ENGL 364.201: African American Drama
Spring 2017
[O’Leary 500M/T TH 8:00-9:15]

Brandy is the new bookstore manager!

Dr. Mitchell
Office hours: T/TH 1:00-2:00/Appt.
Office location: Engl. Dept. 4th Floor, O’Leary 459
Phone: 978-934-4734
Email: keith-mitchell@uml.edu

Required Books:
1. *Intimate Apparel* by Lynn Nottage; *Mojo and String* by Alice Childress; *Father Comes Home from the War* by Suzan-Lori Parks; *Home* by Samm-Art Williams, *Fences* by August Wilson, *Ruined* by Lynn Nottage, *Eclipsed* by Danai Gurira, *When I Come to Die* by Nathan Louis Jackson. In addition: *Safe* and *Sunday Morning in the South* by Georgia Douglas Johnson; *Aftermath* by Mary P. Burrill; *Nails and Thorns* by May Miller; *Color Struck* and *Lennox Avenue* by Zora Neale Hurston, *Prayer Meeting, Or, The First Militant Preacher* by Ben Caldwell, and *The Mojo and the Sayso* by Aishah Rahman [All of these short plays are in-class handouts.]
2. Various Other Handouts throughout the Semester

Additional Reading Assignments:
In addition to the primary reading on the syllabus, you will be required to read a number of critical and theoretical essays pertaining to the American literary tradition and America culture.

This is a lecture and student-centered (discussion intense) course geared towards an overview of African American theater through close readings of key texts by African American dramatists from the earliest expressions to the present. We will be reading texts by African American dramatists who represent a variety of movements and trends which will have played significant roles in shaping the African American and American dramatic canon. Clearly, the texts that we read are far from exhaustive in terms of what African American dramatists have contributed to theater, in general. However, these plays are meant to provide a series of useful touchstones for future reading and study.

Our main goals in the course are:
1. To develop a familiarity with representative African American drama from its earliest expressions through the late 20th centuries and a working knowledge of several important social and aesthetic turns in African American Drama.

2. To achieve a better understanding of the complex relationship between African American dramatic texts and the cultural and historical forces which shape and influence their production, distribution, and reception (i.e. post-Reconstruction America, The Harlem Renaissance, African American Civil Rights Movements, The Black Power Movement; The Black Feminist Movement, Social Realism, African American Modernism; Post-World War II American Society and the “Second Lost Generations,” and African American Postmodernism, to name a few.

3. To consider the problems and politics involved in defining the African American Dramatic literary canon.

4. To enhance your critical thinking and reading skills through the analysis
(close reading) of dramatic texts and your writing skills through a series of formal and informal writing assignments.

Requirements:

1. Come to class regularly and punctually. (Absences will adversely affect your grade. If you are absent more than **3 TIMES AFTER YOU USE UP YOUR 3 EXCUSED/UNEXCUSED ABSENSES YOU WILL FAIL THE COURSE.**
2. Read all the assigned material before coming to class. (Since interpretation and literary analysis are an integral part of the course, class participation is highly encouraged and may even affect the final grade.)
3. Write **1 of 2** short essay assignments of 8-10 pages. The papers will be based upon topics that I come up with; you will not need a works cited page. The paper topics will be developed out of our readings and discussions and will **explore and analyze** significant aspects of the issues and themes raised in the course. Or it can explore a genre or another work by an author we have studied. It should not, however, merely rehash what we have already studied and discussed.

*** [DO NOT UPLOAD ANY OF YOUR ASSIGNMENTS TO BLACKBOARD AS PDFS. UPLOAD YOUR ASSIGNMENTS AS REGULAR WORD DOCUMENTS: DOC, OR DOCX, OR RTF.]

• Quizzes: **WE WILL TENTATIVELY HAVE IN-CLASS QUIZZES PRACTICALLY EVERYDAY. THEREFORE, YOU MUST BE PREPARED BY DOING ALL OF THE REQUIRED READING.** Quizzes may be given on any reading material that has been assigned or any concept(s) that have been covered in class. The points will be calculated at the end of the semester. They are not averaged together. **YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO MAKE UP QUIZZES OR EXAMS.**

Note: Using the exact words of another writer or paraphrasing another writer's words without proper quotations and/or citations is plagiarism. Plagiarism will result in a grade of F for the assignment.

If you are unfamiliar with using the MLA style guide for writing English papers, please consult: Purdue University’s Online Writing Lab Website: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/

Other Important Observances:

a. All electronic devices are to be turned off and put away upon entering class. No texting in class!!
b. Tardiness to class will not be tolerated and will be dealt with appropriately.
c. Eating in class is not permitted.
d. Beverages in class are permitted.
e. When I announce that “class will begin/start,” **ALL TALKING WILL IMMEDIATELY CEASE!!**
f. If you have any type of learning disability, you need to immediately apprise me of this so that we can make the appropriate arrangements for you to do as well as you possibly can in this course.

You are responsible for checking your UML Email every day. Not checking your UML Email is **NO EXCUSE** for not knowing about announcements or changes in the syllabus. Most of the class handouts will also be posted on the class LIBGUIDE PAGE:

http://uml.beta.libguides.com/africanamericandrama
Participation:
Participation is critical in the evaluation and determination of your progress in this class. Participation includes the expression of your ideas based on your intellectual work in class discussions and in group work. The percentage attributed to your participation in class may be the difference between your passing or failing the course. I expect positive contributions to our class discussions through your insights into the materials and discussions, as well as your making connections or by asking questions.

Grading and Evaluation: Students are evaluated and graded by a combination of the following:

1. 1 of 2 short papers: 8-10 pages in length = 20%
2. Discussion Leader Questions: 30%
3. Brainshark Group Projects = 30% [20% for the Group Project and 10% for the Reflection Paper]
4. Daily attendance, quizzes (contingent), class participation, and homework: 20%

Total = 100%.
Final Grades will be calculated as a percentage. Ex. 90-100% = A range, 80-89% = B range, and so on.

Attendance:
Attendance, participation, and preparation for class are expected for each of you; in my long teaching experience I have found many direct correlations between what students learn (and the grades they get) with their coming to class and participating. Because I think attendance is important, I allot 30% of the entire course grade to attendance, quizzes, and participation. I will hand around an attendance sheet each day; sign it even if you are too late to take a quiz that might be given.

**Absences: You are given a total of 3 absences (excused and unexcused) for this class before you final grade will be adversely affected. This total includes both excused and non-excused absences. Once you have reached 3 absences, your final grade will drop by half of a letter grade based on each subsequent absence. For example, if after the 3 absences you miss another class and you have an “A” as a final grade, your final grade will not be higher than an A- because of the absence. Each subsequent absence will result in a half a letter grade reduction of your final grade. Once you have missed 3 classes, I will inform you via UML email of your status. A total of 3 three times being late will count as 1 absence. For example, if you are late 6 times, this will count as 2 absences.

***If you are an athlete, you must bring me your exemption form and your away-tournament schedule in order to be excused from class. Regardless, you are still responsible for completing the reading and any homework that is due.

Discussion Leader Information:
Class Discussion: Each student will be a discussion leader 12 times during the semester, maybe more, depending upon where we are with the texts. I will have a sign-up sheet for the class. As class discussion leaders, you are responsible for bringing in at least three questions.
The three questions should consist of:
*One open-ended question about the work.
*One passage from the work you think is important.
*Something about the work you did not understand and would like to discuss in class or an issue with the work you feel is worth discussing. (There may be some overlap between the first and third categories.)
Please TYPE the questions out and be prepared to turn them in.
Failure to attend class on days you are discussion leader or failure to bring or remember questions will result in a zero for that day’s class discussion. I allow one absence on a day you are scheduled to ask questions, but you must reschedule your discussion leader day. (A note: each discussion day is essentially worth 2 points on your final grade, so it is at least statistically important to do the questions.) This class discussion leader process will begin on Thursday January 26, 2017.

Academic Integrity:

The integrity of the academic enterprise of any institution of higher education requires honesty in all aspects of its endeavor. Maintaining academic integrity is therefore the responsibility of all faculty, staff, and students at the University of Massachusetts Lowell.

Academic dishonesty is prohibited in all programs of the University. Sanctions may be imposed on any student who has committed an act of academic dishonesty.

Definitions of Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to:

_Cheating_ - use, or attempted use, of trickery, artifice, deception, breach of confidence, fraud, or misrepresentation of one's academic work. Submission of the same work in its entirety for credit in two courses without obtaining the permission of the instructors constitutes cheating. Collaborating with others when not explicitly allowed by the instructor constitutes cheating.

_Fabrication_ - falsification or invention of any information or citation in any academic exercise.

_Plagiarism_ - representing, whether intentionally or unintentionally, the words or ideas of another as one's own work in any academic exercise.

_Facilitating dishonesty_ - helping or attempting to help another commit an act of academic dishonesty, including substituting for another in an examination, misrepresenting oneself, or allowing others to represent as their own one's papers, reports, or academic works.

Federal Credit Hour Requirement Policy:

“Federal regulation defines a credit hour as an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutional established equivalence that reasonably approximates not less than-

1. One hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours out of class student work each week for approximately 15 weeks for one semester or trimester hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time; or

2. At least an equivalent amount of work as required in paragraph (1) for other activities as established by the institution including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours” (New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, _Policy on Credits and Degrees_, Effective July 1, 2011).

Relationship of Course to General Education Requirements:

All undergraduate students in the University, depending on the date of enrollment, are required to satisfy General Education requirements. This course, 40/42.364.201, has been approved as an AH/D course for
the GenEd 2000 program. This course meets the Essential Learning Outcome of Diversity & Cultural Awareness (DCA) and Social Responsibility and Ethics (SRE) as defined under the Core Curriculum requirements for students entering Fall 2015 and after.


TH 1/19: Discussion of W. E. B. Du Bois’ essay “Criteria of Negro Art” [Handout], the biographical information on Angelina Georgia Douglas Johnson, Johnson’s Safe and Sunday Morning in the South. Quiz. HW: Google and bring in biographical information on Mary P. Burrill. Read “Art or Propaganda?” by Alain Locke, and Aftermath by Mary P. Burrill [Handouts].

T 1/24: Discussion biographical information on Mary P. Burrill, Locke’s “Art or Propaganda?,” and Burrill’s Aftermath. Quiz. HW: Google and bring in biographical information on May Miller. Read May Miller’s Nails and Thorns and James Truslow Adams’s “The American Dream” [Handouts].

TH 1/26: Discussion of biographical information on May Miller, Truslow Adams’s “The American Dream,” and Miller’s Nails and Thorns HW: Google and bring in biographical information on Zora Neale Hurston. Read Zora Neale Hurston’s Color Struck and Lennox Avenue [Handouts].

T 1/31: Discussion of biographical information on Zora Neale Hurston and Hurston’ Color Struck and Lennox Avenue. Quiz. HW: Google and bring in biographical information on Lynn Nottage. Read Intimate Apparel Act I, Scenes 1-4. Discussion Leaders Begin. “African American Literary and Cultural Terms” homework assignment is due to be uploaded to Blackboard on or before Sunday February 5 at Midnight. Please cut and paste your completed homework to the Blackboard Assignment Box AND please upload the homework as an attachment.

Do not attach your homework assignments as PDFs. Only upload homework assignments as Word Doc, Docx, or RTF (Rich Text Format).


[“African American Literary and Cultural Terms” are due to be uploaded to Blackboard on Sunday February 5 by Midnight].

T 2/7: Discussion of Intimate Apparel Act I, Scenes 5-6. Quiz. HW Read Nottage’s Intimate Apparel Act II, Scenes 1-3. [Hand out Introduction to Brainshark Assignment Sheets]

[Paper #1 is due uploaded to Blackboard on Sunday February 26 at Midnight.]

T 2/14: Discussion of Intimate Apparel Act II, Scenes 4-7. Quiz. HW: Bring in biographical information on Alice Childress. Read Alice Childress’s Mojo and String. [Read both plays] [From 1.5-3 minute Brainshark Introductions need to be uploaded the class Brainshark cite by Midnight tonight.]


T 2/21: MONDAY SCHEDULE

TH 2/23: Discussion of biographical information on Suzan-Lori Parks and Parks’ Father Comes Home from the War, Part I. Quiz. HW: Read Parks’ Father Comes Home from the War, Part II.

[Paper Assignment #1 is due on Sunday February 26. Please upload your essay to Blackboard by Midnight.]

T 2/28: Discussion of Parks’ Father Comes Home from the War, Part II. Quiz. HW: Read Parks’ Father Comes Home from the War, Part III. We will spend 15-20 minutes of the class discussing your Group Brainshark Projects. I will also allow you time to decide upon a group coordinator and to exchange information.

TH 3/2: Discussion of Parks’ Father Comes Home from the War, Part III. Quiz. HW: Google and Bring in biographical information on Samm-Art Williams. Read Sam-Art Williams’s Home, pp.1-30.

T 3/7: Discussion of Sam-Art Williams’s Home, pp. 1-30. Quiz. HW: Read Williams’ Home pp. 31-57.


3/13-3/19: Spring Break


TH 3/23: Discussion of August Wilson’s “The Ground on Which I Stand” and Fences, Act I, Scene IV and Act II, Scene I. Quiz. HW: Read Fences, Act II, Scenes II-V. [Begin working on your Group Brainshark Projects. You Must Work with Library Staff in the Media Center and use the libguide to help you find sources. You may need to consult a Senior Librarian]


TH 4/13: Discussion of *Ruined*, Act II, Scenes, III-VII. **Quiz.** HW: *Bring in biographical information on Nathan Louis Jackson* and read Jackson’s *When I Come to Die*, Act I, Scenes I-V.

T 4/18: Discussion of *biographical information on Nathan Louis Jackson* and Jackson’s *When I Come to Die*, Act I, Scenes I-V. **Quiz.** HW: Read Jackson’s *When I Come to Die*, Act I, Scenes VI-X.

TH 4/20: Discussion of Jackson’s *When I Come to Die*, Act I, Scenes VI-X. **Quiz.** **HW: Google and bring in biographical information on Ben Caldwell** and read Ben Caldwell’s *Prayer Meeting, Or, The First Militant Preacher [Handout].*


TH 4/27: Discussion of Rahman’s *The Mojo and the Sayso* (**LAST DAY OF CLASS/WRAP-UP**).

**Final Papers (Paper #2) and Reflection Papers will be due on the day of the Final Exam by Midnight. You will need to upload your final paper and/or reflection paper to Blackboard. Please remember to only upload papers as Word Documents (doc, docx, or rtf [rich text format]).**