

ARTS 310.001: ARTS AND IDEAS
SUMMER, 2009
MTWRF 8:00 – 9:55 – NH 117

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MISSION STATEMENT

Arts and Ideas will focus on the human significance of art, its social role, its foundation in aesthetics, and its importance as a way of interpreting reality. It introduces the student to the arts as a way of knowing the world, and of shaping the world. The focus of this section will be the art and artists of the Harlem Renaissance, a movement that took place during the American 1920s and 1930s, and the artists that have carried their ideas to the present.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

- *Harlem Stomp! A Cultural History of the Harlem Renaissance* by Laban Carrick Hill
- *The Harlem Renaissance: A Brief History With Documents* edited by Jeffrey B. Ferguson
- *On the Shoulders of Giants: My Journey Through the Harlem Renaissance* by Kareem Abdul-Jabbar with Raymond Obstfeld
- *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison
- *Dutchman and the Slave: Two Plays* by Leroi Jones

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

For the Arts and Ideas Program:

1. Articulate the value of the arts studied and their impact on the self and others
2. Recognize cultural, historical, spiritual, and/or political aspects of the arts studied
3. Define and articulate the concepts, methods, and organizing principles of the arts studied

In addition, for this specific class:

1. Discuss the goals and approaches of the leaders of the Harlem Renaissance.
2. Discuss the characteristics of important works of art from the period.
3. Identify the major artists and thinkers of the period.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CLASS

This is a “diversity intensive” class, so we will be exploring not only the arts of the Harlem Renaissance, but how those works of art connect to the social ideas and circumstances of the time.

Class will mostly consist of dialogue concerning the reading and viewing assignments. I will lecture only briefly and intermittently. This has several ramifications for you as a student. First, you must recognize that you will learn as much from other students as you do from me. Consequently, it is very important that you *take notes on the discussions*, so that you remember what has been discussed. In addition, it is important that you behave in a civil manner during discussion: if you wish to be heard, you must listen; if you wish to have your ideas taken seriously, respect the ideas of others. Also, this class will require reflection and questioning. No opinion will be allowed to stand without questioning of some sort, and you should be prepared to allow such questioning to occur. The object of dialogue is not to “win” the point, but rather to arrive at a richer understanding of the material examined. We will be using critical thinking techniques to assure this.

This class is as much about you as it is about the works of art, and so the connections that you find between the plays we examine and your own life as citizens and human beings in the 21st century is very important. So the course lives on your willingness to discuss ideas and share opinions. Part of your grade will be determined by your class participation, both in class and on-line: are you involved? Are you making an effort to honestly, coherently, and profoundly engage with the ideas? Are you supportive of your fellow students? There are at least three faults for a participant in this type of class: lack of critical thinking; lack of reflective engagement; lack of civility toward your fellow students and teacher. On the other hand, I worship thoughtful, reflective, engaged, civil students with a sense of humor and a willingness to explore ideas!

CLASS “ATMOSPHERE”

Charged Issues: This will be a “dangerous” course, because at the center of the Harlem Renaissance lies issues of race and racism, which continue to be “charged” issues in American society. The result is that chances are good that at some point in the semester you will find yourself talking about things that make you uncomfortable.

First of all, sometimes discomfort is good! It is a sign that you are stretching your mind and heart in order to accommodate a new experience. Try to stay as open as possible to these experiences, knowing that at the end of the semester you will be able to keep what was valuable to you and get rid of what was not.

However, if you find yourself in territory that is simply too uncomfortable to tolerate, please let me know immediately and we will discuss how this might be addressed. There is no shame in acknowledging such discomfort.

Generosity, a Thick Skin and a Sense of Humor: We will all be discussing issues that have connections to strong personal beliefs and individual pain. There will be times when someone will say something that offends you, or that seems ignorant or uninformed. Be patient. Everyone will say something stupid or offensive during the course of the semester. Face it. It will happen. You will step on somebody's corns, and somebody will step on yours. And how we handle it *as a group* will determine how effectively we function as a class. We must come to trust enough to give each other the benefit of the doubt, and at the same time we must also trust enough to "call each other out" when that needs to be done, with the knowledge that it is done from a place of respect and care. What is most required is generosity, a thick skin, and a sense of humor.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. 4 Blue Book postings to Moodle.
2. Substantive responses to at least 2 Blue Book quotations each of the four times they are posted.
3. Short written assignments, usually due on the day of class, as well as quizzes.
4. Active and skilled class participation. This includes participation and attention to in-class discussions, as well as contributions to the on-line discussion forums.
5. A Midterm and a Final Paper.
6. A Final Objective Exam.

BLUE BOOK ASSIGNMENT

- **Part One:** Every Friday, you will post a "blue book" to your personal folder on Moodle for this class. In it, you will discuss the readings and presentations for the previous two weeks, *as well as the class discussions* that followed (this is why I suggest making notes). These blue book assignments should not simply be stenographic summaries, but rather should focus on your own ideas and questions about the issues and works of art being discussed. At times, the instructor may supply a focused prompt question for the Blue Book. These will be evaluated for their quality of thought and clarity of writing and given a grade of Outstanding, Satisfactory, and Unsatisfactory.
- **Part Two:** By Tuesday at midnight following the posting of Blue Books, you should have made substantive, thoughtful responses to at least two of the Blue Books posted that week.

OTHER ASSIGNMENTS

There may be short writing assignments connected to certain readings. Like the Blue Book assignments, these will be graded Outstanding, Satisfactory, or Unsatisfactory. It is very important that these assignments show evidence of critical thinking skills as well as clear, accurate, and precise writing. There will also likely be quizzes or other exercises whenever a reading is due.

MIDTERM AND FINAL EXAMS

There will be a written mid-term paper and a final paper – details will follow. There will also be an objective final exam that will be taken during the final class period on July 3rd.

ATTENDANCE

There are only 19 classes in the summer, so if you miss one you've missed over 5% of the class! Because discussion will be an important part of this class, attendance is absolutely crucial. Each student will be allowed 2 unexcused absences. Upon the 3rd unexcused absence, the student's grade will be lowered one full letter grade, and will continue to be lowered 5% for every absence thereafter. Latenesses will also be penalized, with 3 lates equaling 1 absence.

An absence will be considered excused if it is due to serious illness, accident, or family emergency. (I reserve the right to request documentation for excused absences.) Note: minor illnesses, such as a cold or the flu ("But Scott, I was throwing up all day yesterday..."), will not be considered grounds for being excused – that is why you are given up 2 unexcused absences. So use them wisely! Whether excused or unexcused, you will be responsible for the material covered during the class(es) missed.

THE RELATIVE WEIGHT OF THE ASSIGNMENTS:

- Midterm Paper: about 20%
- Final Paper: about 20%
- Final Objective Exam: about 10%
- Writing Assignments / Quizzes: about 15%
- Active, skilled in-class participation, Blue Book postings and responses: about 25%

Schedule
(Subject to Change)

| JUNE | | |
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| WEEK ONE | | |
| DATE | TOPIC | ASSIGNMENT |
| M, 8 | OFF | |
| T, 9 | Introduction; Arts and Ideas pre-test | |
| W, 10 | Defining, Remembering, and Talking About Racism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video: <i>Rise and Fall of Jim Crow</i> vol 3 | Essay: "Defining Racism: Can We Talk?" (Moodle); |
| R, 11 | Historical Context | <i>Stomp</i> (pp 2 – 32); <i>Shoulders</i> (pp 1 – 26) |
| F, 12 | Historical Context | <i>Stomp</i> (pp 33 – 43); <i>Shoulders</i> (pp 27 – 46); Ferguson (pp 46 -55); Ferguson (pp 37 – 39); BY MIDNIGHT: POST BLUE BOOK (MOODLE) |
| WEEK TWO | | |
| M, 15 | Thinkers: W. E. B. DuBois and Double Consciousness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video: <i>Ethnic Notions</i> • Video: W. E. B. DuBois (from <i>Black Americans of Achievement</i>) • "A Girl Like Me" (YouTube) • "Fats" Waller: "Black and Blue" | DuBois: "The Souls of Black Folk" and "The Talented Tenth"(Moodle); <i>Shoulders</i> (pp 67 – 73) |
| T, 16 | Double Consciousness in the Art of the Harlem Renaissance, and After | <i>Bluest Eye</i> (Opening pages through the end of the section called "Autumn"); Ferguson (p 58 – "If We Must Die"); Dunbar: "Little Brown Baby," "A Negro Love Sing, "Sympathy" (Moodle); Johnson: <i>God's Trombone</i> : "Preface," "Creation," and "Go Down Death." <i>Shoulders</i> (pp 89 – 90); BY MIDNIGHT: RESPOND TO AT LEAST TWO MOODLE POSTS |
| W, 17 | The Bluest Eye | Finish <i>The Bluest Eye</i> |
| R, 18 | Music of the Harlem Renaissance, and After | <i>Shoulders</i> (pp 193 – 255); <i>Stomp</i> (pp 91 – 101) |
| F, 19 | Video: Wild Women Don't Have the Blues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work on midterm | Ferguson (pp 117 (starting with "Ma Rainey" – 123); BY MIDNIGHT: POST BLUE BOOK (MOODLE) |

| WEEK THREE | | |
|-------------------|--|---|
| M, 22 | Video: Ken Burns' <i>Jazz</i> Episode 2 | MIDTERM DUE BY MIDNIGHT |
| T, 23 | The Dam Breaking Video: <i>Tell About the South</i> (Jean Toomer) | <i>Stomp</i> (pp 45 – 53); Ferguson (pp 56 – 63); Toomer: “Bona and Paul” (Moodle); <i>Shoulders</i> (pp 91-94; 99 – 102); BY MIDNIGHT: RESPOND TO AT LEAST TWO MOODLE POSTS |
| W, 24 | Fire! | <i>Stomp</i> (pp 54 – 73); Charles S. Johnson, Introduction to <i>The Book of American Negro Poetry</i> (Moodle); Ferguson (pp 65-68, 82-85); Hurston: <i>Spunk</i> (Moodle) <i>Shoulders</i> (pp 94-99; 106-109) |
| R, 25 | Langston Hughes Video: Langston Hughes | Ferguson (pp 68 – 72); “Ruby Brown,” “Red Silk Stockings,” “Mother to Son” (Moodle); <i>Shoulders</i> (pp 109-116) |
| F, 26 | Controversies in Art and Politics | Ferguson (pp 144 – 177); <i>Shoulders</i> (pp 117-136); BY MIDNIGHT: RESPOND TO AT LEAST TWO MOODLE POSTS |
| WEEK FOUR | | |
| M, 29 | Sports Video: “The journey of the African-American athlete” | <i>Shoulders</i> (pp 137 – 192) |
| T, 30 | Heritage Unbound | <i>Stomp</i> (pp 103 – 113); <i>Dutchman</i> ; BY MIDNIGHT: RESPOND TO AT LEAST TWO MOODLE POSTS |
| JULY | | |
| W, 1 | Film: Bamboozled | |
| R, 2 | Film: Bamboozled | |
| F, 3 | The End of the Harlem Renaissance; Final Exam; Arts and Ideas post-test | <i>Stomp</i> (pp 127 – 135); |

FINAL PAPER: DUE BY FRIDAY, JULY 10TH AT MIDNIGHT.