

ENGL 200 H Autumn 2014: Reading Literary Forms:
Black Modernism and the Politics of Sex

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MW 2:30-4:30 – Denny Hall 212

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Course Description

This class has two main objectives. The first will be an interrogation of the literary and cultural category of “Black Modernism,” during which we will question the term as a historical, generic, formal, and thematic descriptor. Is “Black Modernism” meant to indicate Black subjects’ interest in modernist texts? Or self-identified Black artists whose artistic expression aligns with modernist tenets? Or perhaps cultural texts of a certain historical period whose content deals with Blackness and/or “Black topics”? While modernism is described as a reaction to the social changes of modernity that involved a sometimes tentative overturning of tradition in their experimentation with form (as famously urged in Ezra Pound’s dictum “Make it new!”) and/or content (as famously demanded in William Carlos Williams’s motto “No ideas but in things”). In what ways does this definition also describe the work of the Harlem Renaissance and/or the “New Negro”? What connections are there between what became constituted as a primarily white European literary and arts movement and the work of African American writers and artists of the same time period? What differences might there be between modernism and Black modernism and how might we think about any differences as connected to a difference in subject position in U.S. (and global) racial formation? Might Black Modernism be in reaction to a different modernity, a racial modernity that is certainly, in some way, conditioned by modernism’s role in reproducing racial formation through its dalliance with the racial other, most famously in the erotic exoticism of its primitivism and its representation and salient understanding of racialized others through the frame of sexual stereotypes.

This class’s second related objective, then, will be to think about the politics of sex in the gendered production of race in America that Black modernism engages. While sex is had, used, and exchanged for many reasons (for reproduction, pleasure, intimacy, and securing financial and other forms of well-being), it is also used as a mode of control and manipulation, as a source of moralizing and shaming, and as a form of violence and a legitimization of other violences. Sex and sexuality have also come to *mean* many things as part of our socialization, as forms of identity, as ways of evaluating people, and as indicators of normativity and even rationality. Sexual stereotypes are also modalities through which race and gender are (re)produced and lived and one way bodies are disciplined. For these reasons and more, sex has also been the subject, whether explicitly or implicitly, of many (if not most) literary narratives. This class will analyze the representations of sex in the cultural forms of Black modernism, including fiction, poetry, visual arts, and performance. We will investigate what sex does in these texts and how it is used, including the way it is deployed to negotiate U.S. racial and gender formation. We will question what sex does in and to the narratives we read and the ways different cultural forms represent and engage the subject of sex to make claims about the social world and to intervene in the hegemonic and stereotypical definitions that label people. Finally, we will wonder about whether any definition of Black modernism doesn’t need to include some discussion about how this cultural work questioned sexual stereotypes in U.S. racial modernity as well as the discourses of respectability, identity, rationality, desire, and authenticity that these stereotypes frame.

Course Keywords include: Culture, Representation, Literature, Discourse and Power, Stereotyping, Race, Gender, Sexuality

Course Objectives

Our engagements with the texts and ways of thinking mentioned above are intended to satisfy the following course goals:

1. to develop **critical reading practices** focused on understanding, contextualizing, and analyzing the materials or topics covered culturally, historically, and politically
2. to practice and demonstrate competent **close readings** of texts, including literary, cultural, and similar texts
3. to **understand the investments, contexts, and effects of the close/critical reading skills** studied and used in the course
4. to develop an appreciation for and knowledge of **literature's relationship to related areas, disciplines, and discourses**
5. to develop **vocabulary** and discussion and presentation **skills** in the interest of being better able to construct and defend one's own arguments or interpretations

Course Outline

This course is loosely organized around four sections. The first "Modernisms' Repressions" engages some of the racial and sexual politics of so-called "high modernist" texts, including their propensity toward primitivism before then engaging some ideas and questions about what "Black Modernism" might be or mean. The next two sections will engage the gendered negotiation of stereotypes in literary texts at this particular historical moment. "The Jezebel and the Politics of Respectability" engages African American women's fiction of the period and their use, critique, and play with "respectability" in the face of the sexualize racial stereotypes that defined them. Likewise, "The Black Rapist and the Politics of Masculinity" engages texts in which African American men negotiate racist sexual stereotypes. A final section "Queer Black Modernism" will continue the investigation of masculinity by reading the work of the Harlem Renaissance/Black Modernist period that negotiated a sexuality considered deviant by both whites and blacks.

There are multiple textual threads running simultaneously through this course. One will be the reading of Foucault to understand our texts as parts of the discourse of sexuality that defined African Americans through stereotypes such as the Jezebel and the Black Rapist. Another will be the theorizations of stereotypes and difference that our critical and cultural texts engage; to this end, we will close read literary texts for their negotiation of stereotypes and their understandings of U.S. racial formation. A third thread will be primary documents that engage the use of culture, art, and literature, such as those by Locke, DuBois, and Hughes. We will read our critical, literary, and primary texts for concepts that help us formulate critical questions about the way literature is part of larger discursive formations that define racial subjects through sex and sexuality (which is always, of course, gendered). Each text we read can be used together to understand our course topics and we will refer back to many readings as we proceed.

Required course texts are listed below. Any additional readings I will provide.

- Foucault, Michel *History of Sexuality: Volume One* 1978 0679724699
- Toomer, Jean *Cane* 1923 Liveright Publishing 0871402106 (2011)
- Fauset, Jessie Redmon *Plum Bun* 1928 Beacon Press 0807009199 (1999)
- Wright, Richard *Native Son* 1940 Perennial Classics 0060929804 (2005)
- ENGL 200 H Course Packet available at Ave Copy – 4141 University Way – 206.633.1837

Coursework and Grading

Expectations

You will be expected to demonstrate the course objectives through weekly Quizzes, Writing Assignments, two brief Presentations, and regular, *engaged* class Participation. Due to the scope of the readings we will discuss in class and time constraints, you must come to class having not only **done all the reading** for the day but also **prepared to discuss those readings**. You are responsible for beginning a *timely dialogue* with me outside of class (in office hours or by appointment) about any difficulties you have with the course material or the course in general. I am committed to helping each student as long as you take personal responsibility in your own learning and approach me in a timely manner with issues. Your grade for this class is based entirely on:

- Weekly Online Quizzes 20%
- Presentations 10%
- Participation 25%
- Essays 45%

Weekly Online Quizzes (20%)

Starting in Week 2, you are responsible for posting a weekly quiz in our discussion section on Canvas. You should choose which day you want to post depending on what concepts interest you or when you have time. These quizzes are meant to prepare you for class discussion by demonstrating your **comprehension** of the text through close reading and by generating your own thoughts on their potential stakes and **implications**. These quizzes will involve choosing a quote from either our critical, historical, or literary texts, depending on your interest, and doing a brief close reading to discuss *your* ideas on one of our course topics or issues. You may focus on connecting readings but must focus on *close* reading one of them. These posting must:

- 1) Refer to a **quote** and do a brief **close reading** of the quote that demonstrates your ideas about how this reading engages sex, race, stereotypes, etc.
- 2) Discuss the **implications** of the quote, which means offer some idea about how one can use this quote to analyze or otherwise understand something about our class topics.

Often we will get into small groups and discuss these postings, lead by those that have written a quiz that day, before we discuss the essays in more depth as a class. I will read these during this small group time so we can structure our class discussion around people's interests, concerns, and questions along with what I think is important or useful about each day's readings. These should be thought of as quizzes, so your writing should be brief but substantive. *These are not reading responses, editorials, or opinion papers*, but, rather, careful engagements with the way one of the main ideas/claims of our course is represented in a text and its implications, and stakes, or how it can be used and why it is important for understanding our class topics. These should be *no more* than one double-spaced page and should be posted by **midnight the night before class**. These will be graded on content. If you miss a week, there is no "make up" quiz. While I encourage engagement with each other's ideas online, it is not necessary and my hope is that this engagement will take place in the classroom. You will not receive a grade on these until the final grade; if you have questions about how you are doing on them, ask me.

Presentations (10%)

You will be responsible for two short presentations in this class. See the prompt for more details.

Presentation One: Text Context (5%)

Once this quarter you will be responsible for contextualizing our day's reading and beginning our conversation that day. You can either discuss one of our critical texts, primary documents, or literary texts. Depending on your chosen text or day, you will introduce the author or situate

the text in some way; every presentation will involve explicating that day's reading in some way, starting our conversation with a critical question connected to a passage in the text.

Presentation Two: Paper Claims (5%)

The last week of class will be spent presenting on paper topics. This means that those that have chosen Writing Option One will present on one of their short papers while those that chose Writing Option Two will present their Final Paper topics, using their Paper Proposal as a guide. These should be no more than 5 minutes. Hearing how other people engaged the ideas having done the same class readings is a great way to end a class like this. Hearing other people's claims is also a great way to think through your own ideas for final papers. This also gives us a week with no reading so that you can work on final writing projects and we will use these presentation days to discuss paper ideas.

Participation (25%)

Your participation includes *constructively* taking part in **class discussions** as well as your general **investment** in the class, which means coming to class awake and alert and ready to engage, having not only read the day's readings but having thought about them. You should set a goal of talking at least once per class. I realize that not everyone feels comfortable speaking in class and that people learn in different ways but I encourage you all to take intellectual chances by expressing your ideas and/or asking questions. Fair warning: if you never speak in this class, it will affect your participation grade. Your grade also involves your engagement with your peers during **group work**. I will notice people that consistently do not contribute to small group. A low participation grade **will** affect your final grade. Our specific goal is to learn together how to read literature and discuss social issues in an academic setting and *everyone's* ideas are important to that goal.

Attendance is very important for several reasons: most of the skills you will need to complete your writing assignments will be obtained in class – we cover all the readings in class, focusing on the important ideas to use in papers; I will explain the assignments; and we will do a lot of group work. Obviously, if there are extreme extenuating circumstances, let me know if you will miss class. You are responsible for getting any notes from other students. Anything due on the day missed must be handed in by the next class day and will be considered late.

Negative Participation

However, merely attending class is not enough. Just being awake and alert does not equal participating. I will also note of *negative participation*, which includes not actively engaging in class, making irrelevant comments, having extended side conversations, being disruptive to the class discussion or activity, talking while others talk, sleeping, doing crossword puzzles or suduko, playing video games, or doing homework for other classes. This behavior is distracting and disrespectful to everyone (including me) and will negatively affect your participation grade.

Of particular distraction are texting and being online during class. For this reason, laptops are only permitted to be open for note-taking or research related to class and the use of cell phones is **absolutely prohibited** during class time. There are very few texts so important that they can't wait until class is over. Because of the focus required in this class, I will try my best to take a 5-10 minute break every day during which you can check your messages.

Essays (45%)

All written assignments should be formatted in 12-point Times New Roman (or similar sized font), double spaced, 1" margins, using in-text citations and MLA documentation of all sources. See the prompts for more details.

Writing Options (45%)

Along with online quizzes, there are two writing options for this class, both worth the same total amount. Which you do is your choice, depending on your desire/investment in writing about literary texts and/or these social issues and/or your time constraints, etc. this quarter. You may use the writing in your online quizzes as parts of these papers. These papers will be passed in on Canvas and are due by **5:00PM** on their due dates.

Writing Option One: Three Short Papers (3-4 pages each, 15% each)

In this option you write three short papers, no longer than 4 pages (using the format given). These papers need to have a **claim** in which you **apply** one reading to another. This involves isolating **one (maybe two) quote/concept** from one reading, using **close readings of quote(s)** to explicate the concept's meaning, discussing its **implications** (stakes/uses of these concepts) and **applying** the concept(s) to a brief close reading of a **literary text**. You might also isolate an idea represented in a literary text and apply it to a reading of a critical, primary, or another literary text. The point is to use one reading to explicate, critique, complicate, etc. another. These papers will be due on Mondays and should discuss the ideas of the week before (though you may connect ideas to earlier readings). The advantage of this is that you get three grades instead of one final paper grade and you can spread the writing out over the quarter as you have time/inclination. However, short papers can be difficult to focus and you'll need to provide adequate readings of the critical and cultural texts you use within a short page length.

Writing Option Two: Final Paper (8-10 pages, 35%) with a Paper Proposal (1 1/2 pages, 10%)

In this option you write one Final Paper due December 10. In this paper, your **claim** will need to create a **critical lens** from two concepts from our readings (**isolating concepts, explicating quotes, and discussing the implications** of both concepts, then connecting them into a critical lens) and use your lens to analyze a **close reading of a cultural text** of your choice from among our class texts. You will need to produce a detailed Paper Proposal (a writing prompt explains the format) during Week 8 (due Monday, November 24) introducing your claim, introducing your critical lens and cultural text, and discussing the stakes of your paper. The advantage of this paper is that it may make a good writing sample and some students prefer to think in longer papers in which they can develop in-depth analyses of critical ideas and cultural texts.

Late papers

In fairness to those who do the work on time, late work is unacceptable. If you miss a deadline, I will take off .5 from that paper's grade. Writing Option One deadlines are Mondays by 5PM and you need to pass in three papers before the last Monday. If you only pass in two by the last class, you may take the Short Paper Extension due by Friday, December 5 with -.5 off (or receive a zero). For Writing Option Two, you need to hand in the Paper Proposal and Final Paper on or before the due dates or receive -.5. If you have extenuating circumstances or extreme difficulty with an assignment, email me *at least 24 hours before* the due date.

Respect

During the quarter we encounter sensitive topics dealing with cultural, social and political themes that are often difficult or uncomfortable for some people to discuss. There are two forms of respect that are expected of you.

Respect the texts.

This means understanding that most of our essays have been thought about a long time by a lot of people; you may “disagree” with them – in fact, it is important to think critically and question ideas – but that doesn’t mean they are “wrong.” Because you don’t “agree” with a text or you are not familiar with its ideas or representations or find it difficult to read and understand, does not give you permission to ignore it and/or not read it. Things with which we are not familiar are always difficult at first, if we didn’t engage things that we didn’t already know, we’d never learn anything. If it’s obvious you haven’t done the reading, your participation grade will be affected.

Respect each other.

There are going to be differences in opinions, beliefs, and interpretations as we question the texts and discuss social issues. You need not agree with what others say but you must disagree with respect. Respect for diversity is instrumental in creating a comfortable classroom in which ideas and points of view can be exchanged. **Real respect** means not just distractedly listening while you formulate what you’re going to say but *actually listening* to others and thinking about what they say. I will not tolerate any kind of discrimination, attacks, epithets, grunts, sighs, or any other harmful or dismissive language based on race, class, sexuality, gender, culture, nationality, sexuality, dis/ability, or political orientation. If this occurs, you will be asked to leave. Healthy debate is the keystone of academic inquiry and critical thinking; **non/verbal violence** is not. If you are having any of these kinds of problems with the class, come see me or email me immediately.

Complaints/Concerns/Help

If you have any concerns about the course or me, please see me about them as soon as possible.

If you are not comfortable talking with me or are not satisfied with the response that you receive, may contact:

- Colette Moore, Director of Undergraduate Programs in Padelford A-200A at 206.543.2634 or cvmoores@uw.edu.

If you are still not satisfied with the response you receive, you may contact:

- Gary Handwerk, English Department Chair, in Padelford A-101 at 206.543.2690 or handwerk@uw.edu

Accommodations

Please let me know if you need accommodation of any sort. I am very willing to take suggestions specific to this class to meet your needs and will work with the UW Disabled Student Services (DSS) to provide what you require. For instance, this syllabus is available in large print, as are other class materials. The DSS can be contacted at dso@u.washington.edu or by phone at 206.543.6450/V, 206.543.6452/TTY.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism, or academic dishonesty, is presenting someone else's writing *or ideas* as your own without proper citation. There are many ways to plagiarize, including:

1. *Using another writer's words without proper citation.* If you use another writer's words, you must place quotation marks around the quoted material and include a footnote or other citation of the source of the quotation.
2. *Using another writer's ideas without proper citation.* Your instructors want to know which ideas and judgments are yours and which you arrived at by consulting other sources. Even if you arrived at the same judgment on your own, you need to acknowledge that the writer you consulted also came up with the idea and indicate this with citations.
3. *Citing your source but reproducing the exact words of a printed source without quotation marks.* This makes it appear that you have paraphrased rather than borrowed the author's exact words.
4. *Borrowing the structure of another author's phrases or sentences without crediting the author from whom it came.* This kind of plagiarism usually occurs out of laziness: it is easier to replicate another writer's style than to think about what you have read and then put it in your own words. The following example is from Hacker, Diana. *A Writer's Reference*. New York, NY: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1989.
 - o **Original:** If the existence of a signing ape was unsettling for linguists, it was also startling news for animal behaviorists.
 - o **Unacceptable borrowing of words:** An ape who knew sign language unsettled linguists and startled animal behaviorists.
 - o **Unacceptable borrowing of sentence structure:** If the presence of a sign-language-using chimp was disturbing for scientists studying language, it was also surprising to scientists studying animal behavior.
 - o **Acceptable paraphrase:** When they learned of an ape's ability to use sign language, both linguists and animal behaviorists were taken by surprise. (171)
5. *Borrowing all or part of another student's paper or using someone else's outline to write your own paper.*
6. *Using a paper writing "service" or having a friend write the paper for you.* Regardless of whether you pay a stranger or have a friend do it, it is a breach of academic honesty to hand in work that is not your own or to use parts of another student's paper.

As you progress in your studies, you will be expected to show that you are familiar with important work in your field and can use this work to further your own thinking. All academic writing does this. Citing another author's work will only lower your grade when you are asked to write a paper without additional materials (which is never in this class). In your writing for this class, you are encouraged (in fact, required) to refer to other people's writing and ideas. The key to avoiding plagiarism is that you show clearly where your own thinking ends and someone else's begins. Plagiarism of any kind will not be tolerated. Any student found plagiarizing will *at least* have to rewrite the assignment and *at worst* will be reported to the College of Arts and Sciences for review. (Also, with today's technology, it's as easy to recognize plagiarism as it is to do it.)

Student Resources

Writing Resources

My Office Hours Come to my office hours to discuss any aspect of your writing or this class. I am here to help and am glad to discuss your writing, the texts we read, or any questions you may have about the class. I can be reached by email to schedule meetings if my office hours don't work.

CLUE is an undergraduate tutoring center in Mary Gates Hall. It offers tutorial sessions for most freshmen lecture courses; skills courses; access to computer labs; and drop-in centers for math, science and writing.

Odegaard Writing and Research Center (OWRC) is staffed with graduate and undergraduate peer tutors and librarians. OWRC can help you at any step of the writing or research process from generating a claim to constructing the argument to finding and dealing with research materials to helping with more specific questions about writing. It is free and open to any member of the UW community but make sure to make an appointment at depts.washington.edu/owrc/

UW SafeCampus

Preventing violence is everyone's responsibility. If you're concerned, tell someone.

- Always call 911 if you or others may be in danger.
 - Call 206-685-SAFE (7233) to report non-urgent threats of violence and for referrals to UW counseling and/or safety resources. TTY or VP, call through your preferred relay service.
 - Don't walk alone. Campus safety guards can walk with you on campus after dark. Call Husky NightWalk 206-685-WALK (9255).
 - Stay connected with UW Alert. Register your mobile number to receive instant notification of campus emergencies via text and voice messaging. Sign up at www.washington.edu/alert
- For more information visit the SafeCampus website at washington.edu/safecampus.

UW Counseling Center

Workshops include a wide range of issues including study skills, thinking about coming out, international students and culture shock, and much more. Check out available resources and workshops at: depts.washington.edu/counsels.

Office of Minority and Diversity/Samuel E. Kelly Ethnic Cultural Center

The OMAD's mission is to ensure the access and academic success of diverse populations through the advancement of knowledge, academic excellence, diversity, and the promotion of values, principles, and a climate that enriches the campus experience for all. For more information, visit www.washington.edu/omad/. The ECC has a wealth of resources and opportunities available to students including student advising, organizational development, leadership mentoring, personal growth, and referrals to departments and programs. They also have social and cultural events that focus on social justice and communities of color. For more, visit depts.washington.edu/ecc/.

International Student Service

ISS provides support to UW international students so that they may reach their educational goals. For more, visit iss.washington.edu/.

Q Center

The builds and facilitates queer (gay, lesbian, bisexual, two-spirit, trans, intersex, questioning, same-gender-loving, allies) academic and social community through education, advocacy, and support services to achieve a socially-just campus in which all people are valued. For more, visit depts.washington.edu/qcenter

ENGL 200 H - AUTUMN 2014 COURSE CALENDAR (SUBJECT TO CHANGES)

	READING DUE	PRESENTATIONS	ASSIGNMENTS DUE
WEEK 1	Introductions		
Wed 9/24	Foucault <i>HoS</i> "We Other Victorians" and "The Repressive Hypothesis"		
WEEK 2	Modernisms' Repressions		
Mon 9/29	Handout: Critical Questions Eliot "Prufrock" and "Columbo and Bolo Verses" McIntire "An Unexpected Beginning..."	Eliot (PS2) McIntire (PS1)	
Wed 10/1	Pickering "The Concept of the Stereotype" Hemingway "Indian Camp"	Pickering (PS1) Hemingway (PS2)	
WEEK 3			
Mon 10/6	Handout: Close Reading Carby "Slave and Mistress" Stein from "Melanctha"	Carby (PS1) Stein (PS2)	Short Paper Due
Wed 10/8	Baker from <i>Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance</i> Locke "The New Negro" Toomer <i>Cane</i> 1-54	Baker (PS1) Locke (PS1) Toomer (PS2)	
WEEK 4	Jezebel and the Politics of Respectability		
Mon 10/13	Gosselin "Beyond the Harlem Renaissance..." DuBois "The Criteria for Negro Art" Toomer <i>Cane</i> 55-end	Gosselin (PS1) DuBois (PS1) Toomer (PS3)	Short Paper Due
Wed 10/15	Foucault <i>HoS</i> "The Deployment of Sexuality" Fauset <i>Plum Bun</i> ("Home")	Foucault (PS1) Fauset (PS2)	
WEEK 5			
Mon 10/20	Wolcott from <i>Remaking Respectability</i> Fauset <i>Plum Bun</i> ("Market")	Fauset (PS3)	Short Paper Due
Wed 10/22	Fauset <i>Plum Bun</i> ("Plum Bun")	Fauset (PS3)	
WEEK 6			
Mon 10/27	Fauset <i>Plum Bun</i> ("Home Again")	Fauset (PS3)	Short Paper Due
Wed 10/29	Fauset <i>Plum Bun</i> ("Market is Done") <i>Plum Bun</i> literary criticism TBA	Fauset (PS3)	
WEEK 7	Native Sons: The Myth of the Black Rapist and the Politics of Masculinity		
Mon 11/3	Foucault <i>HoS</i> "Right of Death and Power over Life" Wright <i>Native Son</i> 1-93 ("Book One: Fear")	Foucault (PS1) Wright (PS2)	Short Paper Due
Wed 11/5	Wright <i>Native Son</i> 97-163 (first third of "Book Two: Flight")	Wright (PS2)	
WEEK 8			
Mon 11/10	Davis "Rape, Racism... Myth of the Black Rapist" Wright <i>Native Son</i> 164-270 ("Book Two: Flight")	Davis (PS1) Wright (PS3)	Short Paper Due
Wed 11/12	Wright <i>Native Son</i> 270-330 ("Book Three: Flight")	Wright (PS3)	
WEEK 9			
Mon 11/17	Wright <i>Native Son</i> 331-430 ("Book Three: Fate")	Wright (P3)	Short Paper Due Paper Proposal Due
Wed 11/19	Wright "How Bigger Was Born" Baldwin "Everybody's Protest Novel"	Wright (P1) Baldwin (P1)	
WEEK 10	Queer Modernism		
Mon 11/24	Dunbar-Nelson poems Cullen poems McKay poems	Dunbar-Nelson (P2) Cullen (P2) McKay (P2)	Short Paper Due
Wed 11/26	Hughes "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" Hughes poems and stories Nugent "Smoke, Lilies, Jade"	Hughes (P1, P2) Nugent (P2)	
WEEK 11			
Mon 12/1	Claims Presentations	Claim Presentations	Short Paper Due
Wed 12/3	Claims Presentations Evaluations	Claim Presentations	

Final Papers due Wednesday, December 10 by 5PM.

