

English 154: African American Literature

Section 001, CRN 15813

Course: Contemporary Black Appalachian Poets

Class Meets: Tues/Thurs, 10:00-11:15, Hodges 232

Prerequisite Courses: ENGL 101 & 102/103

Prof. Amy M. Alvarez

Professor's Office Location: Colson Hall, Rm. 231

Office Hours: Wed, 11:00-3:00 pm

Instructor Email and Phone: ama0040@mix.wvu.edu ; 917-686-6421

Zoom Link: <https://wvu.zoom.us/j/99680691950>

****Google Classroom Assignment Portal (Access to Materials and Assignment Submission): :**

<https://classroom.google.com/c/NTc5ODM4NDkwNDUx?cjc=oemzosy> **



Course Introduction:

Appalachia is often defined externally by policy makers, lexicographers, and others as a space that is “white,” “rural,” and “poor.” This problematic definition is already burdensome for white people in the region, but also erases people of color, particularly Black people, who have called this region home for generations.

In this course, we will explore the experience of what it means to be Black in Appalachia and what it means to carry the identity of Black Appalachian/Affrilachian through contemporary poetry (and a bit of prose). We will engage with works that investigate the experience of Black people from Appalachia in both urban and rural settings and will write both creative and analytical responses to literature while learning more about Black poets and writers from this region.

Major Learning Outcomes:

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- locate and interpret texts within diverse literary, cultural, and historical contexts;
- Identify genre conventions and analyze their effects;
- Identify and analyze effects of complexity or ambiguity in texts, culture, and discourse;
- Situate texts in social, economic, political, and literary histories;
- Connect texts to other literary or cultural texts

Required Materials:

Books:

Dunn, Steven. *Potted Meat*. Tarpaulin Sky Press, 2016.

Giovanni, Nikki. *The Collected Poetry of Nikki Giovanni:1968-1998*. HarperCollins e-Books, 2009.

Spriggs, Bianca Lynne, and Jeremy Paden, editors. *Black Bone: 25 Years of the Affrilachian Poets* University Press of Kentucky, 2018.

Wilkinson, Crystal. *Perfect Black*. University Press of Kentucky, 2021.

Tools:

Audacity: This program is a free, open source audio recorder and editor that we will use for our Intellectual Mixtapes. If you are using another program such as GarageBand for audio editing, that is fine. By the second week of the semester, I will conduct an Audacity “how to” to get you started on your Intellectual Mixtapes.

Google Classroom: Required reading and assignments for this course will be posted on Classroom: <https://classroom.google.com/c/NTc5ODM4NDkwNDUx?cjc=oemzpsy> . You can access Classroom through your Mix account. You will also submit your work through classroom.

Mapping Platform: For your mapping project in Unit 4, you explore one (or more, if you choose) of the following: Google’s [My Maps](#), [Storymap](#), or [Timeline](#)

SoundCloud: We will use the audio platform SoundCloud for audio aspects of the Intellectual Mixtape project. You may elect to create a private YouTube channel if you wish to create audiovisual work.

Optional Materials:

You will have the opportunity to conduct a “deep dive” into the work of a single Affrilachian poet (likely a poet who is included in the *Black Bone* anthology). You may want to purchase one or two of their books as part of your intensive study of their work. You can also borrow books from the library.

Assessment

Short Descriptions of and Grading Criteria for Major Assignments/Assessments:

Provide a list for all major assignments/assessments and explanation for the grading criteria for those assignments/assessments. Ensure that all major assignments/assessments and learning activities align with the stated course learning outcomes. Assignments/assessments and learning activities should be sequenced, varied, and suited to the level of learning. Each course should include multiple formative assessments where students are provided feedback aimed at improving their performance in the graded/assessed competencies and outcomes.

Distribution of Course Points:

Intellectual MixTape/ Digital Portfolio: 60%

- Layered Audio
- Virtual Mapping Project
- Original Poem w/Visual

Writing Assignments: 20%

- Diction
- Theme

Presentations: 10%

- Virtual Mapping Project
- Original Poem

Community: 10%

- Engagement
- Preparation
- Participation

***Grading Scale:**

A: 90-100 pts. B: 80-89 pts. C: 70-79 pts. D: 60-69 pts. F: < 60 pts

**You must complete all assignments and attend class regularly for a passing grade.*

Course and Institutional Policies**Attendance/Engagement Policy:**

Attendance and grades are highly correlated. I know that sometimes personal situations and required university events make it impossible for you to be in class. However, consistent class attendance helps students succeed academically and enriches our class dynamic. Therefore, attendance is required. You are granted **four absences** without penalty. Use these for university sanctioned absences, illness, family emergencies, etc. Each additional absence will impact your grade up to a half a letter grade. More than eight absences will result in an automatic F for the class. If you miss a class, you are responsible for all assignments due in the next class.

If you are struggling with an assignment, if you are unexpectedly ill, or if you have some other personal emergency, contact me immediately. If you have an emergency or health problem this semester, also contact the Office of Campus and Community Life in E. Moore Hall (304.293.5611).

Participation Policy:

Participation includes things like attending class, being prepared for class, making thoughtful contributions to class and meeting all deadlines for homework, drafts, and peer review/workshop.

Late Assignment Policy:

Your responsibility to engage with the class work begins when you register for the course. Missing activities, exercises, and project deadlines will be reflected in the corresponding component of your grade for the course.

Falling more than two weeks behind the posted schedule of work without a documented special arrangement may result in failing the course. Special arrangements require a formal, written request (prior to an assignment deadline) that includes an explanation of the circumstances, documentation (if relevant), and a detailed plan for completing any late or missed work. Submitting a formal request for a special arrangement does not automatically guarantee that I will be able to grant your request.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

The West Virginia University community is committed to creating and fostering a positive learning and working environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion.

If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with the Office of Accessibility Services (293-6700). For more information on West Virginia University's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives, please see <http://diversity.wvu.edu>.

As an educator, I fully support the rights of undocumented students to an education and to live free from the fear of deportation. I pledge confidentiality to any student who wishes to disclose their immigration status, and I will work with students who require immigration-related accommodations.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

You are responsible for the integrity of your work. This means that all of your work for this course must be your own and must be created specifically for this course. Failing to maintain the integrity of your work will have serious consequences. We will discuss academic integrity as part of our course, but here are a few things you need to know right away:

Submitting someone else's paper, including papers you obtain online, as your own writing is fraud. It will result in a failing grade for the course and may result in additional action by the Office of Student Conduct.

Copying paragraphs or other passages of someone else's writing without properly citing them is plagiarism. It may result in a grade reduction or failing the course. It, too, may result in additional action by the Office of Student Conduct.

The Eberly College of Arts and Sciences provides a helpful online resource for undergraduate students on understanding and avoiding plagiarism (<http://eberly.wvu.edu/undergraduate/ug-studies/preventing-plagiarism>). If you have any questions about when and how to document sources, or any other question that will help you avoid unintentional plagiarism, please talk with myself, a librarian, or one of the Writing Center tutors in Colson Hall.

WVU COVID-19 SYLLABUS STATEMENT

WVU is committed to maintaining a safe learning environment for all students, faculty, and staff. Should campus operations change because of health concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic or other campus-wide emergency, it is possible that this course will move to a fully online delivery format. If that occurs, students will be advised of technical and/or equipment requirements.

COVID related absences fall under the University attendance policy found here: [attendance](#). As detailed in the policy, a student who becomes sick or is required to quarantine during the semester should notify the instructor. The student should then work with the instructor to develop a plan to complete the course learning outcomes while he or she is absent.

RESOURCES

[The Eberly Writing Studio](#)

The Eberly Writing Studio is a resource that can support you in all aspects of the writing process. It is located in G02 Colson Hall, and you can sign up for one-on-one consultations in person or online. **Mental Health**
Mental health concerns or stressful events can adversely affect your academic performance and

social relationships. WVU's [Carruth Center for Psychological and Psychiatric Services \(CCPPS\)](#) offers a broad range of confidential mental health services to assist you in addressing these and other concerns that you may be experiencing. If you are in need of crisis services, call the CCPPS main number 24/7: (304) 293-4431.

[WellWVU: The Students' Center of Health](#)

Well WVU: The Students' Center for Health provides resources to help manage stress, improve relationships, make healthy lifestyle choices, and face new challenges and transitions.

SCHEDULE OF WORK

This course will meet Tu/Th in Hodges 232 at 10 am. Please pay attention to the schedule of work and regularly check your email and [Google Classroom](#) so that you arrive at the correct location on the correct day. The schedule of work below is subject to changes based on our progress!

Weeks	Topics and Activities	Assignments and Readings
Week 1 January 10-14 *January 10 is the first day of class * January 14 is the last day to add/drop classes without a "W"	Tuesday: Welcome! Course Introduction Icebreaker	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Hot Pass" by Crystal Good • "Affrilachia" by Frank X. Walker • How Black poets and writers gave a voice to 'Affrilachia' Due Sunday: Writing Diagnostic: Poem and/or Brief Reflection Essay
	Thursday: Foundational Concepts of Black Appalachian and Affrilachian Poetry	
Week 2 January 17-21 *January 17 is Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday: No Classes	Tuesday: <u>Unit 1: Nikki Giovanni: Exploring Phrasing & Sound</u> -Discussion of Giovanni Poems	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From <i>Collected Poems of Nikki Giovanni</i>: read each of the poems that start on the following pages: p. 53, 59, 92, 102, 107, 125, 132, 143, 144, 176, 177, 179, 299, 313, 334, 337 • Read the following linked poems: "Possum Crossing", "Allowables", "Quilts", "Quilting the Black Eyed Pea (We're Going to Mars)" → Complete Intellectual MixTape website setup! → Choose a poem to work with for Track 1!
	Thursday: -Exploring "Ego Tripping" -Intellectual MixTape: Track 1 Assignment Overview	
Week 3 January 24-28	Tuesday: - <u>The Intellectual Mixtape (i.e., Digital Portfolio): Track 1</u>	Bring a laptop or tablet to class!

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Digital Tools for Narrative Building (Sites, Audacity, GarageBand, etc.) -Constructing Track 1: Layered Sampling -Discussion of student ideas and Giovanni's poems -Sample projects 	
	Thursday: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Writing Liner Notes -Getting/Giving Feedback 	Due Sunday: Intellectual Mixtape Track #1: 1-Minute Layered Audio Track and Liner Notes
Week 4 January 31-February 4	Tuesday: Unit 2: Crystal Wilkinson: Exploring Themes & Constructs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Discussion of <i>Perfect Black</i>, Section I 	Read: <i>Perfect Black</i> by Crystal Wilkinson
	Thursday: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Discussion of <i>Perfect Black</i>, Sections II & III 	
Week 5 February 7-11	Tuesday: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Intro to Theme Paper - Constructing an Argument based on Literature 	Readings: From Purdue Online Writing Lab Writing About Poetry
	Thursday: Work Day! Peer and Professor Feedback Opportunities	Due Sunday: Writing Assignment #2: Theme Paper
Week 6 February 14-18	Tuesday: Unit 3: Steven Dunn: Culture, Context, & Diction -Intro to <i>Potted Meat</i>	Read: <i>Potted Meat</i> by Steven Dunn
	Thursday: NO CLASS MEETING: Prof. Alvarez speaking at Marshall University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Complete reading of <i>Potted Meat</i> - Complete Question Assignment online for attendance credit
Week 7 February 21-25	Tuesday: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Questions for Steven Dunn/Questions for Analysis -Constructing a thesis 	
	Thursday: Steven Dunn class visit!	
Week 8 February 28-March 4	Tuesday: Work day!	Due Wednesday: Writing Assignment #3: Diction Paper

*Mid-semester reports due by noon March 4	Peer and Professor Feedback Opportunities	
	Thursday: <u>Unit 4: Black Bone & The Affrilachian Poets:</u> <u>Shape & Place</u> -Discussion of “Root” Section of <i>Black Bone</i>	Read: <i>Black Bone: 25 Years of the Affrilachian Poets</i>
Week 9 March 7-11	Tuesday: -Discussion of “Limb” & “Tongue” Sections of <i>Black Bone</i>	
	Thursday: Prof. Alvarez speaking on panels at AWP Conference in Seattle (but you do have a *short* class today!)	Guest Lecturer: Prof. Carlson Intro to Wikipedia Edit Element of Poet Selection Project
Week 10 March 12-19 *Spring Break March 12-20th	Spring Break—No Class	
Week 11 March 21-25	Tuesday: -Intro to Intellectual MixTape, Track 2: Virtual Mapping and Wikipedia Edit (Wiki Edit = extra credit) -Selecting a Poet	
	Thursday: -Constructing Virtual Maps, Utilizing and Citing Research	
Week 12 March 28-April 1	Tuesday: -Work Day -1-on-1 check ins -Writing an Academic Reflection	
	Thursday: -Giving an Academic Presentation -Peer Feedback Opportunity	
Week 13 April 4-8	Tuesday: Virtual Map Presentations!	
	Thursday:	Due Friday: Intellectual Mix Tape, Track # 2: Virtual Map (w/ Liner Notes)
Week 14 April 11-15	Tuesday: <u>Unit 5: Writing Self, Writing Place</u>	

*April 14 is the last day to withdraw from University	-Intro to Intellectual MixTape Track 3: Original Poem and Visual -Writing Exercise	
*April 15: No Class, university closed	Thursday: -Writing Exercises and Craft Mini-Lecture	Due Monday, 4/17: Your poem posted in Workshop Folder
Week 15 April 18-22	Tuesday: -Writing Exercises and Workshop Preparation -Work Time: Writing Feedback, Reflection, Visual Element	Due Thursday: Feedback on Peer Poems
	Thursday: -Writing Workshop	
Week 16 April 25–29	Tuesday: Work Time Final Check-ins	
	*April 29 is the last day of classes *May 2-6 Final Exams Thursday: Poem Presentations! Evaluations	Due Friday, 4/28: Intellectual MixTape, Track 3: Original Poem (with Visual Element and Liner Notes)

May 13-15: Commencement