

African American Environmental Literature

English 660-01

T 7:00 P.M.-9:45 P.M., Bingham Humanities 216

Overview Syllabus

Professor David Anderson Office: Bingham 312C; Phone and Voice Mail: 852-3050
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Office Hours: TR 2:15 a.m.-3:45 p.m., and by appointment.

Prerequisites:

Text and Materials

Required Texts:

Ecocriticism: The New Critical Idiom, by Greg Garrard

Excerpts from Henry Bibb and Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave (available online)

The Conjure Woman, by Charles Chesnutt (available online)

Selections from Poems, by George Marion McClellan (available online)

Cane, by Jean Toomer

Selections from The Collected Poems of Sterling Brown (available online)

Their Eyes Were Watching God, by Zora Neale Hurston

Watershed, by Percival Everett

Carver: A Life in Poems, by Marilyn Nelson

Mississippi Solo, by Eddie Harris

City Eclogue, by Ed Roberson

Parable of the Sower, by Octavia Butler

Additional critical and literary readings to be provided.

Course Goals

In this course, we will discuss African American writers' interest in environmental issues, their engagement with the environmental movement in America. Because of the legacies of slavery and sharecropping, African American writers have stressed equal access to public facilities (such as parks), the need for land ownership, and the importance of social justice to any proper interaction with the environment. Unlike many mainstream environmentalists, who have stressed the need for maintaining a pristine nature, African Americans have often stressed human

relationships to nature as a kind of enlightened stewardship that freed up human creativity, while benefiting nature, as well. Finally, many of these writers have opposed the rigid racial and environmental determinism prevalent within the early environmentalist movement, and stressed the ways that culture, history, and social relationships influence human interaction with nature.

Requirements for Graduation

For both M.A. and Ph.D. students in English, this course may fulfill either the post-1900 literature requirement or serve as a literature elective.

English 660 Grade Breakdown

Class Participation (attendance, active participation, peer review)	20%
Class Report	15%
Five response papers (3 pages)	25%
Seminar Paper (15-20 pages)	40%

******Students must complete all assigned work to pass the course.**

Note: I reserve the right to give reading tests if students demonstrate that they are not reading the material. I also reserve the right to modify the syllabus accordingly.

I RESERVE THE RIGHT TO MAKE CHANGES IN THE SYLLABUS.

Course Policies

Class Preparation

1. At a minimum, students are expected
 - * to read the assigned selections by the dates specified
 - * to hand in writing assignments by the dates specified

Given the large amount of reading, and the historical coverage of this class, you are expected (1) to attend regularly and get to class on time, (2) to hand in written assignments at the beginning of class, (3) to take notes on lectures, and (4) to review your notes before every class period.

2. Regular class attendance and preparation is necessary if students wish to succeed to the best of their respective abilities. After all, in-class writing and exams will be based on introductory materials and sketches, literary selections, lectures, and class discussions. Poor grades in this course usually stem from excessive absence or bad preparation.

Excused absences include those due to participation in a university-sponsored event or

competition, observance of a religious holy day, or a serious illness or family crisis. Inform me of absences you can anticipate. Provide documentation, when feasible, for those classes from which you wish to be excused. **Students must make up any work missed because of an excused absence.**

Should students find it necessary to miss more than four classes during the semester, or find themselves unable to prepare consistently and properly for classes or examinations, I recommend that they drop the course and take it in the future when they have more time to attend and prepare, so that they can perform to the best of their abilities.

Should they miss class, students should ask other students for notes or information on assignments.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

In addition to regular attendance, careful preparation, and participation in class discussions, requirements will include a long seminar paper, a conference prospectus related to the paper, five short weekly response papers (three pages in length), and a short class report done with one or two other students in the class.

1) Seminar paper--40 %

At the end of the semester, students will turn in a fifteen-to-twenty page seminar paper. You may write on any topic relevant to class, pending my approval (although I do suggest that you try to work with some of the assigned reading, and certainly relate your paper to the main topic of this class). Two weeks before the final paper is due, students should submit a 250-500 word conference prospectus that will serve as a proposal for your seminar paper. I will set up something on Blackboard where students may exchange papers and abstracts for feedback.

2) Five response papers--25 % (5% each)

During the course of the semester, students will bring in a three-page response to the assigned reading. These responses should contain some discursive commentary, but may also include questions, either for clarification or elaboration, or for possible class discussion. You should focus your responses to no more than three poems from relevant texts. Response papers are due in class the day the assigned text is discussed.

3) Short class report (15 minutes)--15 %

Students will present one oral report during the course of the semester; topics may include an analysis of an assigned text (as well as the student's assessment of the scholarly work), an article on African American literature relevant to the assigned text, or provide cultural or historical information and relate it to the assigned text. In addition to the presentation, students should also provide a three-page to four-page typewritten version of their reports.

Late Penalties and Work Submission:

Unless you have a legitimate cause (such as illness) and supporting evidence (such as a note from a doctor), assignments need to be handed in on time to receive full credit. Any major assignment that is late will be penalized a half-letter grade.

You may request an extension in writing before the due date of one assignment. In such instances, I should be provided with evidence that you have made satisfactory progress toward completing the assignment. If there is any difficulty submitting work on time, I should be informed at least one class in advance, in which case a new due date will be provided.

Special Needs

Students who have a disability or condition that may impair their ability to complete assignments or otherwise satisfy course criteria are encouraged to meet with me to identify, discuss, and document any feasible instructional modifications or accommodations. Students should notify me no later than the second week of the semester/term in which the course is offered or no later than the end of the second week after such a disability or condition is diagnosed. The student may contact the Disabilities Resource Center for information and auxiliary aid.

Withdrawal and Refund Schedule

I recommend that students withdraw from the class if they accumulate more than two weeks of unexcused absences, or find themselves unable to prepare consistently and properly for classes or examinations, and retake the class when they have more time to attend, prepare, and perform to the best of their abilities. Should you decide to withdraw, do so ASAP to save yourself time, and to ensure the largest possible refund of your money.

Cheating and Plagiarism

Any proven cheating or plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the course and will be reported to the Dean's office and the appropriate committee on student discipline for further action. In the past, such action has ranged from recording the offense in the student's permanent record to expulsion.

The following quotation from the Undergraduate Catalog may prove helpful. According to the section on academic dishonesty, plagiarism is "representing the words or ideas of someone else as one's own in any academic exercise, such as": 1. Submitting as one's own a paper written by another person or by a commercial "ghost writing" service, 2. Exactly reproducing someone else's words without identifying the words with quotation marks or by appropriate indentation, or without properly citing the quotation in a footnote or reference, 3. Paraphrasing or summarizing someone else's work without acknowledging the source with a footnote or reference, 4. Using facts data, graphs, charts, or other information without acknowledging the source with a footnote

or reference. Borrowed facts or information obtained in one's research or reading must be acknowledged unless they are "common knowledge" The specific audience for which a paper is written may determine what can be viewed as "common knowledge": for example, the facts commonly known by a group of chemists will differ radically from those known by a more general audience. Students should check with their teachers regarding what can be viewed as 'common knowledge' within a specific field or assignment, but often the student will have to make the final judgment. When in doubt, footnotes or references should be used. (27)

English 660-01 African American Environmental Literature, Spring 2011

Professor David Anderson

Ofc.: 312C

Ofc. Hrs.: TR 2:15-3:45 p.m., or by appointment.

Phone: Ofc.: 852-3050 (please leave a message if I'm not there)

E-mail: david.anderson2@louisville.edu

Class Schedule:

Week

1. Tu 11 Jan Introduction
2. Tu 18 Jan Key Concepts of Ecocriticism; Relationship to African American Literature (Blackboard)
3. Tu 25 Jan Slavery, and Writings about Environmental Practices
Henry Bibb (excerpts online)
Frederick Douglass (excerpts online)
4. Tu 1 Feb Charles Chesnutt The Conjure Woman (available online)
5. Tu 8 Feb George Marion McClellan: selected poems (online)
6. Tu 15 Feb Jean Toomer Cane
7. Tu 22 Feb Nelson Carver: A Life in Poems
8. Tu 1 Mar Sterling Brown poems from The Collected Poems of Sterling A. Brown (online)
9. Tu 8 Mar Other Harlem Renaissance Poetry (Blackboard)
Hurston Their Eyes Were Watching God
- 14-20 March: Spring Break
11. Tu 22 Mar Harris Mississippi Solo
12. Tu 29 Mar Everett Watershed
13. Tu 5 Apr Octavia Butler Parable of the Sower
14. Tu 12 Apr Ed Roberson City Eclogue
15. Tu 19 Apr Course Summation; Paper Conferences

*****I will supplement assigned readings with critical and scholarly readings throughout the semester.**

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