

Oakland University
College of Arts and Sciences
Department of English
ENG 4900 (ENG 400) Advanced Topics in Literature and Language
4 credits
The Harlem Renaissance
Fall, 2018

Dr. Kathleen Pfeiffer
173 South Foundation Hall
Tu Th 8 – 9:47 a.m.

<pfeiffer@oakland.edu>
Office Phone: (248) 370-2267
Office hours: 544B O' Dowd
Tu Th 1 - 2 and by appt

Course requirements:

Short Essay 20%	Prospectus and Annotated Bibliography 20%
Presentation 15%	Seminar Paper 30%
Participation 15%	

From Oakland University's Undergraduate Catalog

ENG 4900 -- Advanced Topics in Literature and Language: "Advanced topics and problems selected by the instructor." (Formerly ENG 400)

Prerequisite(s): (ENG 211 or ENG 2100) and at least two of the three required 3000 level British and American literary history courses; or permission of the instructor.

This class satisfies the general education requirements for the capstone experience. The students will demonstrate:

- **appropriate uses of a variety of methods of inquiry and a recognition of ethical considerations that arise.** We will do this by reading primary texts, contemporary secondary criticism, and exploring the Harlem Renaissance's historical and cultural context. In our discussions, we will practice old and new historicism, critical racial discourse analysis, and close reading.
- **the ability to integrate the knowledge learned in general education and its relevance to the student's life and career.** We will do this by building upon our foundational knowledge of literary analysis and understanding of the relation between literature, culture, social history and their contexts. By exploring the Harlem Renaissance's cultural, historical and literary context, we will reflect on our own relationship to the past and better understand the racial dimensions of American literary tradition. We will witness the dynamic nature of ideas and individual responses to the demands they make as well as the life that is given to them by individuals and society.

This course fulfills the requirements of the writing-intensive course in the major by requiring a variety of writing tasks (a short writing assignment, a research proposal, an annotated bibliography, and a longer argumentative essay).

Special Considerations: A student with documented learning or physical disability must contact the Office of Disability and Support Services, 121 North Foundation Hall, (248) 370-3266, and inform the professor of special needs during first week of classes. For more information, visit <http://www.oakland.edu/dss>.

Electronic Devices: No text messaging or computers in this class.

Attendance: The University excused absence policy applies to participation as an athlete, manager or student trainer in NCAA intercollegiate competitions, or participation as a representative of Oakland University at academic events or artistic performances approved by the Provost or designee. For the excused absence policy, see <http://www.oakland.edu/?1d=6850&sid=175>.

Academic Misconduct: The University's regulations that relate to academic misconduct will be fully enforced. Any student suspected of cheating and/or plagiarism will be reported to the Dean of Students and thereafter, to the Academic Conduct Committee for adjudication. Anyone found guilty of academic misconduct in this course may receive a course grade of 0.0, in addition to any penalty assigned by the Academic Conduct Committee. Students found guilty of academic misconduct by the Academic Conduct Committee may face suspension or permanent dismissal. The full policy on academic misconduct can be found in the General Information section of the Undergraduate Catalog.

Overview: Harlem became the hub of African-American culture in the 1920's and 30's, and the extraordinary writing that developed during this time continues to influence American literature and culture. This seminar will read the literature of the Harlem Renaissance in relation to its history as well as its social and cultural context. We will examine the role of race and mentorship-paying particular attention to the relationships between white mentors and black writers, and to white and black exchanges generally. In the context of these racial exchanges, we will study the values and the aesthetics of the "New Negro" movement that emerged in Harlem, and we will examine the competing theories about race and racial identity that defined the Harlem Renaissance's intellectual culture.

Goals: This semester, I hope to replicate for you the most nourishing and exciting part of my own undergraduate experience: a series of lively intellectual exchanges among scholars who love literature. You'll find me to be friendly, approachable and fair. This class has high expectations: **you cannot pass this course if you miss more than four (4) class meetings** (please note, however, that this does not give you a free ticket for skipping classes; attendance is required). I am happy and more than willing to meet with you at any time to discuss your standing or your progress in the class, or to continue conversations about class material. Please note that **I do not accept late work** (any need for extensions must be cleared with me prior to the due date; understand that extensions will be given only in the case of unusual and unavoidable circumstances); and that **you must complete all assignments in order to pass the class**.

Presentations: In our third class, everyone will sign up for a presentation topic and date. Your presentation should run 10-15 minutes; the topics are designed to offer historical, cultural or social context for the Harlem Renaissance in general and our day's reading in particular. Most topics will benefit from illustrations, so Powerpoint or Prezi are highly encouraged. (I'm happy to provide further research direction for your topic; feel free to ask.)

You will be graded on the quality, clarity and organization of your presentation, as well as on the substance and significance of material you present. **An MLA formatted bibliography of your sources is due on the day of your presentation.** This must include at least four (4) working sources, unless otherwise directed by the topic.

Participation: As a 4000 level course designed specifically for the English major, this class presumes considerable experience with and competence in discussing literature and undertaking literary analysis. As you can see, 15% of your grade will come from the quality and frequency of your participation in class discussions; in class writing and group work are also covered by participation. Please note that I may give unannounced reading quizzes to be sure that everyone is keeping up with the reading.

Paper: I am always happy to review work in progress with you, and I'm happy to recommend guides to writing or essays about writing. Your **prospectus and annotated bibliography (20%)** should be a 3 - 4 page (double-spaced) proposal which presents a full account of your thesis (what central argument will shape your paper), including its rationale (why this is a valuable and/or new argument) and its context (how it fits into a broader critical discussion about the work); along with a supporting bibliography of 7-9 critical sources. Your **10-15 minute work-in-progress presentation** will not only summarize your argument as it then stands, but also seek suggestions, pose questions, and encourage feedback. The **final paper (30%)** should fill 10-12 pages (dbl-spaced, 1" margins, 12 point), be free of grammatical and syntactical errors, follow MLA format, and have a **working bibliography** of at least 5 sources.

Primary Texts at the OU Bookcenter:

Steven Watson, *The Harlem Renaissance* 0679758895
James Weldon Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* 0140184023
Jean Toomer, *Cane* 0871401517
Waldo Frank, *Holiday* 0252071336
Nella Larsen, *Passing* 0141180250
Carl Van Vechten, *Nigger Heaven* 0252068602
Nugent et al, *Fire!!* 0912607009
Jessie Fauset, *Plum Bun* 9780807009192

Schedule:

Th Sept 6	Introduction; semester review
Tu Sept 11	Film analysis: <i>St. Louis Blues</i> and <i>Black and Tan Symphony</i> Read: Watson "The New Negro Movement is Born" pages 1 - 62
Th Sept 13	Read: Watson "Harlem is Fashionable" pages 63 - 154 Cullen and McKay poetry (handouts) * Sign up for presentations * Paper one assigned
Tu Sept 18	Read: James Weldon Johnson, <i>The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man</i> ch 1 - 6
Th Sept 20	Read: James Weldon Johnson, <i>The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man</i> to the end
Tu Sept 25	Read: Waldo Frank, <i>Holiday</i> through Part Two
Th Sept 27	Read: Waldo Frank, <i>Holiday</i> through Part Three

