black Futures*. New York: New York UP, 2019. 1–24. Print.

Robinson, Cedric J. “The Nature of the Black Radical Tradition.” *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*. 1983. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2000. 167–71. Print.

Zamalin, Alex. “The Political Thought of African American Resistance.” Introduction. *Struggle on Their Minds: The Political Thought of African American Resistance*. New York: Columbia UP, 2017. 1–19. Print.

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## COURSE COMPONENTS

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*Participation*: Attendance and participation are acts of solidarity with your classmates. Because discussion is a collective enterprise, your active participation is vital to everyone’s intellectual growth. Please strive to: 1) be on time to and actively present in class (whether in person or virtual); 2) prepare for and meaningfully contribute to communal inquiries and discussions; and 3) show mutual respect for your classmates. When you submit each of our four major assignments, you’ll self-evaluate your participation in the course thus far, and I’ll respond with feedback.

*Close Readings*: Because academic writing is the main method by which scholars share research and advance knowledge, you’ll complete two writing assignments over the course of the term. These roughly 1,000-word essays are designed to develop your skills of close reading primary texts through the lens of secondary texts. I’ll distribute a prompt for each assignment at least two weeks in advance of the due date.

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

## GRADE BREAKDOWN

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Participation	15%
Close Reading #1	20%
Close Reading #2	20%
Midterm Examination	20%
Final Examination	25%

## GRADE SCALE

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- 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 VALUES**

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*Basic Needs:* I'm committed to ensuring that you have access to the living conditions that you need to succeed in this course. If you face challenges securing food or housing, please contact the Dean of Students and me, if you feel comfortable doing so, for support. That way, I can provide you with any resources I have access to.

*Cancellations:* Please check your email and/or our class Teams chat regularly in case of class cancellations or modifications. If class is canceled or being held in an alternate virtual format, I'll send information via email and Teams chat.

*Disabilities:* I'm committed to ensuring that you have access to the learning conditions that you need to succeed in this 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 you're able. More information can be found at <https://disability.louisiana.edu>.

*Electronics:* If electronic devices are fundamental to your learning process, please feel free to use them in class. That being said, please be mindful of your ability to distract yourself and others when using electronics for other purposes during class time.

*Format:* Our course is designated *hyflex*, meaning that we may meet in-person, virtually, or any combination of the two. I'll be holding office hours in my office and teaching from our classroom (unless otherwise indicated via email and/or Teams chat). Please feel free to join me in my office and the classroom in person or via Zoom, whichever is more conducive to your learning and comfort on any given day. You can access our Zoom classroom through Moodle and email me for a link to Zoom office hours.

*Late Assignments:* I encourage you to submit assignments on time. That being said, life happens. If you're having trouble submitting an assignment on time, please contact me as soon as you're able so that we can make alternate arrangements.

*Plagiarism:* Because academic writing creates new knowledge, plagiarism is considered a serious ethical violation. For this reason, plagiarism results 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: "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 as soon as you're able.

*Safety:* Your physical, mental, and emotional safety are of the utmost importance to me. In this COVID crisis, please put yours and your loved ones' safety first. If you're in need of alternate arrangements for any aspect of this course, please contact me as soon as you're able. In addition, for everyone's health and wellbeing, please strive to adhere to social distancing standards when you're joining us in the physical classroom, including maintaining six feet of distance from your classmates and wearing a face covering at all times. If you're feeling even a hint of illness, please join us via Zoom.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

DATE	READINGS	DEADLINES
	<i>What Is Black Radicalism?</i>	
Thursday 1/14	Syllabus and Zamalin, "The Political Thought of African American Resistance" (Moodle)	
	<i>Fugitivity and Revolution in Slavery</i>	
Tuesday 1/19	Walker, <i>Walker's Appeal</i> (5–23)	
Thursday 1/21	Walker, <i>Walker's Appeal</i> (24–45)	
Tuesday 1/26	Walker, <i>Walker's Appeal</i> (46–73)	
Thursday 1/28	Walker, <i>Walker's Appeal</i> (74–79) and Henry Highland Garnet, "An Address to the Slaves of the United States of America" (Moodle)	
Tuesday 2/2	Keeling, Selections from "Black Futures and the Queer Times of Life" (Moodle)	
Thursday 2/4	Delany, <i>Blake</i> (5–24)	Close Reading #1
Tuesday 2/9	Delany, <i>Blake</i> (24–45)	
Thursday 2/11	Delany, <i>Blake</i> (45–69)	
Thursday 2/18	Delany, <i>Blake</i> (69–89)	
Tuesday 2/23	Delany, <i>Blake</i> (89–116)	
Thursday 2/25	Delany, <i>Blake</i> (116–40)	
Tuesday 3/2	Delany, <i>Blake</i> (140–61)	
Thursday 3/4		Midterm Examination
	<i>Jim Crow Afropessimism</i>	
Tuesday 3/9	Hartman, "The Burdened Individuality of Freedom" (Moodle)	
Thursday 3/11	Wells-Barnett, <i>On Lynchings</i> (1–28)	
Tuesday 3/16	Wells-Barnett, <i>On Lynchings</i> (29–77)	
Thursday 3/18	Wells-Barnett, <i>On Lynchings</i> (78–115)	
Tuesday 3/23	Wells-Barnett, <i>On Lynchings</i> (117–38)	
Thursday 3/25	Wells-Barnett, <i>On Lynchings</i> (138–63)	
	<i>Jim Crow Afrofuturism</i>	
Tuesday 3/30	Robinson, "The Nature of the Black Radical Tradition" (Moodle)	Close Reading #2
Thursday 4/1	Griggs, <i>Imperium in Imperio</i> (3–30)	
Thursday 4/8	Griggs, <i>Imperium in Imperio</i> (31–59)	
Tuesday 4/13	Griggs, <i>Imperium in Imperio</i> (60–86)	
Thursday 4/15	Griggs, <i>Imperium in Imperio</i> (87–115)	

Tuesday 4/20	Griggs, <i>Imperium in Imperio</i> (116–49)	
Thursday 4/22	Griggs, <i>Imperium in Imperio</i> (150–77)	
Tuesday 4/27	Zamalin, “Utopia and Black American Thought” (Moodle)	
Thursday 4/29		
Finals Week (exact date and time to be determined)		Final Examination