

367 SAMPLE SYLLABUS

English 367.03: African-American Voices in U.S. Literature

Remembered Pasts: Representing and Making Arguments about Memory and History

Course Description and Goals:

English 367.02: Literatures in the U.S. Experience, satisfies the university's GEC requirement for a second level writing course. The primary goals of this course are to sharpen your expository writing and critical thinking skills through analysis of African American art, specifically African American literature.

The course has four main parts: out-of-class writing assignments, out-of-class reading assignments, in-class writing workshops, and in-class discussions. Each of these parts plays a crucial role in 1. Improving your writing ability and 2. Introducing you to the African American literary tradition.

Our primary focus will be how writers go about representing and making arguments about the past in non-fiction, poetry, fiction, film, visual art, drama, and music. Our analysis will focus most intensely on the first three genres. Questions we will consider include: How does a writer manifest collective/communal memory in her/his work? Is collective/communal memory solely a construct of literature? Why might a writer include a sense of collective/communal memory in her/his work? To answer these questions, we will consider a range of texts from all of the major periods of the African American literary tradition.

In general, English 367:

- Focuses on expository writing. Students write papers that employ/develop their skills in analysis, argumentation, and the use of evidence.
- Provides extensive experience in writing but also experience in reading, listening, and speaking.
- Stresses revision. For most if not all papers, student have the opportunity to revise after receiving instructor and/or peer comments.
- Deals with aspects of the diverse U.S. experience. English 367 fulfills the university's diversity requirement, meaning that the course furnishes students with a view of the multi-faceted cultures that comprise the "American experience" (or "American experiences"), including issues of race, culture, ethnicity, disability, economic class, social class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and politics. Students learn to analyze their own perspectives (as well as the perspectives of others) and articulate them in well-reasoned, expository prose.

GEC Goals/Rationale:

Writing courses across disciplines develop students' skills in writing, reading, critical thinking, and oral expression.

GEC Learning Objectives:

1. Students apply basic skills in expository writing.
2. Students demonstrate critical thinking through written and oral expression.
3. Students retrieve and use written information analytically and effectively.
4. Students use appropriate technology to complete assignments.

To these goals and objectives, we add visual thinking, understanding, and expression—visual literacy—and collective/cooperative thinking, understanding, and expression.

Course Texts and Materials:

1. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Nellie Y McKay, eds. *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature (Second Edition)*. New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 2004.
2. Octavia Butler. *Kindred*. 1979. Boston: Beacon Press, 2003.
3. Handouts distributed in class and via email.

Required Assignments:

Assignment 1: Personal narrative on a site of memory in your own life or rhetorical analysis of Kincaid's "In History." Prompts will be given.

2-3 pages. 15% of final grade.

Assignment 2: Comparing representations of memory in autobiography and poetry. Prompts will be given. At least one secondary source must be used.

4-5 pages. 25% of final grade.

Assignment 3: Research proposal and working bibliography for final paper.

**1-2 pages. 5%
of final grade.**

Assignment 4: Project on memory and history in African American literature. You may choose to work with one to three primary texts. At least one of them must be a work of fiction. You must work with at least three secondary sources. Specific prompts will not be given.

6-8 pages. 35% of final grade.

Assignment 5: Leading class discussion. Come prepared with a sheet of discussion questions (at least 5) to pass out to the class and any additional materials you find are relevant. Note: your job is not necessarily to *teach* the class for the day, but rather to *lead* class discussion with your ideas, questions, and concerns. Each student will have her/his own day to lead the class.

10% of final grade.

Participation: You must come to class each day prepared to ask questions and talk about the day's readings and writing assignments.

10% of final grade.

Writing Workshops: Each student will also have her/his work workshopped by the class at least once. You're responsible for emailing your draft to the class 24 hours before your assigned day. These workshops are designed to stimulate the revision process. Our work during the workshops will not be graded but will be an important step in our work on assignments 1, 2, and 4.

Course Policies:

Attendance is important to the success of this class and to your development as a writer. Therefore, each unexcused absence after two will result in the lowering of your final grade by a third of a grade. Excused absences, such as those for documented illness, family tragedy, religious observance, or travel for inter-collegiate athletics, will not affect your grade. **It is program policy that five unexcused absences will automatically result in failure for the course.**

Tardiness is disruptive to the classroom environment and prevents you from fully participating and assimilating the information and materials discussed in class. Excessive tardiness will lower your participation grade.

Plagiarism is the unauthorized use of the words or ideas of another person. It is a serious academic offense that can result in referral to the Committee on Academic Misconduct and failure for the course. Please remember that at no point during the writing process should the work of others be presented as your own.

Student Work must be completed and submitted on time. All assignments should be turned in during the class period when they are due.

1. **Draft assignments:** Turning your draft assignment late will mean that you cannot receive a timely or full response from the instructor, so turn in your drafts on time. Failure to turn in an assignment draft at all will result in the deduction of **one-third of a letter grade** on the final version of the paper (for example, B+ to B). Further, if the assignment draft was part of a peer group exercise, failure to turn in the draft will lower your participation grade.
2. **Final graded assignments:** Late submission of a final graded assignment will result in the deduction of **one full letter grade** for each day past the due date (for example, B+ to C+).

The grade will not be affected when a draft or final graded assignment is late for reasons that would result in an excused absence. Students who know they will miss the class when the assignment is due must contact the instructor as soon as possible in advance of class to arrange for submission of the assignment.

Please pick up all late-quarter work as soon as possible. Materials will be held until the end of the second quarter subsequent to the quarter in which you take English 367.

Paper Format: double spaced, 12 point font, standard 1 inch margins, your name, instructor's name, the class (English 367.03), and the date should appear in the upper left corner of the first page; pages should be stapled and numbered; paper should have a title.

Mandatory Conferences: Students must attend one mandatory conference (outside of class) with their instructor on the research project. We will schedule them during class.

Class Cancellation Policy: In the unlikely event due to emergency, I will contact you via email and request that a note on department letterhead be placed on the door. In addition, I will contact you as soon as possible following the cancellation to let you know what will be expected of you for our next class meeting.

Resources:

The **Ombudsman of the Writing Programs**, Matthew Cariello, mediates conflicts between students and teachers in English 367 and 110. He can be reached at cariello.1@osu.edu and 292-5778. All conversations with the Ombudsman are confidential.

The **OSU Writing Center** is available to provide free, professional writing tutoring and consultation. You may set up an appointment by calling 688-4291 or by dropping by the center at 475 Mendenhall

Laboratories. If you are interested in on-line writing advice, visit the OWL (On-Line Writing Lab) at www.cstw.osu.edu.

The Office for Disability Services, located in 150 Pomerene Hall offers services for students with documented disabilities. Contact the ODS at 2-3307.