

**English 3471F: US Literature and Civil Rights**  
**Fall 2018**

**Instructor:** Taylor Kraayenbrink  
**Location:** Physics and Astronomy 148  
**Class Hours:** TUE 1:30-2:30/THU 1:30-3:30  
**Instructor Office and Hours:** UC 1430  
Tuesday 2:30-3:30 or by appointment

**TA:** Sarah Harrison  
**TA Office and Hours:** UC 3405  
**TA Email:** sharri94@uwo.ca  
**Instructor Phone:** (519) 402-3812  
**Instructor Email:** tkraaye@uwo.ca

**NOTE:** All course information including grades, assignment outlines, deadlines, etc. is available via OWL. Check the website regularly for course announcements. <https://owl.uwo.ca>

**Course Description:** This course will consider selections from American literature as it relates to modern civil rights issues in America that pertain to race relations. Although civil rights as an American legal concept can be considered broadly to include freedom of religion and speech, universal enfranchisement, gender equality, and LGBTQ2 rights, this course will focus primarily on the writings of black American authors as they deal with the struggle of black Americans for full civil rights and racial equality. Occasionally, we will read selections of legal documents to orient our understanding of the history of civil rights issues for black people in America, but we will primarily read the writings of black authors in order to understand this history. In the final week of the course, we will consider through literature how the Trump presidency in the US relates to current civil rights issues for black Americans.

**Outcomes:**

Develop four skills essential to literary and cultural competency:

*Close Reading:* Recognize the importance of literature in civil rights discourses by linking form to content and text to context in order to articulate in course discussion and written assignments how a given writer achieves literary and rhetorical effects in order to make a statement regarding civil rights in America.

*Engaged Discussion:* remain attentive and responsive to the work we are studying and the conversation it sparks; express ideas and questions to classmates (even when thoughts or questions might still be in process).

*Clear and Persuasive Writing:* Write clearly and persuasively to make compelling arguments about literary texts, supporting arguments with textual evidence.

*Scholarly Research:* engage with critical scholarship and explore strategies for entering into ongoing critical discussions and debates around the convergence of American literature, culture, and the political negotiation of civil rights issues. Propose ideas within the context of an existing critical discussion. Respond constructively to instructor feedback and peer review.

**Required Course Material (all texts available in Western Bookstore):**

Coursepack

Ta-Nehisi Coates: *Between the World and Me* (Spiegel & Grau)

W.E.B DuBois: *The Souls of Black Folk* (Oxford)

Lorraine Hansberry: *A Raisin in the Sun* (Bloomsbury)

Toni Morrison: *The Bluest Eye* (Vintage)

Claudia Rankine: *Citizen* (Graywolf)

Richard Wright: *Black Boy* (Harper Modern Classics)

**Evaluation**

1. Participation 15%
2. Short Reading Reflection Essays 2x5%
3. Midterm Essay 20%
4. Research Essay 30% (Annotated Bibliography and Thesis Statement 5%)
5. Final Examination 25%

**Evaluation Details:**

**1. Participation:** Attendance is a part of the participation grade and should be constant. If you have more than four class absences, you will be penalized. **Students who are excessively absent from class may be refused permission to write the final examination.** A primary goal of class time in this course is to foster group creativity. In order for group creativity to happen, students need to show up prepared and ready to contribute to class discussion. You are required to demonstrate active engagement with the texts we study in class. You are expected to read course material before the class in which we take it up. You are expected to answer questions, offer your own interpretations of texts based on evidence from those texts, and show a responsive and critical interest in the interpretations and reflections of your classmates. If you want to learn more inspiring information on how group creativity works, and how it is formed, listen to the podcast in the link provided:

<https://itunes.apple.com/ca/podcast/the-daily-shows-secret-to-creativity/id1346314086?i=1000405268582&mt=2>

**2. Short Reading Reflection Essays (300 words):** These exercises are designed to allow you to engage with syllabus material in-depth before class. Select a passage from the day you have signed up for; read it carefully; write about what you consider to be a significant aspect of the passage, or a common and important characteristic of that day's readings taken together. Your reflection is due electronically by 1:30PM on the day prior to the class period in which we discuss the text(s) you've chosen. Your first reflection is **due between September 11 and October 4**. Your second reflection is **due between October 16 and November 15**.

3. **Midterm Paper (750 words) due October 25:** The midterm essay will be a response to an assigned topic (to be circulated later).
4. **Research Paper (due December 6):** The research essay will demonstrate interpretation skills honed over the course of the semester. You will respond to a prompt circulated in advance (or the essay may, with my advance approval, be on a topic of your choice). This essay is to demonstrate the literary-critical reading skills we develop in class over the course of the semester. A hard copy must be submitted in class, as well as an electronic copy uploaded to OWL in Word format by the start of class.
5. **Final Examination** (scheduled by the Registrar's Office): The final cumulative examination will consist of ID questions on passages discussed in class.

### Course/University Policies

**Lateness/Absences:** Unless otherwise stated in the syllabus, assignments are due at the beginning of the class they are scheduled, and will not be accepted late, except under medical or other compassionate circumstances.

**Written documentation:** Students who require academic accommodation should provide notification and documentation, in advance of due dates, stating specific reasons and dates. Students must follow up with the instructor and Academic Counselling office in a timely manner. Documentation for any request for accommodation shall be submitted directly, as soon as possible, to the appropriate Academic Counselling office of the student's Faculty/School of registration (not to the instructor) with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested.

**Grades:** Where possible, assignment objectives and rubrics will be posted on OWL. Should you have a concern regarding the grade you received for an assignment or feel that it is unfair in any way, please wait 24 hours from the receipt of the graded assignment to approach or contact the instructor or TA who graded it. Please make an appointment and prepare in writing, with evidence, why you feel your grade is inappropriate. Note that calculations errors (which do occur!) should be brought to the instructor's attention immediately. 15% of course grades will be posted three days before the last day to drop a course (November 5).

**Scholastic offences:** They are taken seriously, and students are directed to read the appropriate policy at the following website:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

**Statement on Plagiarism**

(See 2014 Western Calendar, pp. 19-21) Plagiarism (the unacknowledged use of another person's work) is one of the most serious academic offences, since it involves fraud and misrepresentation. In plagiarizing, one is in effect claiming another person's words or ideas or data as one's own work, and thus misrepresenting material subject to academic evaluation. It is necessary, therefore, that plagiarism carry appropriate penalties. These are within the discretion of the Chair of Undergraduate Studies, but may include failure of a course or a grade of zero on an assignment, without the privilege of resubmitting it.

**STUDENTS FOUND GUILTY OF A SECOND SERIOUS OFFENCE WILL BE EXPELLED FROM DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH COURSES. FURTHER ACTION MAY BE TAKEN BY THE DEAN'S OFFICE.**

Students must acknowledge each printed or electronic source (including study guides such as *Cole's Notes*, *SparkNotes*, and Internet materials) by author, title, date and place of publication, and page number if: (a) they quote from it directly; (b) they paraphrase its ideas; (c) they are conscious of any influence its ideas may have had on their own work.

It is not always possible to identify the sources of inspiration of one's own ideas with total accuracy. A reasonable and conscientious effort is all that is required. **However, it is entirely the student's responsibility to be aware of the nature of plagiarism.** If students have any questions about plagiarism, they should ask their instructor. If students have any doubts about the documentation of their own essays, they should see the instructor before the essays are due. Information about correct forms of documentation may be found in the *MLA HANDBOOK For Writers of Research Papers* (New York: Modern Language Association, 2009), available in the Reference section at Weldon (LB 2369.M57).

Students found to have submitted the work of another person as their own work **will automatically fail the course.** Any students who know their own work has been used improperly have a responsibility to inform the Department of that fact; otherwise they will be considered collaborators.

Since honest students (by far the majority) are potentially affected by the actions of the dishonest few, some may choose to bring instances of plagiarism or other forms of cheating confidentially to the attention of the Chair of Undergraduate Studies.

**Turnitin:** All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

For further information on plagiarism and policies, visit:  
<https://www.uwo.ca/english/undergraduate/info%20for%20students.html>

**Formatting:** MLA is the required style of writing for all assignments produced for this course. If your faculty/school of registration uses a different style guide, and you would prefer to use it, please make arrangements with the course instructor *prior to submitting an assignment*. Please refer to the Western University Library webpage for information on MLA style:

<https://www.lib.uwo.ca/files/styleguides/MLA8th.pdf>

**Laptops:** Laptops are not permitted in the classroom unless a student has been granted academic accommodation. Cell phones are also prohibited. NOTE: Laptops will be permitted for classes in which we discuss texts highlighted in the syllabus in yellow, as these texts will be circulated digitally.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/22/business/laptops-not-during-lecture-or-meeting.html?smid=fb-share>

**Textbooks:** Each student must purchase the course pack and each of the other required texts for this class. Used options are sometimes available in the bookstore, and you can sell books back to the bookstore or directly to other students after completing the course.

<https://bookstore.uwo.ca/buyback>

### STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

The purpose of the Code of Student Conduct is to define the general standard of conduct expected of students registered at Western University, provide examples of behavior that constitutes a breach of this standard of conduct, provide examples of sanctions that may be imposed, and set out the disciplinary procedures that the University will follow. For more information, visit

<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/board/code.pdf>

### SUPPORT SERVICES

There are various support services around campus, and these include, but are not limited to:

1. Student Development Centre -- <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd/>
2. Student Health -- <http://www.shs.uwo.ca/student/studenthealthservices.html>
3. Registrar's Office -- <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western

<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

**Schedule of Classes**

Sept 6: "Declaration of Independence"

Sept 11, 13: Jefferson: selection from *Notes on the State of Virginia*; Phyllis Wheatley: "On Being Brought from Africa to America," "On the Death of the Rev. George Whitfield," "To His Excellency General Washington"; Booker T. Washington: selection from *Up From Slavery*;

Sept 18, 20: W.E.B. DuBois: *The Souls of Black Folk*: Forethought, Chapters 1, 2, 3, 7

Sept 25, 27: W.E.B. DuBois: *The Souls of Black Folk*: Chapters 10, 11, 13, 14

Oct 2, 4: Paul Laurence Dunbar: "An Ante-Bellum Sermon," "We Wear the Mask," "Sympathy"; Claude McKay: "The Lynching," "If We Must Die," "America," "Outcast"

Langston Hughes: "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," "Mother to Son," "I, Too," "The Weary Blues," "Song for a Dark Girl," "Visitors to the Black Belt," "Democracy," "Theme for English B"; **(Reflection 1 Due October 4)**

Oct 9, 11: NO CLASS:

Oct 16, 18: Richard Wright: *Black Boy*

Oct 23, 25: Richard Wright: *Black Boy*; James Baldwin: "Letter to My Nephew" **(Midterm Paper Due October 25)**

Oct 30, Nov 1: Martin Luther King, Jr. "I Have a Dream," "Letter from Birmingham Prison,"; Federal Bureau of Investigation: "Letter to King, Jr."; Malcolm X: "The Ballot or the Bullet,"; Sara M. Bergstresser: "The Death of Esmin Green"

Nov 6, 8: Ralph Ellison: "Battle Royale"; Lorraine Hansberry: *A Raisin in The Sun*

Nov 13, 15: Lorraine Hansberry: *A Raisin in the Sun*; Claudia Rankine: *Citizen* **(Reflection 2 Due November 15)**

Nov 20, 22: Claudia Rankine: *Citizen* **(Research Paper Annotated Bibliography and Thesis Statement due November 22)**

Nov 27, 29: Ta-Nehisi Coates: *Between the World and Me*

Dec 4, 6: Ta-Nehisi Coates: *Between the World and Me*; Film Screening: *I Am Not Your Negro*, Jay Z: "My President is Black" (2008), "The Story of O.J." (2017); Kendrick Lamar: "King Kunta" (2015), Kendrick Lamar: "Grammy Performance 2018"; Childish Gambino: "This is America" (2018) **Research Paper Due December 6**