

Foundational Studies—Literary Studies

English 346: Modern Black American Literature

Literature and Language at ISU (2010), an official document of the Department of English, includes the following description of English 346:

English 346, Modern Black American Literature, is a survey of African American fiction, poetry, drama, and nonfiction since World War II in its historical, social, cultural, aesthetic, and intellectual contexts. It examines the traditions of protest, integrationist, nationalist, and post-civil rights writing and the conflicts among these traditions. The themes explored may include coming of age, gender, racial identity, social activism, folklore, and history.

1. **Demonstrate aesthetic responsiveness and interpretative ability.** English 346 provides students in a variety of disciplines with opportunities to explore a wide range of literature (poetry, fiction, nonfiction, and drama—and less often film and music) shaped by the historical and social experiences of African Americans. By reading, discussing, and writing about these diverse texts, students will learn alternative ways in which to interpret and respond to literature.
2. **Connect writings to their literary, cultural, and historical contexts.** While all writing exists within cultural and historical contexts, the texts for English 346 can only be adequately appreciated through an awareness of these contexts. For example, the instructor must make students aware of the Black Power movement of the 1960s if they are to understand both the content and the form of the literature of the Black Arts Movement. Similarly, the emergence of feminism and womanism (the African American counterpart of feminism) must be discussed so that the work of contemporary black women writers can be appropriately read.
3. **Employ literature to analyze issues and answer questions relating to human experience, systems, and the physical environment.** Modern Black Literature exposes students to material that often directly engages the problem of racial difference and racism in order to show its importance to all people, regardless of race or ethnicity. It also demonstrates the ways this problem, in addition to issues of gender, class, and cultural traditions affect the lives of individuals, families, and communities. Moreover, much of the literature concerns itself with universal rather than only racial experiences, such as human relationships, the place of the individual in society, and coming of age.
4. **Reflect on themselves as products of and participants in traditions of literature and ideas.** Reading allows students to engage directly with texts (analysis through close reading); discussion allows students to participate in a reciprocal exchange of ideas and insights; writing allows students to articulate their views in a careful way. These three experiences give students ample opportunities to work actively with literature and explore the ideas that literature both contains and generates.

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Required Texts:

Hatch and Shine, Black Theatre USA: Plays by African Americans, The Recent Period, 1935-Today
Harper, Every Shut Eye Ain't Asleep: An Anthology of Poetry by African Americans Since 1945
Baldwin, Go Tell It on the Mountain
Morrison, The Bluest Eye

Catalog Description:

English 346, Modern Black American Literature—3 hours. African American writing from 1940 to the present. Foundational Studies Credit: Literary Studies.

Overview:

English 346 is a survey of African American fiction, poetry, drama, and nonfictional prose since World War II in its historical, social, cultural, aesthetic, and intellectual contexts. It examines the traditions of protest, integrationist, nationalist, and post-civil rights writing and the conflicts among these traditions. The themes explored may include coming of age, gender, racial identity, social activism, folklore, and history.

Outcomes:

By the end of English 346, students should be able to

- identify thematic motifs in African American literature, such as black-white relationships, identity, and family dynamics (LS 3);
- identify the concerns and influences of race, class, culture, and gender in African American literature (LS 2, 3; S 1);
- identify the influence of African American cultural traditions on African American literature (LS 2, 3; S 1);
- recognize the relative presences and absence of political agendas in African American literature, especially as they affect the form and content of that literature (LS 2, 3; S 1);
- apply principles of close reading in discussions of and in writing about the literature (LS 1; S 1);
- express themselves clearly in both written and spoken forms (LS 4; S 1);
- apply critical thinking skills when reading, writing, speaking, and listening (S 1);
- recognize the ways in which African American literature is similar to and different from the literature of the dominant culture (LS 1, 2, 3, 4; S 1).

Requirements:

(1) Attendance [FS syllabus]: You are expected to attend class regularly, on time. You will be allowed three unexcused absences. I will excuse absences in the following cases: illness or injury experienced by you; funeral attendance for a family member; participation in a university-sponsored activity, such as a team sport or a professional conference required for a class; service in the armed forces; and jury duty. In all cases, proper written documentation must be provided. Having more than three unexcused absences will affect your final grade as follows:

<u># of Absences:</u>	<u>Deduction from Total Points Earned in the Class</u>
4-5	12 points
6-7	24 points
8-9	36 points
10 or more	48 points

(2) Response Papers [FS syllabus; LS 3]: For the assigned literature of three authors in the syllabus, you will write a two-page reading response paper in which you respond to some facet of the work that you find to be particularly interesting, provocative, or problematic. This is an opportunity to further engage with the literature we discuss in class. This should not merely be a rehashing of class discussions or lectures. I am interested in what you think about the literature. Also, do not begin your papers with a biographical sketch of the author; instead, start right off discussing what it is that interests you about the literature and why. Give examples to support the points you make. Be sure to give page references if you include quotes from the literature.

Here are some suggestions of topics on which you could focus your response papers:

- interesting themes or issues discussed by the author
- interesting aspects of the author's writing style
- ways that you can personally relate to what the author is writing about
- ways that the author raised your awareness about a particular issue or helped you to think about an issue in a new or different way

Response Papers must be typed (double-spaced), written with 12-point Times font, and have one-inch margins on all sides. Do not put extra space between paragraphs or write your papers with boldface type. Grammar, spelling, and punctuation do count. Late papers will be graded down five points for each day they are late. I will only accept hard copies of papers; no emailed papers.

(3) Exams and Quizzes [FS syllabus]: There will be two exams (a midterm and a final exam). There will also be two scheduled quizzes; additional unannounced quizzes will be given if necessary. Normally, exams and quizzes will only be given on the date and at the time they are scheduled. Unannounced quizzes may be given during any class period. I will consider requests for make-up exams and quizzes on a case-by-case basis. In all cases, proper written documentation must be provided.

Plagiarism [FS syllabus]:

Plagiarism (representing someone else's words or ideas as if they are your own) will not be tolerated; you will receive a zero on the plagiarized assignment, and you will be reported to Student Judicial Programs. For further information on academic integrity, which is part of the Indiana State University *Code of Student Conduct*, see:

<http://www1.indstate.edu/academicintegrity/studentguide.pdf>

Laptops and Electronic Devices [FS syllabus]:

While the University has chosen to require laptops of its students, the University also recognizes and respects the right of faculty to conduct their classes as they deem appropriate. In this course, no laptop may be used. Failure to comply with this direction is a violation of the *Code of Student Conduct*. Cell phones and other electronic devices should also be turned off during class.

Grading:

Your grade will be based on the following point scale:

Midterm Exam: 100 points	372-400 points=A
Final Exam: 100 points	360-371 points=A-
Quizzes (2): 40 points each	348-354 points=B+
Response Papers (3): 40 points each	332-347 points= B
(400 points total)	320-331 points=B-
	308-319 points=C+
	292-307 points=C
	280-291 points=C-
	268-279 points=D+
	252-267 points=D
	240-251 points=D-
	below 240 points=F

(If unannounced quizzes are given, the grading scale will be adjusted accordingly.)

Conferences:

If you have questions or problems at any point during the semester, please feel free to stop by during my office hours. I am also available by appointment.

Schedule:¹

Note: Readings and assignments should be completed by the date they appear in the schedule.

¹ As a course that focuses on reading, English 346 incorporates Foundational Studies (FS) objective 2 on a daily basis; further, daily discussions address FS objective 10. Other objectives—both general and specific—are noted throughout the daily schedule of class activities using these abbreviations: *FS* = Foundational Study, *LS* = Literary Studies, and *S* = Skills (Applied Learning).

BT: Black Theatre USA

ESE: Every Shut Eye Ain't Asleep

Week 1: January 12, 14, 16

Mon: Introduction to the course [LS 2]

Wed: Richard Wright, "The Man Who Lived Underground" (handout) [LS 1, 2, 3]

Fri: Ralph Ellison, "Flying Home" (handout) [LS 1, 2, 3]

Week 2: January 19, 21, 23

Mon: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

Wed: Ann Petry, "Has Anybody Seen Miss Dora Dean?" (handout) [LS 1, 2, 3]

Fri: James Baldwin, Go Tell It on the Mountain (pp. 1-65) [LS 1, 2, 3]

Week 3: January 26, 28, 30

Mon: Baldwin (pp. 67-124) [LS 1, 2, 3]

Wed: Baldwin (pp. 125-176) [LS 1, 2, 3]

Fri: Baldwin (pp. 177-224) [LS 1, 2, 3]

Week 4: February 2, 4, 6

Mon: Baldwin (Part Three: pp. 225-263); quiz [LS 1, 2, 3, 4; S 3]

Wed: Go Tell It on the Mountain film [LS 1, 2, 3]

Fri: Go Tell It on the Mountain film [LS 1, 2, 3]

Week 5: February 9, 11, 13

Mon: Robert Hayden (ESE pp. 5-30) [LS 1, 2, 3]

Wed: Gwendolyn Brooks (ESE pp. 30-59) [LS 1, 2, 3]

Fri: Lorraine Hansberry, A Raisin in the Sun (BT pp. 104-146) [LS 1, 2, 3]

Week 6: February 16, 18, 20

Mon: A Raisin in the Sun film; response paper due #1 (Focus on one author's writing from Wright through Hansberry.)

Wed: A Raisin in the Sun film [LS 1, 2, 3]

Fri: A Raisin in the Sun film [LS 1, 2, 3]

Week 7: February 23, 25, 27

Mon: Amiri Baraka, Dutchman (BT pp. 381-91) [LS 1, 2, 3]

Wed: Discuss midterm; Dutchman film [LS 1, 2, 3]

Fri: Dutchman film [LS 1, 2, 3]

Week 8: March 2, 4, 6

Mon: Ed Bullins, Goin' a Buffalo (BT pp. 392-418) [LS 1, 2, 3]

Wed: Midterm [LS 1, 2, 3, 4; S 1, 3]

Fri: Nikki Giovanni (handout) [LS 1, 2, 3]

Week 9: March 9, 11, 13

Mon: Spring Break

Wed: Spring Break
Fri: Spring Break

Week 10: March 16, 18, 20

Mon: Sonia Sanchez (ESE pp. 102-110) [LS 1, 2, 3]
Wed: Audre Lorde (ESE pp. 117-125) [LS 1, 2, 3]
Fri: Haki Madhubuti (ESE pp. 200-206) [LS 1, 2, 3]

Week 11: March 23, 25, 27

Mon: Lucille Clifton (ESE pp. 150-160) [LS 1, 2, 3]
Wed: Michael Harper (ESE 173-192); response paper #2 due (Focus on one author's writing from Baraka through Harper.) [LS 1, 2, 3; S 3]
Fri: Toni Morrison, The Bluest Eye (pp. 1-58) [LS 1, 2, 3]

Week 12: March 30, April 1, 3

Mon: Morrison (pp. 59-109) [LS 1, 2, 3]
Wed: Morrison (pp. 110-163) [LS 1, 2, 3]
Fri: Morrison (pp. 164-216); quiz [LS 1, 2, 3; S 3]

Week 13: April 6, 8, 10

Mon: Ernest Gaines, "A Long Day in November" (handout) [LS 1, 2, 3]
Wed: John Wideman, "Damballah" (handout) [LS 1, 2, 3]
Fri: Paule Marshall, "Reena" (handout) [LS 1, 2, 3]

Week 14: April 13, 15, 17

Mon: Alice Walker, "Everyday Use" (handout) [LS 1, 2, 3]
Wed: Adrienne Kennedy, Funnyhouse of a Negro (BT pp. 333-43) [LS 1, 2, 3]
Fri: George C. Wolfe, The Colored Museum (BT pp. 451-72) [LS 1, 2, 3]

Week 15: April 20, 22, 24

Mon: Maya Angelou (handout) [LS 1, 2, 3]
Wed: Rita Dove (ESE pp. 272-92) [LS 1, 2, 3]
Fri: Yusef Komunyakaa (ESE pp. 249-57) [LS 1, 2, 3]

Week 16: April 27, 29, May 1

Mon: Elizabeth Alexander (ESE pp. 305-316) [LS 1, 2, 3]
Wed: Discuss final exam
Fri: response paper #3 due (Focus on one author's writing from Morrison through Alexander.); course evaluations

Final Exam: Monday, May 4 at 10:00 a.m. [LS 1, 2, 3, 4; S 3]

English 346 (Modern Black American Literature) and Foundational Studies

REQUIREMENT: English 346, Modern Black American Literature, fulfills the Literary Studies requirement of the Foundational Studies program. *[FS Syllabus]*

GENERAL OBJECTIVES: The Foundational Studies program incorporates general goals that will be applied in English 346: students will (a) “critically evaluate the ideas of others,” (b) “demonstrate an appreciation of human expression through literature and fine and performing arts,” and (c) “express themselves effectively, professionally, and persuasively both orally and in writing” (*Foundational Studies 2009*). Further, Foundational Studies courses are designed to “develop critical thinking skills” and “develop information literacy,” as well as “include a graded writing component” (*Foundational Studies 2009*) *[FS Syllabus]*

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES: Courses in Literary Studies—including English 346—have these specific learning objectives:

1. Demonstrate aesthetic responsiveness and interpretive ability;
 2. Connect writings to their literary, cultural, and historical contexts;
 3. Employ literature to analyze issues and answer questions relating to human experience, systems, and the physical environment; and
 4. Reflect on themselves as products of and participants in traditions of literature and ideas.
- [FS Syllabus]*
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APPLICATION: The assignments in English 346 (readings and discussions) will allow you to meet Foundational Studies goals, as well as the specific goals of the class. The readings for the course—in different genres, by different authors, from different periods—will challenge you to look at literature in a contextual fashion. Discussions and other class activities will help you to develop techniques for interpreting literature, based on close reading and critical interpretation. Related readings, lectures, discussions, and perhaps research will allow you place literature in its cultural context, as well as analyze the ways in which literature represents and comments on human experience. The required writing will allow you to interpret and to respond to readings in a variety of ways—offering opportunities for you to analyze what you read from both personal and academic perspectives. The most general goal, however, is to allow literature to expand your ideas, to challenge your thinking, to create new experiences, to enlarge your perceptions, and to enrich your life. *[FS Syllabus]*

FURTHER INFORMATION: For information about the Foundational Studies program—specifically the “Sycamore Standard,” academic freedom, and the rights and responsibilities of students with disabilities—consult the Foundational Studies website (<http://www.indstate.edu/gened/newfoundationalstudiesprogram.htm>). *[FS Syllabus]*