

Learning Objectives

Students who successfully complete this class will be able to:

- Identify the 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
- Make connections between different historical periods
- Write informally about literature and criticism
- Reflect on materials that we've read and discussed in a personal way

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 the platform.

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

Beginner; access to Blackboard, Zoom, and the ability to stream digital content on Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, etc.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials:

Books:

Pauline Hopkins, *Contending Forces* (1900)
Charles W. Chesnutt, *The Marrow of Tradition* (1901)
Paul Laurence Dunbar, *The Sport of the Gods* (1902)
James Weldon Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912)

Films:

Reconstruction: America After the Civil War (2019)
Ethnic Notions (1987)
Frontline, Documenting Hate: Charlottesville (2018)



*Scholarly essays/excerpts on Blackboard

**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 (250 words)**—For each reading/viewing assignment you complete, you will need to draft an informal response to it. (Please draft in MS Word and then copy and paste into Blackboard.) Privileging your own voice and perspective, reflect on one of the following questions: What is the aesthetic, cultural, or political significance of the material? What does it reveal about post-Reconstruction race relations and/or African American narrative? How does it contribute to our understanding of race as social formation and lived experience or the relationship between literature and the material world? 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. **Posts are due on Mondays and Wednesdays by 3pm.**
2. **Midterm Assignment: Reaction Paper (2-3 pages)**—Select a passage or chapter (from one of the novels we've already read and discussed), or a scholarly essay, or an episode from the PBS documentary, *Reconstruction: America After the Civil War*, and draft a creative or critical response to it. Prioritize your personal experience reading and thinking about the work. What experiences and/or feelings did it evoke? What impact did it have on you? What are the major takeaways?
3. **End of Term Assignment: Reflective Essay (10-12 pages)**—Why does the Nadir Matter? Why should we study this historical period today and/or read African American literature inspired by it? What lessons does African American literature produced during this time hold for us? What truths about America, race, class, and gender emerge in the novels we read and discussed? How does the

legacy/unfinished business of the nadir live on in American life today? Why do you think racial tensions have persisted and/or have been reignited and what might be done to address the problem?

Grading Breakdown

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Attendance & Participation	100	10
Blackboard Posts	100	20
Midterm Paper	100	35
Final Paper	100	35
TOTAL	500	100

Grading Scale

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale

A	93-100	C	73-76
A-	90-92	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 or Chicago 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.

Grading Philosophy

For each written assignment you complete and submit (with the exception of the Blackboard posts), you will receive a brief narrative statement (about 3-4 sentences) summarizing the strengths and weaknesses of your paper. You will also receive two scores: one for content (i.e. the quality and rigor of your ideas or argument), and another for composition (i.e. how well you write, including organization, grammar, mechanics, and usage). At the end of the semester when I compute final grades, I will average the two scores to calculate a final composite score for each assignment. The rationale for this particular grading scheme lies in my acknowledgement of the very subjective nature of grading. It is extremely difficult to assess learning, and personally, I believe that our current educational system encourages students to place too much focus on the grade and too little focus on the learning. This is an earnest attempt to prioritize the learning and to de-emphasize the grade.

Assignment Submission Policy

Assignments are due on the day listed on the syllabus. Please submit all work directly to me via email. Your work should be submitted as a MS Word document so that I can use the “reviewing” feature to comment on your paper. The file name should be: your first and last name_the name of the class_and the name of the assignment.

Grading Timeline

All assignments will be graded and returned no later than two weeks after submission. Final papers will not be returned unless requested.

Additional Policies

1. **Attendance and Participation:** Consistent attendance and participation is critical to your success in this class. If you miss a class, then you should reach out to another student in the class for notes or make an appointment to see me during office hours. 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. **Course Format/Meeting Structure:** The format of this course is a mixture of lecture, discussion, and applied learning activities. I’m a big fan of the “flipped” classroom, in which activities that would traditionally be assigned as homework are completed during class time. Towards this end, I may use freewriting exercises, media, visual art, op-eds, supplemental readings, or other aids to enhance our understanding of the material and structure our time in class. Always bring your reading and writing materials to our meetings. Class will generally begin with an ice-breaker/warm up activity—e.g. we might discuss a quote, screen a clip, or engage in a freewriting activity. After this, I/or another student might present important information in the form of a mini-lecture, guided discussion, or a reaction paper. Other times, I will give you an applied learning activity to work on in a pair or smaller group. Class will end with a summary/wrap-up of the material discussed.
4. **Email:** I will respond to emails during normal business hours, Monday through Friday, from 9 am to 5 pm. Emails sent outside of this window will be responded to during the next business day. I generally reply to emails within a day, but if it takes me longer, please be patient.
5. **Office Hours:** I am available, by appointment, for virtual office hour visits via Zoom. If you’d like to schedule a virtual visit, please email me for a 20-minute consultation. In office hours, I can elaborate on class discussions and help with assignments.
6. **The Writing Center:** While I am always happy to meet with you in office hours to discuss the materials we read/discuss in class as well as assist you with approaches to your written assignments, if you need writing help, then I recommend that you make an appointment for a consultation with a tutor at the writing center. The staff is comprised of scholars and teachers trained in Composition and Rhetoric as academic fields and can assist you with the writing process from start to finish. You can book a consultation here: <https://dornsife.usc.edu/writingcenter/>.
7. **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.
8. **Synchronous Session Recording Notice:**
All synchronous sessions will be recorded and provided to all students asynchronously. USC prohibits the sharing of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment. Please take note of the following policy:

S Campus 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).

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

***Note: Assignments are subject to change at the instructor’s discretion.**

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings/Homework	Deliverable/ Due
Week 1	T 1/10: Introductions, Course Overview, and Syllabus Th 1/12: <i>Reconstruction</i> , part 1, hours 1 and 2	Watch part 1, hours 1 and 2 of <i>Reconstruction: America After the Civil War</i> (USC Libraries) Watch part 2, hours 1 and 2 of <i>Reconstruction: America After the Civil War</i> (USC Libraries)	
Week 2	T 1/17: <i>Reconstruction</i> , part 2, hours 1 and 2 Th 1/19: Literature of the Reconstruction	“Literature of the Reconstruction to the New Negro Renaissance, 1865-1919,” pp. 541-554 Richard Yarborough, Introduction to <i>Contending Forces</i> , pp. xxvii-xxviii	
Week 3	T 1/24: Yarborough; Introduction to Pauline Hopkins and <i>Contending Forces</i> Th 1/26: <i>Contending Forces</i> , (preface, Ch. I-III), pp. 13-64	<i>Contending Forces</i> , (preface, Ch. I-III), pp. 13-64 <i>Contending Forces</i> , (Ch. IV-VII), pp. 65-140	
Week 4	T 1/31: <i>Contending Forces</i> , (Ch. IV-VII), pp. 65-140 Th 2/02: <i>Contending Forces</i> , (Ch. VIII-IX), pp. 141-182	<i>Contending Forces</i> , (Ch. VIII-IX), pp. 141-182 <i>Contending Forces</i> , (Ch. X-XIV), pp. 183-262	
Week 5	T 2/07: <i>Contending Forces</i> , (Ch. X-XIV), pp. 183-262 Th 2/09: <i>Contending Forces</i> , (Ch. XV-XVII), pp. 263-302	<i>Contending Forces</i> , (Ch. XV-XVII), pp. 263-302 <i>Contending Forces</i> , (Ch. XVIII-XXII), pp. 303-402	

Week 6	T 2/14: <i>Contending Forces</i> , (Ch. XVIII-XXII), pp. 303-402 Th 2/16: Sollors; Introduction to Charles Chesnutt and <i>The Marrow of Tradition</i>	Werner Sollors, Introduction to <i>The Marrow of Tradition</i> , xi-xxxviii <i>The Marrow of Tradition</i> , (Ch. I-VIII), pp. 5-54	
Week 7	T 2/21: <i>The Marrow of Tradition</i> , (Ch. I-VIII), pp. 5-54 Th 2/23: <i>The Marrow of Tradition</i> , (Ch. IX-XVIII), pp. 54-101	<i>The Marrow of Tradition</i> , (Ch. IX-XVIII), pp. 54-101 <i>The Marrow of Tradition</i> , (Ch. XVIII-XXXV), pp. 101-177	
Week 8	T 2/28: <i>The Marrow of Tradition</i> , (Ch. XVIII-XXXV), pp. 101-177 Th 3/02: <i>The Marrow of Tradition</i> , (Ch. XXXV-XXXVII), pp. 177-195	<i>The Marrow of Tradition</i> , (Ch. XXXV-XXXVII), pp. 177-195 Jae Roe, "Keeping an Old Wound Alive: <i>The Marrow of Tradition</i> and the Legacy of Wilmington"	Midterm Paper 3/02
Week 9	T 3/07: Roe Th 3/09: Rodgers; Introduction to Paul Laurence Dunbar and <i>The Sport of the Gods</i>	Lawrence Rodgers, Ch. 1 "The Early Migration Novel," from <i>Canaan Bound</i> <i>The Sport of the Gods</i> , (Ch. I-VII), pp. 321-362	
Week 10	Spring Break/No Class		
Week 11	T 3/21: <i>The Sport of the Gods</i> , (Ch. I-VII), pp. 321-362 Th 3/23: <i>The Sport of the Gods</i> , (Ch. VIII-XIII), pp. 363-406	<i>The Sport of the Gods</i> , (Ch. VIII-XIII), pp. 363-406 <i>The Sport of the Gods</i> , (Ch. XIV-XVIII), pp. 407-433	
Week 12	T 3/28: <i>The Sport of the Gods</i> , (Ch. XIV-XVIII), pp. 407-433 Th 3/30: Morgan; Introduction to James Weldon Johnson and <i>The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man</i>	Thomas L. Morgan, "The City as Refuge: Constructing Urban Blackness" <i>The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man</i> (Preface, Ch. I-V), pp. 3-48	

Week 13	T 4/04: <i>The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man</i> (Preface, Ch. I-V), pp. 3-48 Th 4/06: <i>The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man</i> (Ch. VI-IX), pp. 48-77	<i>The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man</i> (Ch. VI-IX), pp. 48-77 <i>The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man</i> (Ch. X-XI), pp. 78-110	
Week 14	T 4/11: <i>The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man</i> (Ch. X-XI), pp. 78-110 Th 4/13: Japtok	Martin Japtok, “Between Race as Construct and Race as Essence” Marlon Riggs, <i>Ethnic Notions</i> (USC Libraries/Films on Demand)	
Week 15	T 4/18: <i>Ethnic Notions</i> Th 4/20: The New Nadir: McGuire	Patricia McGuire, “Charlottesville: American Tragedy Redux” <i>Frontline Documenting Hate: Charlottesville</i> (USC Libraries)	
Week 16	T 4/25: <i>Frontline Documenting Hate: Charlottesville</i> Th 4/27: Course Wrap-up	Create a brainstorming web of the concepts, themes, major events, and aesthetic or political developments we discussed this semester. Bring this to our final class session, where we will reflect on our journey this semester. This document/activity will help you start your final paper.	
FINAL			Final Paper 5/04

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