ENGLISH 190-5
HARLEM RENAISSANCE
SPRING 2018

Professor Bryan Wagner
Contact: bwagner@berkeley.edu
Class Hours: Mon/Wed 5:00-6:30, Wheeler 122
Office Hours: Mon 3:00-5:00, Wheeler 416

REQUIRED BOOKS

Jean Toomer, *Cane* (Liveright)
Nella Larsen, *Passing* (Penguin)
David Levering Lewis, *When Harlem Was in Vogue* (Penguin)
Claude McKay, *Home to Harlem* (Northeastern)

Note: Additional texts, images, recordings are available on BCourses

GRADING POLICY

40% Final Essay (14-16 pages, including formal proposal)
15% Midterm Exam (Identification and Interpretation)
25% Take-Home Final Exam (Reflection and Synthesis)
20% Weekly Critical Writing and Class Participation

WEEKLY CRITICAL WRITING

Before 11pm on Sunday, students submit responses to our discussion forum on BCourses. Each response should contain 2 or 3 questions about the week's reading. Each post should total at least 150 words. You are allowed to post a late response two times over the semester without penalty, but if you are late more than twice, your final grade will be lowered. Work to formulate real questions—questions, in other words, to which you do not already have solid answers. Before class on Monday, be sure to read the questions written by your classmates.

When writing your questions, please keep in mind the following criteria.

**Good questions are debatable.** When a question is debatable, you can imagine several reasonable answers. This means we won't all agree right away about the answer to a good question. It also means a good question cannot be answered by recalling a fact or pointing to a word. Good questions tend to generate long conversations. They cannot be answered in a few words. You know that you have an especially good question if you think we will continue to disagree about the answer even after we have made our best arguments.
Good questions are precise. When you’re asking a good question, you know that the answer will not be just a matter of opinion. Likewise, when you’re answering a good question, you know that you can gather evidence that might convince others to accept your answer. Good questions point to words, lines, or passages and ask about their significance. Sometimes, you may need to use technical language to phrase a question precisely. This is true when asking about literary form or about the theoretical presuppositions we bring to the study of culture.

Good questions are significant. People care about the answers to good questions. When you hear a good question, you are willing spend time to answer it. When a good question is asked, there is something clearly at stake for the listener as well as the speaker. However, it is the speaker’s responsibility to explain precisely what is at stake in asking the question.

ESSAY

Essays are 14-16 pages, double spaced, plus bibliography. They are to be submitted under the assignments tab on BCourses. I am not giving artificial prompts for the essays. Students are to formulate the questions to focus their essays. When choosing your question, make sure that it meets our stated criteria for a good question (debatable, precise, and significant). It is likely that the question for your essay will be drawn at a scale different from your weekly responses. Students are encouraged to refine and revise their essay questions during the writing process.

ESSAY PROPOSAL

Your essays are anticipated by formal proposals submitted under the assignments tab on BCourses. Your essay proposal should include the following parts:

1. A good question, and a list of potential answers. Be sure that your question satisfies our criteria (debatable, precise, and significant), and be sure to explain your potential answers in detail, using examples to make your ideas concrete. If you can only imagine one answer to your question, you should ask yourself whether it merits an essay-length investigation.

2. A draft of your introductory paragraph, following the pattern for academic introductions we will discuss in class. First, your paragraph explains the question your essay seeks to answer and indicates why this question is worth asking. Second, it summarizes a common-sense answer to your question, an answer that most people are willing to accept at face value. Third, it identifies a problem with the common-sense answer, a contradiction in its reasoning or an overlooked detail. Fourth, it offers a new-and-improved answer to your question, an answer that accounts for the contradiction or overlooked evidence that you have just described. This new-and-improved answer is the primary claim (or the “thesis statement”) of your essay.

3. A catalog of evidence, including at least twelve examples that you can use to support and develop your argument. These may be quotations or your own summarizing language. Your catalog may also include relevant contextual information, whether critical or historical.
EXAMS

We have one midterm exam during the semester. This exam requires you to identify (author, title, and date) and interpret passages from assigned reading. Your interpretation should pay close attention to the language of the passage, to its context in the work in which it appears, and to its relationship to the themes in the course. There is also a take-home final exam. The final exam is integrative and comparative, asking you to respond to two or three broad questions about the cultural history of the Harlem Renaissance and its representative works.

DEADLINES

Sundays, 11PM
March 14  Weekly Questions
April 22  Midterm Exam
May 7  Proposal Due
May 10  Exam Due
May 10  Essay Due
ENGLISH 190 - HARLEM RENAISSANCE - SPRING 2018
COURSE SCHEDULE

HARLEM RENAISSANCE IN CONTEXT AND RETROSPECT

Jan 17                 Course Introduction


AFTER THE RED SUMMER: CONFLICT AND COMMITMENT

Jan 29 / 31          Claude McKay, Harlem Shadows (1922)
                     W. E. B. Du Bois, “Returning Soldiers” (1919)
                     Marcus Garvey, “Africa for the Africans” (1922)
                     A. Philip Randolph, “The Negro in Politics” (1919)

MIGRATION AND RETURN

Feb 5 / 7             Jean Toomer, Cane (1923)
                     W. E. B. Du Bois, “Of the Black Belt” (1903)
                     Rudolph Fisher, “City of Refuge” (1925)
                     Jacob Lawrence, Panels 1, 45, 52 from Migration of the Negro (1941)

ENTER THE NEW NEGRO

Feb 12 / 14           Countee Cullen, Color (1925)
                     Alain Locke, “The New Negro” (1925)
                     W. E. B. Du Bois, “Criteria of Negro Art” (1926)
                     Gwendolyn Bennett, “Heritage” and “To a Dark Girl” (1925)
                     Angelina Weld Grimké, “The Black Finger” (1923) and “Tenebris” (1924)

Feb 21                Meta Fuller, “Ethiopia Awakening” (1914) and “Mary Turner” (1919)
                     Aaron Douglas, “The Judgment Day” and “The Prodigal Son” (1927)
                     Arthur A. Schomburg, “The Negro Digs Up His Past” (1925)
                     Alain Locke, “The Legacy of the Ancestral Arts” (1925)
DIALECT AND DESCENT

Feb 26
Langston Hughes, *The Weary Blues* (1926)
Paul Laurence Dunbar, “A Negro Love Song” (1895)
James W. Johnson, Preface to *Book of American Negro Poetry* (1922)
Langston Hughes, “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain” (1926)
George S. Schuyler, “The Negro Art-Hokum” (1926)

Feb 28
Dudley Murphy, dir., *St. Louis Blues* (1929)
Christine Dall, dir., *Wild Women Don't Have the Blues* (2007)
Bessie Smith, “Backwater Blues” (1927) and “Empty Bed Blues” (1928)
Ma Rainey, “See, See Rider” (1924) and “Prove it on Me” (1928)
Mamie Smith, “Crazy Blues” (1920)
Sterling Brown, “Ma Rainey” (1932)

Mar 5
Langston Hughes, *Fine Clothes to the Jew* (1927)
William Kelley, “Langston Hughes: The Sewer Dweller” (1927)
James W. Johnson, “The Dilemma of the Negro Author” (1928)
Langston Hughes, “Christ in Alabama” (1931 and 1967)

Mar 7
Zora Neale Hurston, “Spunk” (1925)
Zora Neale Hurston, “Sweat” (1926)
Zora Neale Hurston, “Color Struck” (1926)
Zora Neale Hurston, “Hoodoo in America” (1931)
Zora Neale Hurston, “How it Feels to be Colored Me” (1928)
Zora Neale Hurston, “Characteristics of Negro Expression” (1934)

Mar 12
Alain Locke, “The Negro Spirituals” (1925)
W. E. B. Du Bois, “Of the Sorrow Songs” (1903)
Zora Neale Hurston, “Spirituals and Neo-Spirituals” (1934)
Fisk University Jubilee Singers, “Steal Away to Jesus” (1926)
Paul Robeson, “Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child” (1926)
James W. Johnson, Preface to *Book of American Negro Spirituals* (1925)

MIDTERM EXAM (MAR 14)

LOVE AND DEATH

Mar 19
Richard Bruce Nugent, “Smoke, Lilies and Jade” (1926)
Wallace Thurman, “Cordelia the Crude” (1926)
Gladys Hayford, “Rainy Season Love Song” (1927)
Mae V. Cowdery, “Insatiate” (1936)
Mar 21  
James Van Der Zee, *Harlem Book of the Dead* (1978)  
Exhibition Gallery Photos from *Harlem on My Mind* (1969)  

**PASSING**

Apr 2 / 4  
Lydia Maria Child, “The Quadroons” (1842)  
Walter White, “The Paradox of Color” (1925)

Apr 9 / 11  
Nella Larsen, *Passing* (1929)  
Jessie Fauset, “The Sleeper Wakes” (1920)  
Georgia Douglas Johnson “The Octoroon” (1922)

**NOT PRIMITIVE**

Apr 16 / 18  
Claude McKay, *Home to Harlem* (1928)  
Dudley Murphy, dir., *Black and Tan Fantasy* (1929)  
Rudolph Fisher, “The Caucasian Storms Harlem” (1927)  
Carl Van Vechten, “Moanin Wid a Sword in Mah Han” (1926)

*ESSAY PROPOSAL DUE (APR 22)*

*WRITING WORKSHOPS (APR 23 & 25)*

*FINAL EXAM DUE (MAY 7)*

*ESSAY DUE (MAY 10)*
SUGGESTED READING: BIOGRAPHY, SOCIAL HISTORY, AND CULTURAL CRITICISM

Jervis Anderson, This Was Harlem: A Cultural Portrait (New York: FSG, 1982).


Angela Davis, Blues Legacies and Black Feminism (New York: Vintage, 1999)


