



**ENGL 447 32734R/African American Narrative:
“The African American Novel & The Nadir”**

Units: 4

Term—Day—Time: Spring 2019; T & Th; 11:00-12:20 p.m.

Location: Taper Hall of Humanities (THH) 105

Instructor: Professor Melissa Daniels-Rauterkus

Office: THH 439

Office Hours: Wednesdays from 10 a.m.-3:00 p.m. and by appointment

Contact Info: rauterku@usc.edu; Skype: [m.rauterkus718@gmail.com](https://www.skype.com/people/m.rauterkus718@gmail.com)

Timeline for replying to emails: I generally answer emails/phone calls

during business hours, i.e. Mon-Fri., from 9 am-5pm. I will reply to all messages within 48 hours.

Teaching Assistant: NA

Office:

Office Hours:

Contact Info: Email, phone number (office, cell), Skype, etc.

IT Help: USC Information Technology Services

Hours of Service: Telephone support available 24 hrs./per day, 7 days/wk. Email support available Mon.-Fri. from 8am-6pm.

Contact Info: consult@usc.edu; (213) 740-5555; see also Dornsife Technology Services at dornsife.usc.edu/contact-cts/



Course Description

In his 1954 book, *The Negro in American Life and Thought*, the celebrated African American historian and activist Rayford Logan dubbed the period from the end of Reconstruction through the early 20th century the “Nadir” because it was without a doubt one of the lowest moments in the history of American race relations since the Civil War. Having lost many of the civil rights acquired in the aftermath of emancipation, African Americans were introduced to a new form of racial oppression vis-à-vis Jim Crow. Predicated on the premise that segregation was necessary to preserve white supremacy and racial purity, Jim Crow found its most virulent expression in the landmark U.S. Supreme Court case, *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), which not only implemented the infamous “separate but equal” ruling, but also gave legal sanction to racial discrimination, violence, and disenfranchisement against blacks. This course will explore how African American writers responded to and transformed these events through the imaginative and politicized space of the novel. In the course of reading a selection of representative work, we will consider many questions, including, What did it mean to be a black American at the turn of the century? What is the relationship between literature and society? Can literature affect social change? Required texts include: Sutton E. Griggs, *Imperium in Imperio* (1899); Pauline Hopkins, *Contending Forces* (1900); Charles W. Chesnutt, *The Marrow of Tradition* (1901); Paul Laurence Dunbar, *The Sport of the Gods* (1901); and James Weldon Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912). This course will require short journal entries of about 300 words, a close reading essay at midterm of 5-7 pages, an abstract and an annotated bibliography, and a final seminar paper of 10-12 pages due at the end of the semester.

Learning Objectives

- Understand human experience and cultural, historical, and political events as narrative and in relationship to narrative forms
- Engage with a literary work in both a personal/informal way and an academic/formal way
- Learn how to read, think, and write critically about complex issues
- Conduct research and build off existing scholarship to create an original argument that advances the conversation about a literary work(s) and contributes to the field in a meaningful way



Prerequisite(s): ENGL 263

Co-Requisite(s):

Concurrent Enrollment:

Recommended Preparation:

Course Notes

Grading Type: Letter

This is a web-enhanced course that utilizes Blackboard. I will post assignments, supplemental readings, and links to digital content on our

Blackboard page. This course may also utilize audio/visual media. Because these files are too large to upload onto Blackboard, they will be available through course reserve, YouTube or other instant streaming services.

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

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

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

Sutton E. Griggs, *Imperium in Imperio* (1899)

Pauline Hopkins, *Contending Forces* (1900)

Charles W. Chesnutt, *The Marrow of Tradition* (1901)

Paul Laurence Dunbar, *The Sport of the Gods* (1901)

James Weldon Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912).

**Additional readings will appear on Blackboard*

*** Please use the editions that I have selected and which are available for purchase at the USC Bookstore.*

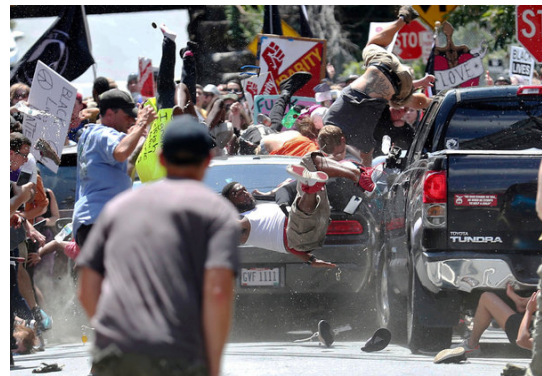
It's much easier to participate in/follow class discussions when we're all using the same versions.

Description and Assessment of Assignments

1. Journal Entries (250-350 words)—For each reading assignment you complete, you will need to draft an informal response to it. Privileging your own voice and perspective, tell me what you think the author was trying to say, achieve, or reveal. What is your personal position in relationship to the author's? How does the work affirm or challenge your own experience or viewpoint? How did the work affect you? The purpose of this activity is to establish a personal connection with the text and to help you contribute to in-class discussions. This is a more subjective exercise. Do not provide a formal, academic appraisal of the work. Focus on what you feel and what you have to say about what you read. I will from time to time call on you to share your writings with the class. At the end of the semester, you will be asked to submit your top 3 entries to be assessed and included in your final grade.
2. Midterm Assignment: Close Reading (5-7 pages)—Select a passage from one of the assigned readings and provide a critical interpretation of it, paying special attention to its formal attributes (e.g. style, grammar, syntax, tropes, literary devices), its cultural, historical, or political implications, and its bearing on other phenomena/events outside of the text. You should begin by annotating your passage of choice. Make observations about all of the striking details or facts about the text. Look for patterns. Pay close attention to language. Then interpret the details. Why

are they fascinating? What deeper meaning do they impart on the passage? I will provide a more detailed assignment sheet and guide well in advance of the due date.

3. **Abstract & Annotated Bibliography (250 words/10-12 sources)**—To help you prepare for your final assessment in this class, which is a seminar paper, you will assemble an abstract and an annotated bibliography. The former is a brief overview of what you intend to explore in your paper; whereas the latter is an MLA Works Cited list with bibliographical summaries for each entry. Your abstract should have a working title, state your thesis, and provide a basic description and trajectory of your argument. Your annotated bibliography should list the sources you intend to use to write your paper. This will require you to plan/think ahead. Do not wait until the last few weeks of class to select a topic, but rather contemplate possible topics as you make your way through the course. Towards this end, you might choose to keep an idea notebook or detailed notes about your reading and/or our class discussions. Once you've settled on a topic and have done some preliminary research you should be ready to select your sources. Your sources should all be scholarly works written for an academic audience. This includes books of literary or historical criticism, journal articles, or book chapters in an edited volume. You may use an op-ed piece provided that it is scholarly in tone or engages with the material in a scholarly way. For each entry, you will need to draft a 100-150 word summary of the work, redacting its argument, explaining its significance to your proposed thesis, how you intend to use the source, and why you think it is relevant. The abstract and the annotated bibliography will be due about a month before class ends so as to give you ample time to draft and revise your final paper.
4. **End of Term Assignment: Seminar Paper (10-12 pages)**—This course culminates in a seminar paper. This essay should reflect your mastery of the content we studied over the course of the semester. Towards this end, it should be your best and most sophisticated work. In terms of structure, it should have an introduction that provides background and contextual information about your topic and announces your thesis, it should demonstrate your ability to develop an argument across multiple paragraphs (using relevant examples and evidentiary material in the form of primary and secondary sources), it should connect the literature to its relevant cultural and political contexts, and finally, it should have a conclusion that underscores the significance of your argument. For example, you may choose to focus on how your essay contributes to/or intervenes in the existing scholarly conversation about your topic or you may choose to discuss the implications of your argument in the context of the current political moment. Why does this matter outside of this class? Why does this matter now? You may choose to build off your close reading essay, provided that you add a substantial amount of new work and significantly enhance your earlier arguments. Your paper is due on Wednesday, May 1, 2019 by 5:00 p.m. You may submit your final essay via email, but please also leave a hard copy in my faculty box in the department of English so that I have a backup copy in the event of an email glitch.



Grading Breakdown

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Participation	100	10
Journal Entries	100	15
Midterm Assignment	100	20
Abstract & Annotated Bib.	100	25
Seminar Paper	100	30
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 Rubric

A-range (90-100): Essay provides a sophisticated analysis of the topic or work in question; contains an identifiable argument and engages with the material in a complex way to illuminate cultural, historical or political issues relevant to its discussion. The essay is well-written and highly polished. The essay is formatted according to MLA citation guidelines.

B-range (80-89): Essay provides a solid analysis of the topic or work in question and attempts to engage with the material in a complex and thorough manner, but it does not fully address all of the relevant issues or does not provide a thorough accounting of the cultural, historical, or political factors involved. The essay may have a few compositional, structural, or grammatical errors. The essay may contain minor citation errors.

C-range (70-79): Essay does not provide a compelling analysis of the topic or work in question and does not earnestly attempt to address the cultural, historical, or political realms in a complex way. The argument is underdeveloped. The essay may have several compositional, structural, or grammatical errors. The essay may have multiple citation errors or may not properly cite sources or include a bibliography.

D-range (60-69): Essay lacks an argument and does not do the work of analysis. The essay does not engage with the relevant material and does not address cultural, historical, or political issues. The essay may be rife with compositional, structural, or grammatical errors. The essay may not reflect the use of a citation method.

F (59 and below): The essay does not demonstrate appropriate scholarly effort/engagement or the student failed to submit the assignment.

Assignment Submission Policy

Assignments are due on the day listed on the syllabus. Formal writing assignments may be submitted via email, but should always be accompanied by a hard copy, typed and double-spaced in MLA format. In the event that you need to submit an assignment late, please let me know in advance.

Grading Timeline

Assignments will be graded and returned within one to two weeks of submission.

Additional Policies

1. **Attendance and Participation:** Consistent attendance and participation is absolutely critical to your success in this class. Try to be a regular contributor to discussion so that I know you by name. Please do not come to class late or leave early, as this is disruptive to me and your fellow classmates. If you need to arrive late or leave early on a specific day, please let me know as soon as possible.
2. **Late/Missing Work:** In order to receive full credit, all assignments must be submitted by or on 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 discussion. I will rely on your journal entries, small group activities, media content, and visual aids to both enhance our understanding of the material as well as to structure our time in class. Always bring your reading and writing materials to class. Class will generally begin with a 20 minute warm up activity—e.g. we might discuss a provocative or pithy quote, screen a clip from a relevant video and follow up with discussion, perform a close reading on a passage or image, or engage in a freewriting activity and talk about it. After this, I will present important information or lead a discussion of the assigned reading for about 30 minutes to complement your outside reading and strengthen your understanding of the literature. Finally, we will use the remaining 30 minutes for small group activities or large group exercises that encourage us to adopt a more applied and active approach to the content.
3. **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. Please refrain from voicing opinions that may be perceived as being offensive or insensitive.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings and Homework	Deliverable
Week 1	Introductions 1/08: Greetings and Introductions; Syllabus; Course Overview; Icebreaker: “The historic and crucial lessons of the violent protests in Charlottesville”; Course Inventory: 1) Why are you taking this course? 2) What do you expect to get out of it? 3) What challenges do you anticipate?	Carefully review the syllabus; watch the first episode of <i>The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow</i> , “Promises Betrayed” 56 min. (link to video on Blackboard, available through Kanopy, login using your USC library info.); prepare a few remarks about the documentary, e.g., what were you surprised to learn about this period? List 3 things. For each item, draft 2-3 sentences explaining why it resonated with you. (due 1/10)	

	1/10: Lecture: What was the “Nadir”? Reconstruction, its Failures, and the Cultural Work of African American Literature; group activity: share journal entries	Read “Literature of the Reconstruction to the New Negro Renaissance, 1865-1919” pp. 541-554; watch “Making a Way Out of No Way” from <i>The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross</i> with Henry Louis Gates, Jr. 57 min. (due 1/15)	
Week 2	1/15: Excerpt from Marlon Riggs’s <i>Ethnic Notions</i> ; lecture: Race, Representation, and African American Culture; group activity: <i>The Crisis</i> Symposium: “The Negro in Art: How Shall He Be Portrayed” 1/17: Lecture: Plessy and the birth of Jim Crow; examine the Court’s majority decision and Harlan’s dissent; group activity: Booker T. Washington’s response to Plessy, “Who is Permanently Hurt?”	Read “Introduction” to <i>Plessy v. Ferguson</i> , ed. by Brook Thomas pp. 1-38. (due 1/17) Watch <i>Early Civil Rights: Washington or Du Bois</i> 29 min. (due 1/22)	
Week 3	1/22: Lecture: Introduction to Sutton E. Griggs and <i>Imperium in Imperio</i> ; group activity: What would your American utopia look like? 1/24: Lecture; group activity: group text reading	Read <i>Imperium in Imperio</i> pp. 3-37; draft journal entry (due 1/24) Read pp. 38-77; draft journal entry (due 1/29)	
Week 4	1/29: Lecture; introduce midterm assignment: how to do a close reading; group activity: close reading 1/31: Lecture; group activity: round table	Read pp. 78-115; draft journal entry (due 1/31) Read pp. 116-149; draft journal entry (due 2/05)	
Week 5	2/05: Lecture; group activity: respond, react, reply (use journal entries) 2/07: Lecture; group activity: group text reading	Read pp. 150-177; draft journal entry Watch <i>An Outrage: The History and Legacy of Lynching in the South</i> 34 min. (due 2/12)	
Week 6	2/12: Lecture: Introduction to Pauline E. Hopkins and <i>Contending Forces</i> ; group activity: share journal entries on <i>An Outrage</i> 2/14: Lecture; group activity: group text reading	Read <i>Contending Forces</i> pp. 13-64; draft journal entry (due 2/14) Read pp. 65-113; draft journal entry (due 2/19)	

Week 7	2/19: Lecture; group activity: respond, react, reply (use journal entries) 2/21: Lecture; group activity: round table	Read pp. 114-165; draft journal entry (due 2/21) Read pp. 166-219; draft journal entry (due 2/26)	Midterm Essay Due 2/21
Week 8	2/26: Lecture; group activity: group text reading 2/28: Lecture; group activity: respond, react, reply (use journal entries)	Read pp. 220-273; draft journal entry (due 2/28) Read pp. 274-339; draft journal entry (due 3/05)	
Week 9	3/05: Lecture; group activity: round table 3/07: Lecture; introduce abstract & annotated bib. Assignment; group activity: group text reading	Read pp. 340-402; draft journal entry (due 3/07) Enjoy your break/Read ahead if you're interested in writing your final paper on a text we have not read yet!	
	Spring Break		
Week 10	3/19: Lecture: Introduction to Charles W. Chesnutt and <i>The Marrow of Tradition</i> ; group activity: read contemporaneous book reviews and come up with several questions about the novel 3/21: Lecture; group activity: respond, react, reply (use journal entries)	Read <i>The Marrow of Tradition</i> pp. 5-51; draft journal entry (due 3/21) Read pp. 51-101; draft journal entry (due 3/26)	
Week 11	3/26: Lecture; group activity: lit. in contemporary context 3/28: Lecture; group activity: group text reading	Read pp. 101-152; draft journal entry (due 3/28) Read pp. 152-195; draft journal entry (due 4/02)	
Week 12	4/02: Lecture; group activity: lit in contemporary context 4/04: Lecture: Introduction to Paul Laurence Dunbar and <i>The Sport of the Gods</i> ; group activity: respond, react, reply (use journal entries)	Watch "Any Place but Here," from <i>The Promised Land</i> 50 min. (due 4/04) Read <i>The Sport of the Gods</i> pp. 321-362; draft journal entry (due 4/09)	Abstract & Annotated Bib. Due 4/04
Week 13	4/09: Lecture; group activity: round table 4/11: Lecture; group activity: respond, react, reply (use journal entries)	Read pp. 363-406; draft journal entry (due 4/11) Read pp. 407-433; draft journal entry (due 4/16)	

Week 14	4/16: Lecture; group activity: lit. in contemporary context 4/18: Lecture: Introduction to James Weldon Johnson and <i>The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man</i> ; group activity: respond, react, reply (use journal entries)	Watch "Imitation of Life" (due 4/18) Read <i>The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man</i> pp. 5-110; draft journal entry (due 4/23)	
Week 15	Conclusions 4/23: Lecture; group activity: respond, react, reply (use journal entries) 4/25: Wrapping up and reflecting: the Nadir and its enduring legacy the Nadir; course evaluations	Watch "Whose History: The Reckoning over Confederate Monuments and the Racial Terror of Lynching" from <i>America Divided</i> 60 min. (due 4/25) Thanks for a wonderful semester! Work on your final paper	
			Final Paper Due 5/01

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 Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>.

Support Systems:

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. 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. 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.

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: 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. emergency.usc.edu

USC Department of Public Safety – UPC: (213) 740-4321 – HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24-hour emergency or to report a crime.

Provides overall safety to USC community. dps.usc.edu