

## GESM 120g: Reading “Black Love”

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Spring 2022

Lecture 35398R

M/W 5-6:20PM

ONLINE

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Office Hours: M/W 11AM-12PM via email; also available by appointment.

**Required Texts** (I’ve requested e-copies of all books from the USC Library; if available, these texts will be freely accessible in Ares Reserves):

1. GESM 120g Reader (Available in Blackboard under “Content” [then click on “Course Resources”])
2. Gwaltney, John Langston. 1993. *Drylongso: A Self Portrait of Black America*. New York: The New Press.
3. Hurston, Zora Neale. 1990 [1935]. *Mules and Men*. New York: HarperCollins.
4. Hurston, Zora Neale. 1998 [1937]. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*; with a foreword by Mary Helen Washington. New York: HarperCollins.
5. Hurston, Zora Neale. 2006 [1943]. *Dust Tracks on a Road: An Autobiography*. New York: Harper Perennial.

**Optional Texts:**

6. Zinsser, William. 2001. *On Writing Well* (6th Edition). New York: HarperCollins Publishers.

**Course Description:** What is love, let alone “Black” love? Can love be qualified in relationship to race, gender, class, sexuality, etc. and their many intersections? What broader stakes (e.g., intellectual, personal, political) underlie the scholarly quest to understand “Black love”? This seminar interrogates these questions through a close and passionate reading of Zora Neale Hurston’s canonical texts, *Mules and Men*, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (*TEWWG*), and *Dust Tracks on a Road: An Autobiography*. At once known then lost in literary obscurity, Hurston was found again – first by African American author Alice Walker and later by Oprah Winfrey, who famously brought *TEWWG* to the big screen. Hurston’s story about “black love” in *TEWWG* was a bit before its time; it sought and, arguably, still seeks to radicalize the ways we think about Black gender role expectations, social class, and racial inequality in relationship to various indices of love (e.g., intimacy, desire, communion) and “not-love” (e.g., lust, control, domination, sexual violence). We will interrogate these works and the extent of Hurston’s intervention by first situating her as ethnographer/writer via a close reading of *Mules and Men*. We will then read *TEWWG*, a seminal text of the Harlem Renaissance, along with Hurston’s autobiography, *Dust Tracks on a Road*. Along the way, we will routinely ask, “Where is the love?” We will also investigate interdisciplinary theories of race, gender, sexuality, humor, and “love” that will ultimately help us understand Hurston and her texts anew. Our primary objective will be to “read” deeply within and beyond Hurston’s texts for insights into what it means to love and be loved, see and be seen, know and be known in regard to that most mysterious category – love – ever-complicated (still) by our focus on race. We will employ the tools of literary, social, and visual analysis to unpack the sensorial (e.g., tactile, aural, visual), representational, and affective dimensions of “Black love.” We will also “queer” heteronormative understandings of “Black love” in the context of Hurston’s work and life, as well as the present day, by unpacking notions of gender and authenticity; namely, we will ask what does it mean to be a “real” Black man and woman and what defines “real” “Black” “love”? At the end of our time together, we will gain a scholarly appreciation for Hurston (as an author) and *TEWWG* as a teachable-text concerning the affective (e.g., felt), intersubjective, and politically fraught nature of “Black love.”

## Learning Objectives:

GESM 120g aims to:

- (a) cultivate skills in reading and analyzing literature and qualitative and multi-disciplinary research concerning race, gender, sexuality, authenticity, and “love”
- (b) increase understandings of the cultural complexities and moral stakes of racial, gendered, etc. authenticity and intimacy as it plays out in peoples’ everyday lives
- (c) help students translate their own findings/discoveries concerning matters of race, gender, class, authenticity, “love” – and their many intersections – using close and critical readings/literary analysis and interdisciplinary qualitative analysis

Accordingly, you will have ample opportunity to critically engage several books, chapters, poems, articles, films, and audio-visual clips via critical readings, in-class presentations, and critical dialogue. This course will enable you to better appreciate the affective, political, and intellectual complexities of “Black love.” You will also gain insight into the political stakes of this very concept, from past to present, through close readings (i.e., careful and sustained interpretation of a passage or text).

**Grading:** There will be a midterm and final exam covering assigned readings, films, audio-visual clips, and guest speakers. The midterm and final are worth 30% (30 points) and, thus, 60% (60 points) of your overall grade. Each of the exams will include short-answer and essay questions and will be non-cumulative. In addition, 10% (10 points) of your grade will be determined by your class participation in Blackboard’s *Discussion Board* module. Specifically, you are required to post up to TWO critical and collegial responses to recorded lectures and/or a classmate’s posting(s) in Discussion Board. The remaining 30% (30 points) of your grade will be determined by a three to five-page double-spaced essay (excluding bibliography of three to five sources) examining a Hurstonian-informed “Black love” story/text (e.g., Kim McLarin’s *Womanish*, Tressie McMillan Cottom’s *Thick and Other Essays*, Sonya Renee Taylor’s *The Body Is Not An Apology*, Jamel Brinkley’s *A Lucky Man*), film (e.g., *Love Jones*, *Moonlight*, *Waiting to Exhale*, *Think Like a Man*, *Naz & Maalik*, *Punks*), song(s), poem(s), image(s), etc. The paper will be due in Blackboard before midnight on **Friday, April 8, 2022**. All essays **must adhere** to the following format: double-spaced, 12 point-font, 1” top, bottom, right, and left margins, pages numbered consecutively in upper right-hand corner. **Late papers will only be accepted in exceptional cases and will be deducted a minimum of three points.** (Additional guidelines for papers will be posted in Blackboard.) A total of four extra-credit points can be earned on the midterm and final exam via a two-point bonus questions based primarily on “optional” readings. The grading scale is as follows:

### Grading Scale:

94-100 = A	87-89 = B+	77-79 = C+	67-69 = D+	≥ 59 = F
90-93 = A-	84-86 = B	74-76 = C	64-66 = D	
	80-83 = B-	70-73 = C-	60-63 = D-	

GRADE BASIS
Midterm: 30%
Essay: 30%
Final Exam: 30%
Participation: 10%

**An Official Note on Examinations:** Make-up exams will only be given under extraordinary circumstances and will require documentation from a physician. The content and form of any make-up exam will be at my discretion. In any case, you should inform me via email or phone **prior** to missing an exam. If you feel you must reschedule an exam on account of having (a) two additional exams scheduled at the same time or (b) three exams in a 24-hour period, inform me *at least* two weeks prior to our scheduled midterm.

**Class Resources:** Resources for this course are available through Blackboard. Consult GESM 120g in Blackboard for access to the course syllabus, grades, essay guidelines, announcements, mock essay and short answer questions, exam study guides, and other helpful information. The optional readings for this course are also highly recommended. Zinsser's accessible and extremely helpful book (*On Writing Well*) is useful for further honing your writing skills. Consider adding this text to your library and read it at your leisure.

**Statement for Students with Special Needs:** Students requesting academic accommodations based on special needs should register with the Office for Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from OSAS when necessary documentation is filed. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible, preferably by or before fifth week. OSAS contact information is as follows: 213-740-0776 (Phone), 213-740-6948 (TDD Only), 213-740-8216 (Fax); Email: [osasfrontdesk@usc.edu](mailto:osasfrontdesk@usc.edu); Webpage: <https://osas.usc.edu/about/contact-location-hours/>

**Statement on Academic Integrity:** USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General Principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. SCampus, The Student Guidebook, contains the Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00, while the recommended sanctions are located in [Appendix A](#). Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at: <https://sjacs.usc.edu/students/review-process/>. Information on intellectual property at USC is available at: [https://policy.usc.edu/files/2014/02/intellectual\\_property.pdf](https://policy.usc.edu/files/2014/02/intellectual_property.pdf)

**University Policy Regarding the Sharing of Course Materials outside of the Learning Environment:** USC policy prohibits sharing of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment: SCampus Section 11.12(B): Distribution or use of notes or recordings based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study is a violation of the USC Student Conduct Code. This includes, but is not limited to, providing materials for distribution by services publishing class notes. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information, which had been distributed to students or in any way had been displayed for use in relationship to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the Internet or via any other media. ([See Section C.1 Class Notes Policy](#)).

**Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in Crisis:** This course will be taught *asynchronously*. Lecture notes (in PowerPoint) will be posted in Blackboard on a weekly basis. They will also be recorded (and discussed) for online streaming via a platform called "Panopto"; links to pre-recorded lectures will be sent weekly via email; you do not need a subscription to Panopto to stream these lectures. Opportunities for class dialogue and participation will be afforded weekly via Blackboard's *Discussion Board* module. (To access, click "Tools" and scroll down to "Discussion Board.") Feel free to use this forum to comment on weekly lectures, readings, and films, as well as converse with me and your peers. All students will need access to a computer and the internet to vet lecture notes and links and fully participate in this course.

**USC Support Systems:** In this season of swirling pandemics, please know that there are various support systems in place at USC and beyond, including:

***USC Technology Rental Program***

We realize that attending classes online and completing coursework remotely requires access to technology that not all students possess. If you need resources to successfully participate in your classes, such as a laptop or internet hotspot, you may be eligible for the university's equipment rental program. To apply, please [submit an application](#). The Student Basic Needs team will contact all applicants in early August and distribute equipment to eligible applicants prior to the start of the fall semester. Here, too, are several *USC Technology Support Links*:

- [Blackboard Help for Students](#)
- [Software available to USC Campus](#)

***USC Campus Support and Intervention*** - (213) 821-4710; [campussupport.usc.edu](http://campussupport.usc.edu)

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student. Specific covid-19 related support systems are noted below:

The [Office for Student Basic Needs](#) fund can assist with housing expenses, food insecurity, emergency travel, income loss related to closed workplaces, technology upgrades required for remote instruction, and other unforeseen needs stemming from the current crisis. Students interested in applying for the Student Basic Needs Emergency Grant are encouraged to email the Basic Needs Team at [basicneeds@usc.edu](mailto:basicneeds@usc.edu). The team will evaluate the request and, if needed, schedule a one-on-one consultation to learn more about the student's situation.

**USC's COVID-19 Resource Center** provides information, updates, and support for the USC community. Please consult the website (<https://coronavirus.usc.edu/>) to learn about Spring 2022 COVID-19 Health and Safety protocols. To notify the university of a case, please call their 24/7 COVID-19 hotline at 213-740-6291 or email [covid19@usc.edu](mailto:covid19@usc.edu).

***Counseling and Mental Health*** - (213) 740-9355 (WELL) – 24/7 on call; [studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling](http://studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling)

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

***National Suicide Prevention Lifeline*** - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call; [suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org)  
Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

***Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP)*** - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press "0" after hours – 24/7 on call; [studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault](http://studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault)

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

***Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)*** - (213) 740-5086 / Title IX – (213) 821-8298; [equity.usc.edu](http://equity.usc.edu), [titleix.usc.edu](http://titleix.usc.edu)

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

## USC Support Systems (*continued*):

**Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment** - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

[https://usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care\\_report/index.php/pid670872?](https://usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report/index.php/pid670872?)

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity |Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

**Diversity at USC** - (213) 740-2101; [diversity.usc.edu](http://diversity.usc.edu)

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

**USC Emergency - UPC:** (213) 740-4321, **HSC:** (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

[dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu), [emergency.usc.edu](http://emergency.usc.edu)

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency precludes travel to campus.

**USC Department of Public Safety - UPC:** (213) 740-6000, **HSC:** (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call

[dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu)

Non-emergency assistance or information.

**Office of the Ombuds** - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC); [ombuds.usc.edu](http://ombuds.usc.edu)

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concerns.

## READING & EXAM SCHEDULE

### COURSE INTRODUCTION, SITUATING ZORA NEALE HURSTON

#### Week 1:

1/10

1/12

#### COURSE INTRODUCTION

- Walker: Looking for Zora [in RDR]
- Washington: Introduction – Zora Neale Hurston, A Woman Half in Shadow [in RDR]
- Film: [Zora Neale Hurston: A Heart with Room for Every Joy](#) (2005; 42 minutes)

To access articles in Reader (in RDR) in Blackboard, click "Content," then click "Course Resources," and finally, click "Reader." Readings are alphabetized by author's last name.

#### Week 2:

1/17 **No Class**

1/19

#### AFRICAN AMERICAN ETHNOGRAPHY/FOLKLORE

- Hurston: How It Feels to Be Colored Me [in RDR]
- Hurston: Court Order Can't Make the Races Mix [in RDR]
- Gwaltney: Introduction; A Nation within a Nation [in [Drylongso](#)]
- Jacobs: The Natives Are Gazing and Talking Back [*Optional*; in RDR]
- Smith: Neither Victim nor Villain [in RDR]
- Film: [The Deadly Deception](#) (1993; 60 minutes)

#### Week 3:

1/24

1/26

#### THE POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION AND *MULES & MEN*

- Boyd: Mules, Men, and Maroons [in RDR]
- Boyd: A Glance from God [in RDR]
- Hurston: [Mules & Men](#) Part I
- Reviews, [Mules & Men](#) [1935] [in RDR]
- Film/Clips: [Zora Neale Hurston: Jump at The Sun](#) (2008, 84 minutes)
- **OPTIONAL 30-MINUTE CISCO WEBEX "CHECK-IN" ON MON @ 5-5:30PM PST**

- Week 4:** FOLKTALES, THE “DOZENS, AND WIT-LARGE IN *MULES & MEN*
- 1/31
- 2/2
- Gwaltney: More than Mere Survival [*Optional*; in [Drylongso](#)]
  - Hughes: Jokes Negroes Tell on Themselves [in RDR]
  - Jacobs: Introduction, [From the Kitchen to the Parlor](#) [*Optional*; in RDR]
  - Jacobs: Gender, Authenticity, and Hair in AfAm Stand-up Comedy [in RDR]
  - Film: *Why We Laugh: Black Comedians on Black Comedy* (2009; 86 minutes; [a Google link to stream this film will be sent via email](#))
  - **OPTIONAL 30-MINUTE CISCO WEBEX “CHECK-IN” ON MON @ 5-5:30PM PST**

### EXCAVATING “BLACK LOVE” IN ZORA NEALE HURSTON’S SEMINAL TEXT (TEWWG)

- Week 5:** READING “BLACK LOVE” IN *THEIR EYES WERE WATCHING GOD*
- 2/7
- 2/9
- Hurston: [Their Eyes Were Watching God](#)
  - Reviews, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* [1937] [in RDR]
  - Walker: Zora Neale Hurston’s *TEWWG*: Black Novel of Sexism [*Optional*; in RDR]
  - Wolff: Listening and Living: Reading and Experience in *TEWWG* [in RDR]

- Week 6:** SCREENING “BLACK LOVE” IN *THEIR EYES WERE WATCHING GOD*
- 2/14
- 2/16
- Marks: Sex, Violence, and Organic Consciousness in ZNH’s *TEWWG* [in RDR]
  - Washington: “I Love the Way Janie Left Her Husbands”: Emergent Female Hero [in RDR]
  - Willis: Wandering: Hurston’s Search for Self and Method [in RDR]
  - Film: [Their Eyes Were Watching God](#) (2005; 113 minutes)
  - **OPTIONAL 30-MINUTE CISCO WEBEX “CHECK-IN” ON MON @ 5-5:30PM PST**

- Week 7:** MIDTERM
- 2/21 **No Class**
- 2/23 **Midterm**
- No Class Monday: President’s Day
  - Midterm on Wednesday in Blackboard (instructions to come)

### EXAMINING HURSTONIAN IMPERATIVES IN THE PRESENT

- Week 8:** “BE REAL BLACK FOR ME”: THE POLITICS OF RACIAL AUTHENTICITY
- 2/28
- 3/2
- Hathaway: The Unbearable Weight of Authenticity in Zora Neale Hurston’s *TEWWG* and a Theory of “Touristic Reading” [in RDR]
  - Kelley: Notes on Deconstructing “The Folk” [in RDR]
  - Film/Clips: [Black Is ... Black Ain’t](#) (1994, 88 min.) available [Alexander Street](#); [Alice Walker Talks about Self Perception and Love in Zora Neale Hurston’s Work](#)
  - **OPTIONAL 30-MINUTE CISCO WEBEX “CHECK-IN” ON MON @ 5-5:30PM PST**

- Week 9:** “DEEPER”: QUEERING BLACK LOVE
- 3/7
- 3/9
- [Isfahani-Hammond: Horses and Humans: On and Off the Track](#)
  - Holland: (Queer) (Black) Love [in RDR]
  - Ford: What’s Queer about Race [in RDR]
  - hooks: For Women Only: Lesbian Love [in RDR]
  - Film/Clips: [Killer of Sheep](#) (1979; 83 minutes – available in [Alexander Street](#))
  - **OPTIONAL 30-MINUTE CISCO WEBEX “CHECK-IN” ON MON @ 5-5:30PM PST**

### SPRING RECESS: NO CLASS THIS WEEK (3/14-3/18)

- Week 10:** “WHO DO YOU LOVE?": HAIR, SKIN COLOR, AND OTHER MARKERS OF LOVABILITY
- 3/21
- 3/23
- Gwaltney: The Many Shades of Black [in [Drylongso](#)]
  - Jacobs: Constructing and Contesting Knowledge in Women’s Cross-Cultural Hair Testimonies [in RDR]
  - Madenga: [What Love Taught Me About Blackness](#)
  - Films/Clips: [A Question of Color](#) (1993; 57 minutes) – available in [Alexander Street](#)
  - **OPTIONAL 30-MINUTE CISCO WEBEX “CHECK-IN” ON MON @ 5-5:30PM PST**
- Week 11:** “TOUGH” [BLACK] LOVE – OR DISCIPLINING BLACK LOVE
- 3/28
- 3/30
- Banks: Beyond Race [in RDR]
  - Charleston: Act Like a Lady, Think Like a Man [in RDR]
  - Harvey: Our Love Is Not Like Your Love [in RDR]
  - Kipnis: The Manly Man; Cheaters [*Optional*; in RDR; see “Kipnis – Men”]
  - Murray: Black Marriage, White People, Red Herrings [in RDR]
  - Perry et al.: “You Ain’t No Denzel”:... [*Optional*; in RDR]
  - Films/Clips: [Men: A Love Story](#) (2016; 80 minutes) – available in [Kanopy](#)
  - **OPTIONAL 30-MINUTE CISCO WEBEX “CHECK-IN” ON MON @ 5-5:30PM PST**
- Week 12:** “RESPECT YOURSELF”: INTERROGATING THE POLITICS OF RESPECTABILITY
- 4/4
- 4/6
- Griffin: Black Feminists and Du Bois [*Optional*; in RDR]
  - Harris: The Rise of Respectability Politics [in RDR]
  - Rose: Introduction and Epilogue of [Longing to Tell](#) [*Optional*; in RDR]
  - **Essays Due on Friday, April 8, 2022, before midnight in Blackboard** (click “Assignments” tab)
  - **OPTIONAL 30-MINUTE CISCO WEBEX “CHECK-IN” ON MON @ 5-5:30PM PST**

## OUR “SOMETHING IN THE [NOT QUITE] MIDDLE”

- Week 13:** UNDERGRADUATE ENRICHMENT WEEK
- 4/11
- 4/13
- [Virtual Library Orientation](#) (peruse at your leisure)
  - [The Writing Center](#) – A Brief Overview (peruse at your leisure)
  - [Undergraduate Research Opportunities](#) (peruse at your leisure)
  - [Service-Learning & Community Engagement in a Virtual World](#) (peruse at your leisure)
  - [USC Campus Resources](#) (peruse at your leisure)
  - [Together Apart: Freshman Colloquium – Fall 2020](#) (peruse at your leisure)
- Week 14:** NO CLASS (WELLNESS WEEK) - REFLECT ON BLACK LOVE
- 4/18
- 4/20
- This may also be a good week to post a reflection or two in Blackboard’s Discussion Board and/or comment on a peer’s posts
- Week 15:** READING *DUST TRACKS ON A ROAD*
- 4/25
- 4/27
- Boxwell: “Sis Cat” as Ethnographer:... [in RDR]
  - Hurston: [Dust Tracks on a Road](#)
  - Hurston: Drenched in Light [*Optional*; in RDR]
  - Reviews, *Dust Tracks on a Road* [1942] [*Optional*; in RDR]
  - Walker: ZNH and The Postmodern Self in *Dust Tracks on a Road* [in RDR]
  - Film: [Zora’s Roots](#) (2008; 1 hr.; [a Google link to stream this film will sent via email](#))
  - **OPTIONAL 30-MINUTE CISCO WEBEX “CHECK-IN” ON MON @ 5-5:30PM PST**

**FINAL EXAM: MONDAY, MAY 9<sup>TH</sup>, 2-4PM (PST) IN BLACKBOARD**

## COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHY (Books in Bold)

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- hooks, bell. 2002. For Women Only: Lesbian Love. *In* *Communion: The Female Search for Love* (193-205). New York: William Morrow.
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