

## **American Modernism: the African American Tradition**

This class covers the African American tradition, widely known as the Harlem Renaissance or the New Negro Renaissance. We will read a representative selection of basic texts written in the 1920s and '30s by poets and fiction writers, will uncover the ties of the Harlem Renaissance with the contemporary visual arts movement, and will trace continuities with African American literary and cultural theories of the 1970s and '80s.

Students are required to (i) read the texts assigned for each class and (ii) give a presentation reviewing a text. Grades will be based on (i) class participation, (ii) presentations, and (iii) a final written exam. All the texts can be found in *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature* [NAAL] or *The Heath Anthology of American Literature* [Heath]. They have also been collected in a CLASS PACKET.

### **TOPICS**

#### 1. Predecessors: James Weldon Johnson & W.E.B. DuBois

- either: W.E.B. DuBois, "The Souls of Black Folk" (1903) (NAAL)
- or: James Weldon Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912)  
(NAAL, Packet)

#### 2. Introduction: the New Negro Renaissance

- "Harlem Renaissance, 1919-1940" [NAAL, Packet]
- Alain Locke, "The New Negro" (1925) [Heath, NAAL, Packet]
- Arthur A. Schomburg, "The Negro Digs Up His Past" (1925) [NAAL, Packet]
- Langston Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" (1926)  
[NAAL, Packet]
- Marcus Garvey, "Africa for the Africans" (1923) [NAAL, Packet]
- George Shuyler, "The Negro Art-Hokum" (1926) [NAAL, Packet]

#### 3. Constructions of the female self

- Marita Odette Bonner, "On Being Young--a Woman--and Colored" (1925)  
(NAAL, Packet)
- Zora Neale Hurston, "How It Feels to be Colored Me" (1928) [NAAL, Packet]
- Zora Neale Hurston, "Sweat" (1926) [NAAL, Packet]
- Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937)  
[excerpts from NAAL; Packet]

- Nella Larsen, *Quicksand* (1928) [excerpts from NAAL; Packet]
- Nella Larsen, *Passing* (1929) [excerpts from Heath]

#### 4. The New Negro Artist

- Claude McKay, *Home to Harlem* (1928) [excerpts from NAAL]
- Jean Toomer, *Cane* (1923) [NAAL]

#### 5. The poetry

- Langston Hughes, "The Blues I'm Playing" (1934) [NAAL]  
*The Big Sea* (1940) [excerpts from NAAL]  
 poems from NAAL
- James Weldon Johnson, poems from NAAL
- Claude McKay, poems from NAAL
- Countee Cullen, poems from NAAL
- Sterling A. Brown, poems from NAAL

#### 6. After Harlem

- Richard Wright, *Native Son* (1940)
- Ralph Ellison, *The Invisible Man* (...)

## SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS

Feb 21

- W.E.B. DuBois, "The Souls of Black Folk" (1903) (NAAL)

PRESENTATION: \_\_\_\_\_

- James Weldon Johnson, "The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man" (1912)  
(NAAL, Packet)

PRESENTATION: \_\_\_\_\_

Feb 28

- "Harlem Renaissance, 1919-1940" [NAAL, Packet]

PRESENTATION: \_\_\_\_\_

- Alain Locke, "The New Negro" (1925) [Heath, NAAL, Packet]

PRESENTATION: \_\_\_\_\_

- Arthur A. Schomburg, "The Negro Digs Up His Past" (1925) [NAAL, Packet]

PRESENTATION: \_\_\_\_\_

March 7

- Langston Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" (1926)  
[NAAL, Packet]

PRESENTATION: \_\_\_\_\_

- Marcus Garvey, "Africa for the Africans" (1923) [NAAL, Packet]

PRESENTATION: \_\_\_\_\_

- George Shuyler, "The Negro Art-Hokum" (1926) [NAAL, Packet]

PRESENTATION: \_\_\_\_\_

March 14

- Marita Odette Bonner, "On Being Young--a Woman--and Colored" (1925)  
(NAAL, Packet)

PRESENTATION: \_\_\_\_\_

- Zora Neale Hurston, "How It Feels to be Colored Me" (1928) [NAAL, Packet]

PRESENTATION: \_\_\_\_\_

- Zora Neale Hurston, "Sweat" (1926) [NAAL, Packet]

PRESENTATION: \_\_\_\_\_

March 21

- Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937)  
[excerpts from NAAL; Packet]

PRESENTATION: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

April 4

- Nella Larsen, *Quicksand* (1928) [excerpts from NAAL; Packet]

PRESENTATION: \_\_\_\_\_

- Nella Larsen, *Passing* (1929) [excerpts from Heath]

PRESENTATION: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

April 11

- Claude McKay, *Home to Harlem* (1928) [excerpts from NAAL]

PRESENTATION: \_\_\_\_\_

April 18

- Jean Toomer, *Cane* (1923) [NAAL]

PRESENTATION: \_\_\_\_\_

April 25

- Langston Hughes, "The Blues I'm Playing" (1934) [NAAL]  
*The Big Sea* (1940) [excerpts from NAAL]  
poems from NAAL

May 2

- James Weldon Johnson, poems from NAAL
- Claude McKay, poems from NAAL

May 8

- Countee Cullen, poems from NAAL
- Sterling A. Brown, poems from NAAL

May 15

- Richard Wright, *Native Son* (1940)
- Ralph Ellison, *The Invisible Man* (...)

## PACKET

1. W.E.B. DuBois, "The Souls of Black Folk" (1903)
2. James Weldon Johnson, "The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man" (1912)
3. "The Harlem Renaissance, 1919-1940" [NAAL]
4. Alain Locke, "The New Negro" (1925)
5. Arthur A. Schomburg, "The Negro Digs Up His Past" (1925)
6. Langston Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" (1926)
7. Marcus Garvey, "Africa for the Africans" (1923)
8. George Shuyler, "The Negro Art-Hokum" (1926)
9. Marita Odette Bonner, "On Being Young--a Woman--and Colored" (1925)
10. Zora Neale Hurston, "How It Feels to be Colored Me" (1928)
11. Zora Neale Hurston, "Sweat" (1926)
12. Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) [excerpts from NAAL]
13. Nella Larsen, *Quicksand* (1928) [excerpts from NAAL]
14. Nella Larsen, *Passing* (1929) [excerpts from Heath]
15. Claude McKay, *Home to Harlem* (1928) [excerpts from NAAL]
16. Jean Toomer, *Cane* (1923)
17. Langston Hughes, "The Blues I'm Playing" (1934)
18. Langston Hughes, *The Big Sea* (1940) [excerpts from NAAL]
19. Langston Hughes, poems
20. James Weldon Johnson, poems
21. Claude McKay, poems

22. Countee Cullen, poems

23. Sterling A. Brown, poems

24. Richard Wright, *Native Son* [excerpts from NAAL]

25. Ralph Ellison, *The Invisible Man* [excerpts from NAAL]