Long Black Song: Twentieth-Century African American Literature

This survey of African American literature and film focuses on language, history, and culture. What are the contours of African American literary and cultural history? How do race, gender, class, and sexuality intersect within the politics of African American culture? What can we expect to learn from these literary and cultural works? Why does literature matter to students of social change? This lecture course will attempt to provide answers to these questions, as we begin with Richard Wright’s *Native Son* (1940) and end with Dee Rees’s *Pariah* (2011), with many stops along the way. We will discuss poetry, fiction, drama, non-fictional prose, and film. Other artists include Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin, Gwendolyn Brooks, Malcolm X, Ntozake Shange, Audre Lorde, Toni Morrison, and Ava DuVernay. There are no prerequisites for this course. Two five-page essays and a final examination.

**Class Meetings**

**January 19**  
Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., “I Have a Dream” (1963)

**January 21**  
Richard Wright, “How Bigger Was Born” (1940)  
James Baldwin, “Notes of the Native Son” (1955)  
Gwendolyn Brooks, “Gay Chaps at the Bar” (1945)  
[CourseWorks]

**January 26**  
Richard Wright, *Native Son* (1940)  
HarperPerennial  
ISBN – 9780062357250

**January 28**  
Wright

**February 2**  
Gwendolyn Brooks, *A Street in Bronzeville* (1945)  
[CourseWorks]

**February 4**  
[CourseWorks]

**February 9**  
James Baldwin, *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953)
February 11  Baldwin

February 16  Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (1952)
Random House
ISBN - 9780679732761

February 18  Ellison

February 23  Ellison

[CourseWorks]

March 1  Hayden [Paper #1]

March 3  LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka, *Dutchman* (1964)
[CourseWorks]

[CourseWorks]

March 10  Sonia Sanchez, *Does Your House Have Lions* (1997)
[CourseWorks]

SPRING BREAK

Random House
ISBN - 9780345915030

March 24  Malcolm X

March 29  Toni Morrison, *Sula* (1973)
Knopf
ISBN - 9781400033430

March 31  Morrison

April 5  Ntozake Shange, *for colored girls who have considered suicide, when the rainbow is enuf* (1977)
Simon & Schuster
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**Course Requirements**

Two five-page essays. Take-home final examination.

**Course Books**

All course books will be available at Book Culture. Texts that are out of print can be accessed through CourseWorks.

**Prof. Marcellus Blount**  
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