



ENGL 447 (Section 32733R): The Slave Narrative & Its Contemporary Expressions

Units: 4

Fall 2017; MWF 1-1:50 PM

Location: Waite Phillips Hall (WPH) 204

Instructor: Dr. Melissa Daniels-Rauterkus,
Assistant Professor of English & African American Studies

Office: Taper Hall of Humanities 439

Office Hours: Monday and Wednesdays 11am-12pm

Contact Info: melissa.rauterkus@dornsife.usc.edu, (213)740-2808 (office), Skype: m.rauterkus718@gmail.com. I generally answer emails during business hours and will reply to all emails, phone calls, and Skype requests within 48 hours.

IT Help: USC Information Technology Services

Hours of Service: Telephone support available 24 hours a day, 7 days per week; Email support available Mon-Fri. 8:00am-6:00 pm.

Contact Info: consult@usc.edu; (213)-740-5555



Course Description: The African American slave narrative is one of the most organic forms of expression in the American literary and cultural tradition. The outgrowth of autobiography and sentimental literature as well as antislavery and abolitionist discourses, the slave narrative chronicles the horrors of the black experience in bondage. Featuring scenes of brutal violence, sexual abuse, and emotional trauma, the slave narrative functions as an important critique of slavery's innate perversity and inhumanity in addition to the implicit contradictions and failures of American democracy. This course examines the slave narrative as an artistic, intellectual, and political tool of agitation and resistance. We will trace the genre's emergence and development in relationship to its aesthetic precursors, influences, and contemporary interpretations, while identifying the essential patterns and motifs that structure the form. Some of the dominant conventions and tropes that we will analyze include: the use of "authenticating documents," the descent from innocence into the hell of slavery, the critical confrontation with the master, the quest for literacy, flight, fugitivity, and freedom. We will discuss how slave narratives mobilize the discourses of realism and sentimentalism; the ways in which enslaved African Americans chart the transition from bondsman/woman to personhood; and finally, how issues of race, representation, and cultural ownership affect our understanding of the genre when it is adapted to the screen by a white director, as in the case in Quentin Tarantino's film, *Django Unchained* (2012). Assignments will include two short essays, informal discussion posts, and a final seminar paper.

Learning Objectives

Students who successfully complete this class will be able to:

- Perform a close reading of a literary and non-literary text
- Interpret a work in relationship to its relevant aesthetic, theoretical, and/or cultural contexts

- Identify the textual/narrative elements and interpretive problems that distinguish a literary work
- Locate imaginative and critical works within their appropriate contexts and traditions, and thus therefore, better understand literary history and intellectual genealogy
- Come up with a cogent thesis and craft a well-developed and polished analysis of a work
- Conduct scholarly research and use secondary sources to substantiate an original argument

Course Notes

This is a web-enhanced course that utilizes Blackboard. I will post assignments, lecture notes (occasionally), and supplemental readings and digital content. Please check Blackboard for important announcements, course materials, and informal writing assignment threads.

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

Beginner; access to Blackboard and the ability to view digital content.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials:

Douglass, Frederick, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*.

ISBN: 9780393265446

Jacobs, Harriet. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*.

ISBN: 9780674035836

Brown, William Wells. *Clotel; Or, The President's Daughter*.

ISBN: 9780312621070

Wilson, Harriet. *Our Nig; or, Sketches from the Life of a Free Black*.

ISBN: 9780307477453

Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*.

ISBN: 9781400033416

Django Unchained, Dir. by Quentin Tarantino (will be uploaded to Blackboard)

12 Years a Slave, Dir. by Steve McQueen (will be uploaded to Blackboard)

*Scholarly essays on Blackboard

****I strongly suggest that you purchase/rent the editions listed above, as all reading assignments will be given in page numbers. Moreover, during discussion, I will refer to passages on specific pages. It is much easier for everyone to follow along when we're all quoting from the same versions.**

Note: All books are available for purchase/rent at the USC Bookstore: 840 Childs Way, Los Angeles 90089 (213) 740-0066.

Description and Assessment of Assignments:

1. Blackboard Posts:

From time to time, you will be asked to post a brief response (500 words) to a Blackboard thread, based on the assigned primary or secondary reading. Your post should demonstrate a firm understanding of the most salient literary, cultural, and/or theoretical points and/or questions raised by the material as well as strong critical thinking and writing skills. You will be evaluated on how well you do both. Sophisticated responses will go above and beyond mere summary, positing instead an analytical and/or critical statement about the primary text's formal and structural attributes, its aesthetic and cultural politics, its reception, the material conditions of its production, or the cultural work that it performs. For posts on critical essays, you might discuss how the argument

illuminates or makes sense of the primary text. How does it offer a protocol for reading and comprehending the imaginative work? Is it valuable? What are the blind spots or lacunae in the argument? How would you revise the argument?

2. Short Essays:

You will write two, short essays for this class. Your first essay is a close reading of 2-3 pages in length. You are required to select a passage (150-200 words) from the assigned reading (i.e. reading we have already completed), and provide a critical interpretation of it, paying special attention to its formal attributes (e.g. style, grammar, syntax, tropes, literary devices), cultural or historical implications, and its bearing on things/events outside of the text. You do not need to incorporate any secondary sources into your analysis. Please see the course schedule below for the due date. Your second essay will be an analysis of a single chapter of your choosing from the assigned reading. It should be 5-7 pages in length. You should include into your paper any relevant scholarship/secondary sources from our supplemental readings on Blackboard to add greater complexity to your argument. Please see the course schedule below for the due date.

3. Final Seminar Paper:

This course culminates in a seminar paper of 8-12 pages in length. This is a formal research paper that performs the work of literary analysis. Your essay should articulate an original thesis but demonstrate an awareness and active engagement with the existing scholarship on your topic/text(s) of choice. You will receive a handout with more explicit instructions no later than week 5 of class. I will also discuss the assignment in class and offer individual consultations to help you think through your topic/argument and offer strategies and suggestions for enhancing your research/scholarship.

Grading Breakdown

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Attendance & Participation	100	10
Blackboard Posts	100	20
Short Essay #1	100	15
Short Essay #2	100	15
Final Seminar Paper	100	40
TOTAL		
	500	100

Grading Scale

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale

A	95-100	C	73-76
A-	90-94	C-	70-72
B+	87-89	D+	67-69
B	83-86	D	63-66
B-	80-82	D-	60-62
C+	77-79	F	59 and below

Assignment Rubrics

Please see me for additional information on grading.

Assignment Submission Policy

With the exception of Blackboard posts, all written assignments must be submitted in hard copy form. Essays must be typed, formatted according to MLA guidelines, and fastened with staples (no paper clips or bent pages).

Grading Timeline

All formal, written assignments, e.g. your two short essays, will be graded and returned no later than two weeks after submission. Blackboard posts will not be returned.

Additional Policies

1. Attendance:

Consistent attendance and participation is absolutely critical to your success in this class. You are allotted two unexcused absences—without penalty—for the duration of the semester. Unexcused absences beyond this number will result in a penalty of a 5% grade reduction off your final grade for each class session that you miss. Please do not come to class late or leave early, as this is rude and disruptive to me and your fellow classmates. Excessively late arrivals and early departures will be counted as absences. If you need to arrive late or leave early on a specific day, let me know as soon as possible.

2. Late/Missing Work:

In order to receive full credit, all assignments must be submitted by their respective due dates. Late assignments will be docked by 5% for each week that they are late. Any outstanding work that you want included in the final grade must be submitted before the last week of class.

3. Course Format/Meeting Structure:

The format of this course is a hybrid of lecture and seminar-style discussion. Most of our meetings will begin with me delivering a brief lecture to frame our analysis of the readings, followed by discussion. I may rely on Blackboard posts, impromptu close-readings as a class, small group activities (if attendance permits), or visual aids to structure our discussion time.

4. In-class Behavior:

You are expected to demonstrate proper academic etiquette at all times. Please do not check and/or send emails while in class, text-message, or complete assignments for other classes. You are welcome to bring beverages to class, but please do not eat in class, as it can be distracting. Please refrain from voicing opinions that may be perceived as being racist, homophobic, sexist, or generally uncouth.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

*Please note that assignments are subject to change at the instructor's discretion.

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings/Homework	Deliverable/ Due
Week 1	8/21 Welcome to ENGL 447/Course Overview/Intro to the Slave Narrative 8/23 What is the Slave Narrative?/Genre, Genealogy, & Problems of Representation 8/25 Identifying the Form: James Olney, "I Was Born"	Get Books James Olney, "I Was Born" Lindon Barrett, "African American Slave Narratives: Literacy, the Body, & Authority"	
Week 2	8/28 Barrett on the slave narrative 8/30 Ferguson on violence and slavery 9/01 Stepto, <i>From Behind the Veil</i> , ch. 1	Sally Ann Ferguson, "Christian Violence and the Slave Narrative" Robert Stepto, <i>From Behind the Veil</i> , ch. 1 None	
Week 3	9/04 Labor Day—no class 9/06 Masculinity, Literacy, & Freedom: Intro to Douglass & <i>Narrative of the Life</i> 9/08 Douglass pp 3-41	None Douglass pp 3-41 Douglass pp 41-84	
Week 4	9/11 Douglass pp 41-84 9/13 "A Perilous Passage": Black Girlhood, Slavery, and Agency: Intro to Jacobs & <i>Incidents</i> 9/15 Jacobs pp 1-45	None Jacobs pp 1-45 Jacobs pp 46-125	First Essay Due 9/13
Week 5	9/18 Jacobs pp 46-125 9/20 Jacobs pp 126-162 9/22 Jacobs pp 163-203	Jacobs pp 126-162 Jacobs pp 163-203 Jacobs pp 204-264	
Week 6	9/25 Jacobs pp 204-264 9/27 Andrews on Voice; Dialogizing the Black Narrative and the Emergence of the Fictive Voice: Intro to Brown & <i>Clotel</i> 9/29 Brown pp 81-119	William Andrews, "The Novelization of Voice" Brown pp 81-119 Brown pp 120-158	
Week 7	10/02 Brown pp 120-158 10/04 Brown pp 159-194	Brown pp 159-194 Brown pp 195-227	

	10/06 Brown pp 195-227	Lee Schweningen, "Clotel and the Historicity of the Anecdote"	
Week 8	10/09 Schweningen on Clotel 10/11 Variations on the Form: Intro to Wilson & <i>Our Nig</i> 10/13 Wilson pp 1-39	BB Post Wilson pp 1-39 Wilson pp 40-77	Second Essay Due 10/11
Week 9	10/16 Wilson pp 40-77 10/18 Wilson 78-140 10/20 Stern on <i>Our Nig</i>	Wilson 78-140 Julia Stern, "Excavating Genre in <i>Our Nig</i> " BB Post	
Week 10	10/23 Exorcising the Ghosts of Slavery: Intro to Morrison, <i>Beloved</i> , & The Neo-Slave Narrative 10/25 Morrison pp 1-33 10/27 Morrison pp 34-100	Morrison pp 1-33 Morrison pp 34-100 Morrison pp 101-138	
Week 11	10/30 Morrison pp 101-138 11/01 Morrison pp 139-180 11/03 Morrison pp 181-241	Morrison pp 139-180 Morrison pp 181-241 Morrison pp 242-277	
Week 12	11/06 Morrison pp 242-277 11/08 Morrison 281-end 11/10 No Class—ASA Convention (See Blackboard for lecture notes/discussion thread)	Morrison 281-end Cynthia Hamilton, "Revisions, Rememories, & Exorcisms"	
Week 13	11/13 Hamilton on Morrison 11/15 From Page to Screen: Adapting the Slave Narrative for Hollywood: Intro to <i>12 Years a Slave</i> 11/17 <i>12 Years a Slave</i>	View <i>12 Years a Slave</i> Gates and McQueen, "12 Years a Slave"; Thomas Doherty, "Bringing the Slave Narrative to the Screen" BB Post	
Week 14	11/20 Final Paper Consultations—no class (available by appointment) 11/22 Thanksgiving—no class		

	11/24 Thanksgiving—no class		
Week 15	11/27 Intro to <i>Django</i> 11/29 <i>Django</i> cont. 12/01 Last day of class/Course wrap up	View <i>Django</i>	
FINAL	12/06: This class culminates in a seminar paper. There will not be a final exam. Please submit your paper by 5pm in the English Department office.		Final Paper Due 12/06

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct:

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standards* (see <https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions>). Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct (at <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>).

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* (see <http://equity.usc.edu>) or to the *Department of Public Safety* (see <http://capsnet.usc.edu/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>). This is important for the safety whole USC community.

Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. *The Center for Women and Men* provides 24/7 confidential support (see <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm>), and the sexual assault resource center webpage describes reporting options and other resources (see sarc@usc.edu).

Support Systems:

A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute* which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students (see <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>). *The Office of Disability Services and Programs* provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations (see http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html). If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology (see <http://emergency.usc.edu/>).

Student Counseling Services (SCS) - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling/>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1-800-273-8255

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 - 24/7 on call
Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.
<https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/>

Sexual Assault Resource Center
For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: <http://sarc.usc.edu/>

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX Compliance – (213) 740-5086
Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. <https://equity.usc.edu/>

Bias Assessment Response and Support
Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support/>

The Office of Disability Services and Programs
Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. <http://dsp.usc.edu>

Student Support and Advocacy – (213) 821-4710
Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa/>

Diversity at USC
Information on events, programs and training, the Diversity Task Force (including representatives for each school), chronology, participation, and various resources for students. <https://diversity.usc.edu/>

USC Emergency Information
Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, <http://emergency.usc.edu>

USC Department of Public Safety – 213-740-4321 (UPC) and 323-442-1000 (HSC) for 24-hour emergency assistance or to report a crime.
Provides overall safety to USC community. <http://dps.usc.edu>