Wilkes University Curriculum Committee

PROPOSAL SUBMITTAL FORM

Directions:

- Use this set of forms for all proposals sent to the Curriculum Committee.
- Pages 1-3 of this document are required. Any unnecessary forms should be deleted from the packet before submissions. If multiple forms are needed (course addition, course deletion, etc), simply copy and paste additional forms into this packet.
- Note that all new programs (majors and minors), program eliminations, significant program revisions and all general education core revisions must be reviewed and approved by the Provost and Academic Planning Committee (APC) prior to submission to the Curriculum Committee. The Provost will make the decision if a program revision requires APC review.
- Completed and signed forms are due no later than the second Tuesday of every month. Submit one signed original hard copy and a scanned electronic copy with all signatures to the Chair of the Curriculum Committee.

Originators: Mischelle Anthony (chair) and Sean Kelly
Phone and email: x. 4529, mischelle.anthony@wilkes.edu

1. Proposal Title: Studies in African American Literature

2. Check only one type of proposal: (double click on the appropriate check box and change default value to "checked").

- [ ] New Program. (Major or Minor Degree Programs). This requires prior review and approval by the Provost and APC.
- [ ] New Concentration, Track, or Certificate. The Provost determines if review and approval by APC is necessary.
- [ ] Elimination of Program. (Major or Minor Degree Programs). This requires prior review and approval by the Provost and APC.
- [ ] Elimination of Concentration, Track, or Certificate. The Provost determines if review and approval by APC is necessary.
- [ ] Program Revision. Significant revisions to a program require review and approval by the Provost. The Provost determines if review and approval by APC is necessary.
- [ ] General Education Revision. Submissions only accepted from the General Education Committee (GEC). Must be reviewed and approved by the Provost.
- [X] Course additions or deletions not affecting programs (such as elective courses, transition of "topics" courses to permanent courses).
- [ ] Change in course credit or classroom hours.
- [ ] Incidental Changes. Includes changes in course/program title, course descriptions, and course prerequisites. (Although these changes do require approval by the Curriculum Committee, they do not go before the full faculty for approval).
- [ ] Other (Specify)
3. Indicate the number of course modification forms that apply to this proposal:

   1. Course Addition Form (plus syllabi)
   2. Course Deletion Form
   3. Course Change Form

4. Executive Summary of Proposal.
   Briefly summarize this proposal. The breadth and depth of this executive summary should reflect the complexity and significance of the proposal. Include an overview of the proposal, background and reasoning behind the proposal and a description of how the proposal relates to the mission and strategic long-range plan of the unit and/or university. For incidental changes a one or two sentence explanation is adequate.

"Studies in African American Literature" has been taught previously as a Topics (ENG 398) course with strong student enrollment. We propose to add this course to our program curriculum in order to expand the offerings that focus on texts that demonstrate core features (aesthetic and intellectual) of African American literature and the growing field of criticism connected to that literature. "Studies in African American Literature" fills a gap in our coverage and also helps meet our departmental student learning objectives (SLOs) that deal with ethical awareness, aesthetic awareness, and diversity.

5. Other specific information. (Not applicable for incidental changes.)

   What other programs, if any, will be affected by this proposal? Describe what resources are available for this proposal. Are they adequate? What would be the effect on the curriculum of all potentially affected programs if this proposal were adopted? Include any potential effects to the curriculum of current programs, departments and courses.

   This proposal does not affect any other programs. No additional resources are needed for the delivery of the course.

6. Program Outline. (Not applicable for incidental changes).

   A semester-by-semester program outline as it would appear in the bulletin for a new program or any modified program with all changes clearly indicated.

   Adding this course does not alter the rotation of recommended 300-level courses. This new course would be added to the list of courses offered to meet 300-level requirements for English majors and minors.
7. Signatures and Recommendations. (please date)
   • Signatures of involved Department chair(s) and Dean(s) indicate agreement with the proposal and that adequate resources (library, faculty, technology) are available to support proposal.
   • If a potential signatory disagrees with a proposal he/she should write "I disagree with this proposal" and a signed statement should be attached to this submission.

   Print Name/Title: [Signature] Date
   Department chair(s) of all potentially affected programs

   Print Name/Title: [Signature] Date
   Dean(s) of any potentially affected College/School.

   Print Name: [Signature] Date
   Registrar

   Print Name: [Signature] Date
   Provost (For new programs, significant revisions and revisions to the General Education Program revisions only).
   Provost should check here if this proposal is a program revision AND the significance of the revision requires review and approval by APC prior to Curriculum Committee.

   Print Name: [Signature] Date
   Chair, Academic Planning Committee. For new programs, program revisions sent via the provost. Signature indicates that the proposal has been reviewed and approved by APC.

   Print Name: [Signature] Date
   Chair, General Education Committee. For revisions to General Education program only. (Signature indicates that the proposal has been approved by GEC).
1. Course Title: Studies in African American Literature

2. Course Number: Eng 356

   Coordinate with Registrar to insure course number is available

3. Course Credit Hours:
   Classroom Hours 3          Lab Hours ______  Other ______

4. Course Prerequisites: Eng 101

5. Course Description (as proposed for the Bulletin): Course descriptions provide an overview of the topics covered. If the course is offered on a scheduled basis, i.e. every other year, or only during a set semester, note this in the description. Course descriptions should be no more than two to three sentences in length.

   A study of African American literature from the Antebellum era to the present.

6. Required Documentation:

   Proposed Syllabus    Attach proposed syllabus immediately after this document. In some situations the official syllabus may contain information which is beyond the review needs of the Curriculum Committee (such as extensive rubrics, etc). It is permissible to attach an abbreviated syllabus. In general, syllabi (whether full or abbreviated) should contain the following information: Course Title, Course Number, Credit hours, Faculty Information (name contact information, office hours), Course Description, Course Outcomes or Objectives, Assessment (grading) information, required texts (or other things such as tools, software, etc), pertinent policies and a proposed schedule of topics.

   See attached syllabus.
This special topics course will examine African American literature from the slave narratives of the nineteenth century to the modernist and postmodernist productions of the late twentieth century. Although this course is not a survey, we will attempt to become familiar with many of the seminal works of the various periods of African American literary history, including: Slavery and Reconstruction, the New Negro Renaissance and Harlem Renaissance, Naturalism, Modernism, and the Black Arts Movement. Our discussions of the literary texts will often be framed by an examination of the aesthetic frameworks and political perspectives that accompany each period. In this course, we will consider the following:

1. The ways in which African American literature and aesthetics are both informed by and respond to the complex social, political, and economic realities of Black citizenship in the United States. The role of the Black artist, James Baldwin points out in his work *Notes of a Native Son* (1955), is a complicated one. Baldwin acknowledges the difficult position of Black authors who, when responding to the racist dominant ideology of American society, may inadvertently reproduce that ideology in their own representations of victimization. They may, in addition, fail to adequately represent the complexity of human life by narrowly focusing on political resistance: "The failure of the protest novel lies in its
rejection of life, the human being, the denial of his beauty, dread, power, in its insistence that it is his categorization alone which is real and which cannot be transcended” (23). Consequently, debates about African American literature and aesthetics have often focused on questions concerning the legitimacy (whether or not the message and imagery used to depict African American experiences are "correct" from the perspective of prevailing identity politics of the day) and the authenticity of representation (whether or not the representation—especially in voice and perspective—can be truly be "Black" according to the respective expectations of various audiences).

2. The ways in which African American literature reflects and is informed by the distinct aesthetic principles of other African and African American aesthetic productions (including spirituals, blues, and jazz); and

2. The ways in which the complex formal structures of African American literature, music, and the visual arts (modes often focused on revision, creative destruction, and innovation) reflect the complex psychological experience and ontological reality (invisibility, double-consciousness, namelessness) of African American communities throughout American history. Theorist and critic Houston A. Baker points out, for example, that "the blues . . . comprise a mediational site where familiar antinomies are resolved (or dissolved) in the office of adequate cultural understanding” (6). Henry Louis Gates Jr. has suggested that African American aesthetics, generally, are characterized by various modes of "signifying(g)," especially the employment of the rhetorical trope chiasmus, which utilizes "repetition and reversal" (172) to subtly critique the norms of the dominant culture. Tricia Rose has, in addition, argued that rap music operates in the same tradition as a vehicle for resisting "dominant public transcripts" of power by offering "resistive hidden transcripts" (100). She explains:

Rap music is, in many ways, a hidden transcript. Among other things, it uses cloaked speech and disguised cultural codes to comment on and challenge aspects of current power inequalities. Not all transcripts directly critique all forms of domination; nonetheless, a large and significant element in rap’s discursive territory is engaged in symbolic and ideological warfare with institutions and groups that symbolically, ideologically, and materially oppress African Americans. (101-101)

Course Objectives

- To familiarize students with the social, historical, aesthetic, and philosophical issues pertaining to African American literature.
- To develop contemporary theoretical approaches to reading and analyzing African American literature.
- To develop/ enhance critical thinking and analytical writing skills through course writing assignments, examinations, and class discussions.
- To develop and implement research techniques.

Objectives directly related to the WGS designation:

- Examine the sexual politics of the slave narrative.
- Examine the complex articulations of sexual politics and gender representation within African American writing, especially in response to the cultural norms of white supremacist hegemony.
- Consider the implications of feminist theoretical perspectives and self-designated feminist artistic representations.
• Explore the intersections of the cultural desire for whiteness and the ideology of feminine beauty.

**Texts**

1. Course reader (copies that I will provide for you)
2. Nella Larson, *Quicksand*
3. Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*
4. Jean Toomer, *Cane*
5. Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*
6. James Baldwin, *Another Country*
7. Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*
8. Gloria Naylor, *Linden Hill*

**Course Requirements and Expectations**

All students are expected to complete the required reading and participate in class discussions. Often, the reading assignments between Wednesday’s class and the following Monday (approximately 4 V2 days) will be rather extensive to ensure coverage of the material. Please plan your reading schedule accordingly. Formal writing assignments will include four (4) short response papers (of about 2.5 pages each, two per each half of the course), a midterm essay exam, a final exam, and 12-page research paper.

**Grading Policy:**

Wilkes University uses a 4-point scale for final grades. Throughout the semester, I will use the 10-point scale to grade exams and papers and convert grades to the 4-point scale according to the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>4-point Scale</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>90-100 = 4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>85-89 = 3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>80-84 = 3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>75-79 = 2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70-74 = 2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>65-69 = 1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60-64 = 1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>59 &amp; below = 0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Grading Breakdown**

Attendance / Participation (including reading quizzes): 10%  
Short Response Papers (4): 15%  
Midterm Essay Exam: 20%  
Final Exam: 25%  
Final Essay (12-15 pages): 30%

*Please be aware that failure to submit a final essay or complete an exam will result in a 0.0 for the course.*

**Attendance and Participation (10%):** Students are allowed three (3) unexcused absences. After four absences, the final grade will be negatively affected; five or more absences may result in failure of the course. Oral participation in class discussions is mandatory. The main goal of this course is to produce meanings of these texts through our collective examinations and discussions of them. While I will often give mini lectures as we close read the texts, I will not be-and should not be- lecturing the entire time. I will often use response papers as a way of bringing members of the class into the discussion; however, even on days when you are not assigned a response paper, you should still come to class prepared with thoughtful questions and comments about the texts.
Tardiness: If there is a good reason why you may need to be late for class, please let me know. Otherwise, please be on time! This class will begin promptly at 9:00; if you join us late, you could be marked absent or miss changes made to the schedule of assignments. Most importantly, your late entrance will disrupt the work of the class.

Response Papers (15%): Response papers must be typed, double-spaced, and approximately 2 1/2 pages in length. Successful response papers will be those that critically engage a particular aspect of a work (using direct quotes for analysis), raising questions, making connections, and producing meanings that will add to our group discussions. *I* *W*e *m* *m*mmary will not be accepted. When you sign up for your response papers, remember that you MUST write on two early texts (prior to the midterm essay exam) and two later ones.

Quizzes: Short, content-based quizzes may be given from time to time to ensure that everyone is keeping up with the reading. Quizzes are worth five points apiece and will be averaged into your attendance/participation grade.

Midterm Essay Exam (20%): At midterm I will ask you to write an analytical essay that responds to a specific question that brings together important themes and issues from the first half of the course. You will be able to choose your topic out of a few options. While you may use your notes and the primary text to write the essay, you will not be allowed to use outside research sources.

Final Exam (25%): The format will likely be some combination of author/work identification, short answer explication, and a choice of essay questions dealing with the texts we will have read this term.

Final Essay (30%): The final, 12-15 page paper should emerge out of your extended engagement with the texts and ideas that we will examine over the course of the semester. Your essay should be structured around a central and compelling thesis (that is, you must make an original argument—which is not the mere statement of fact) and developed with the extensive use of textual evidence, including moments of precise explication and analysis.

While you MUST use at least four (4) research sources (from academic journals, scholarly books, and other relevant primary sources [such as journals, letters, newspapers, and other marginalia]), I suggest that you plan your argument and choose many of your specific examples from the primary literary texts before you begin your research. This will allow you to develop a clear and coherent idea for your essay before becoming overly influenced by professional scholars. Essays that merely summarize the work of professional scholars will not be accepted. Secondary sources should be used strategically to support your position and offer relevant counter-arguments. All papers must follow MLA guidelines for parenthetical documentation, and they must include a works cited page.

Essay Grading Criteria: The following objectives form the basis for the evaluation of your essays for this course.

1. The paper puts forward an original, coherent, and compelling thesis (that is, an original argument about something).
2. The paper supports or 'proves' the thesis by offering substantial instances of textual analysis (including quotes from the primary text and explication).
3. The paper demonstrates an ability to effectively organize ideas through structured paragraphs.
4. The paper demonstrates a reasonable mastery of sentence-level grammatical and syntactical structures (this includes: subject-verb agreement, verb tense agreement, correct spelling and punctuation.).
5. The paper includes correct MLA parenthetical citations and a works cited page.

A (4.0) papers will not only demonstrate a mastery of organizational and structural aspects but will also demonstrate high levels of critical and creative thinking (e.g., evidenced by the quality of the thesis and supporting analysis).

B (3.0-3.5) papers will demonstrate an average to above average mastery of organizational and structural aspects and will reflect strong potential in creative and analytical approaches. B-level essays often demonstrate very insightful work that is underdeveloped or problematic in some key organizational or structural aspect.

C (2.0-2.5) papers will typically demonstrate an average to below-average command of organizational and structural aspects. These papers will likely have a thesis, but it will be vague and unfocused. Textual analysis will tend to be very underdeveloped; the paper will instead consist mostly of summary.

F-D (0.0-1.5) papers are largely incoherent and fail to meet the expectations of the assignment in some fundamental way.

Plagiarism: To submit someone else's work as your own without acknowledging the author is plagiarism. This includes borrowing work from other students, professional writers, or instructors—basically from any source—without properly acknowledging the author (and this obviously includes reworking essays downloaded from the internet). The proper methods for documenting written and media sources can be found in any writer’s manual. Plagiarized papers—whether intentional or not—earn a 1.1. The university's recommended penalty for repeated plagiarism is a failure for the course. If you ever have any questions about this, please see me.

Schedule

* Readings will be discussed on the days indicated.
* (CR) = Course Reader

August
I. Slavery and Reconstruction
Mon. 8/25: Introduction
Wed. 8/27: Frederick Douglass, from Narrative (1845)

September

Mon. 9/1: Labor Day
Wed. 9/3: (CR) Jacobs, from Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl (1861)
Mon. 9/8: (CR) Booker T. Washington, Chapter XIV from *Up From Slavery*, "The Atlanta Expositions Address" (1895); (CR) W.E.B. DuBois, Chapters I and III from *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903)
Wed. 9/10: Jean Toomer, *Cane* (1923) (through page 56); (CR) Alain Locke, from "New Negro" (1925)

**II. Harlem Renaissance**

Mon. 9/15: Toomer (through page 115)
Wed. 9/17: Nella *Larson, Quicksand* (1928) (through chapter 11)

Mon. 9/22: Larson (complete the novella)
Wed. 9/24: Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) (through chapter 5)

Mon. 9/29: Hurston (chapters 6-12)
Wed. 10/1: Hurston (chapters 13-20).

**III. Naturalism, Modernity and Postmodernity/Blues and Jazz Aesthetics**

**October**

Mon. 10/6: (CR) Excerpt from Richard Wright's *Native Son* (1940) (page 416-516). HW: Read Baker and Heble (CR). Also, watch/listen to Youtube videos of the following jazz, blues, and rap artists:
   
   Louis Armstrong, "Savoy Blues"; "Basin Street Blues"
   Charlie Parker, "Confirmation"
   John Coltrane, "My Favorite Things"
   Miles Davis, "Someday My Prince Will Come"; "So What"
   Ornette Coleman, "Peace"
   Public Enemy, "Fight the Power"

Wed. 10/8: **Midterm Essay Exams Due.** Aesthetic theory (focus on Heble if you can't complete all of the reading):
   

Mon. 10/13: Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (1952) (through chapter 4)
Wed. 10/15: Ellison (chapter 5-8)

Mon. 10/20: Ellison (chapter 9-13)
Wed. 10/22: Ellison (chapter 14-16)

Mon. 10/27: Ellison (chapters 17-22)
Wed. 10/29: Ellison (chapters 23-epilogue)

November

Wed 11/5: Morrison (132-206)

Wed. 11/12: Baldwin (pages 127-179)

Mon. 11/17: Baldwin (pages 183-283)
Wed. 11/19: Baldwin (pages 284-324)

Mon. 11/24: Baldwin (pages 325-436)
Wed. 11/26: Thanksgiving Break

December

Mon. 12/1: from Gloria Naylor, *Linden Hills* (1985) (beginning of the novel through December 21st [page 141])
Wed. 12/3: Naylor (December 22’d through December 23rd). Brief exam preview.

Bibliography


