

# English 154

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Ethel Morgan Smith, ENGL 154, Fall 2002, African American Literature

Fall 2002

WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY

Department of English

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## **African American Literature-English 154**

This course is a historical introduction and survey in the literature of African Americans. We will examine issues of subjectivity and agency (ability to assert life), multiple consciousness and experience by looking at topics such as gender relations, family life, work patterns, organizational activities, and cultural production. In a way this is an interdisciplinary course in that we will draw upon the writings of fiction (novels) and nonfiction (memoirs).

Student's participation is essential to the development of competency in analyzing these literary works, thus students are expected to be prepared for class by completing the readings prior to class discussion, and further to participate in class orally. **This is a demanding course. Reading is a must!**

### **CLASS OBJECTIVES**

To stimulate the understanding and enjoyment of African-American literary works in relation to their historical period and their relationship to experience and culture

To develop the ability to read literary texts for meaning, structure and style

To develop critical reading, writing, and thinking skills through the analysis of literary works of African Americans

To deepen your understanding of American literature and culture through the specialized study of and focus on works by African Americans as important components of American literature, culture, and aesthetics

To recognize and critically analyze selected African-American works through genre, predominate themes, literary movements, and relationship to historical and social contexts.

## **CLASS PROCEDURES**

1. **Attendance** is very necessary! If you cannot attend class for some reason, you are responsible for finding out from a classmate what you have missed, and what the assignment is for the next class meeting. **Please do not call me at home for assignments you've missed.** You are expected to be prepared to participate fully in the class discussion on the day you return to class, and to hand in any assignment that is due. Quizzes, homework, and writing inclass assignments cannot be made up if you're absent on the day they're due. **Don't expect an A if you miss ONE day of class;**

2. **Class participation** will be an important portion of your grade, not that it will be equivalent in value to all of the written work and discussion. I will assume that each of you would have read the assignment, and I will, therefore, feel free to call on you.

3. To prepare yourself for class discussions, **mark what you read by underlining passages**, or by writing the page and paragraph number down so that you can easily refer to materials. What I mean by that is, material that strikes you as important or interesting, or part of the text that you simply do not understand. This is a time to raise questions as well.

4. **Assignments must be turned in** as a minimum requirement for passing this course. Assignments are due at the end of the class on the due date. They should be placed in my hand. Late papers will be **penalized one grade for each day they are late**, and will receive a failing grade! In cases where illness or absences from campus has made it impossible for you to hand in your work on schedule, you must present a properly authorized excuse in order to avoid a late penalty.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

Class Participation 15%

Two Quizzes 20%

(unannounced)

Midterm Examination 30%

Final Examination 35%

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

*The Fire Next Time* by James Baldwin

*The Price of the Ticket* (film) James Baldwin

*Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison

*A Raisin in the Sun* (film) by Lorraine Hansberry

*Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* by Harriet Jacobs

*Sarah Phillips* by Andrea Lee

*Coming of Age in Mississippi* by Ann Moody

*Song of Solomon* by Toni Morrison

*Linden Hills* by Gloria Naylor

*Women of Brewster Place* (film) by Gloria Naylor

**CLASS SCHEDULE:**

Week of:

Aug 19<sup>th</sup> Introduction-Review of Syllabus-Discussion on Expectations 3

Aug 25<sup>th</sup> *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*

Sept 2<sup>nd</sup> **Labor Day**

Sept 4<sup>th</sup> *Song of Solomon*

Sept 7<sup>th</sup> **Rosh Hashanah (Day of Special Concern)**

Sept 11<sup>th</sup> *Invisible Man* (We will read this book in 4 segments)

Sept 16<sup>th</sup> **Yom Kippur (Day of Special Concern)**

Oct 4<sup>th</sup> Midterm Examination Week

Oct 7<sup>th</sup> *A Raisin in The Sun* (film)

Oct 16<sup>th</sup> *Coming of Age in Mississippi*

Oct 25<sup>th</sup> Last Day to Drop a Class

Nov 4<sup>th</sup> *The Fire Next Time*

Nov 5<sup>th</sup> **Election Day**

Nov 11<sup>th</sup> *Sarah Phillips*

Nov 18<sup>th</sup> *Linden Hills*

Nov 23<sup>rd</sup> **Thanksgiving Recess**

Nov 30<sup>th</sup> *Women of Brewster Place* (film)

Dec 5<sup>th</sup> Last Day to Withdraw

Dec 6<sup>th</sup> Last Day of Class

Dec 9<sup>th</sup> Final Examination Week (examine time and place will be announced)

**West Virginia University is committed to social justice. The instructor of this course, with WVU's commitment, expects to maintain a positive learning environment based upon open communication and mutual respect. Any suggestions as how to further such an environment will be appreciated.**