This course will be an introduction to and an exploration of twentieth century writing by black women, primarily American, but also African and Carribbean. The focus will be on short stories and novels, but we will also read some poetry. The course will also include films related to the African Diaspora. The purpose of the course is to introduce students to the rich and varied texts produced by black women across the Diaspora.

Required Texts: African American Literature, For Colored Girls, Unwinding Threads, Annie John and Krik? Krak!

Requirements: Attendance is mandatory. Your final grade will be lowered for each day you miss class. On the third absence, students will receive an F for the course.

Participation grades are determined not only by attendance, but also by contributions to class and small group discussions. You will not receive an A for participation if you come to every class, but do not speak. There will be frequent study questions or short written responses to the reading. Study questions or reading responses must be typed. A 15-20 minute oral report is required. Students will sign up for a poetry presentation. The purpose of the presentations is to lead class discussion. Students should understand there assigned poem, but rather than just decode it for the class, should have questions prepared to lead students in a discussion of the poem. One 5-7 page essay is required. Essays must be typed according to MLA requirements (see attached example). Secondary sources are not required. Essays less than 5 full pages will be severely docked. No late assignments will be graded, but the essay must be completed to pass the class. The course will include a final exam. Pop quizzes are always possible. For your information, see attached grading standards.

Grading Distribution: Participation & quizzes--5%, Oral Report--5%, Study questions--10%, Essay--40%, and Final 40%. For your information, see attached grading standards.

Oral Reports are due as scheduled on the sign up sheet. You must give your report on your assigned day. If you miss your scheduled time, you will receive an F for the assignment.

Reading & Assignment schedule: Come to class with that day’s reading already completed. All assignments are due at the beginning of class. You are expected to be in class for all movie screenings. Should you miss a video, it will be your responsibility to find, rent, and view a copy on your own.
5/21 Introduction & Still I Rise
5/22 Introduction, Hurston, & Petry in AfAm. Lit.
5/23 Morrison, Bambara, & Walker in AfAm. Lit.
5/24 Video—A Raisin in the Sun & “Bars Fight” in AfAm. Lit.
5/28 No Class: Memorial Day
5/30 “October Journey,” “First Fight, Then Fiddle,” “We Real Cool,” “Willie,” “125th Street and Abomey,” “A Letter to Dr. Martin Luther King,” “My Father’s Wars,” and “Queen of the Ebony Isles” in AfAm. Lit.
6/6 Sutherland, Aidoo, & Nwapa in Unwinding Threads
6/7 Ogot, Tlali, & Head in Unwinding Threads (Evaluations)
6/8 Final

This syllabus is subject to change.

Grading:

Assignments will be graded on these main criteria:

Organization--Does the thesis statement function as it should? Does the paper have a clear plan? Is it unified? Is all material presented relevant to the thesis statement?

Development--Does the paper use specific examples, illustrations, facts, or other forms of evidence to support the thesis statement? Are they relevant? Are they sufficient?

Mechanics--Is the paper free of gross spelling errors? Is punctuation used appropriately? Is the paper free of errors of agreement (subject/verb, pronoun/antecedent)? Is the paper free of major sentence errors (fragments, comma splices, run ons)?

Content--Is the paper interesting? Are the ideas fresh and original?

Diction--Is the vocabulary that of a college student? Has the author avoided ineffective cliches? Is most of the language concrete?

Style--Is the writing efficient (not wordy)? Does the sentence length vary? Do the sentences and paragraphs begin differently? Has the writer achieved a natural voice?

Grading is always subjective to some extent, but here are some guidelines:
The C Paper--The C paper is adequate, nothing more or less. The writer has organized the material ably, employed details to support generalizations, and handled mechanics satisfactorily. Although more might have been accomplished in any one or all of these areas, the student has revealed competence in them. What a C paper usually lacks is some praiseworthy feature: significant or fresh ideas, ease of expression, or grace of style. A C paper generally fails to impress, though it explains an idea of some substance in a clear and acceptable manner. In general, it usually elicits both favorable and unfavorable comments and neither pleases nor displeases the reader.

The D Paper--This paper is deficient in one of the major areas: organization, development, or mechanics. If the writer fails to organize the paper or paragraphs adequately, provides insufficient support, or makes numerous errors in mechanics, the paper deserves a D. A D is a passing grade, thus a D paper should contain some redeeming features that indicate growth in skills.

The F Paper--The F paper is deficient in two or three of the major areas. An F paper is not necessarily a total failure; the writer did not demonstrate sufficient ability to be given a passing grade of D. If the paper lacks worthwhile content; displays no real sense of organization, support, or mechanics; or is difficult, frustrating, or confusing to read, then the paper will receive an F.

The B Paper--The B paper is not only competent in all the major areas, but excels in several. As opposed to the C paper, the B paper contains certain achievements that make it more than adequate. Usually these are in the areas of content and language. Although lapses may appear in the paper, they are usually trivial and sparse. The B paper demonstrates proficiency in all six major areas, and excellence in some. The paper is reasonably clear, focused, and well supported; ideas are adequately developed through details and examples. Organization and form are appropriate, and ideas are generally presented coherently. Surface features do not interfere with understanding or distract from meaning. Still, mere absence of error does not assure the paper a B grade.

The A Paper--The A paper is a superior piece of work that is a pleasure to read. The paper is clear, engaging, original, and focused; ideas and content are richly developed with appropriate details and examples. Organization and form enhance the central idea and theme; ideas are presented coherently to guide the reader through the text. Usually the A paper excels the B paper in content, diction, and style. The student also uses language with sensitivity, assurance, and vitality. The style is fluent and graceful.

My comments usually focus on organization and content since these areas usually need the most improvement. If my comments do not help you improve or you are still unsure why you received a grade, please speak with me for further clarification.
Poetry Presentation Sign-up List

5/24  “Bars Fight”

5/25  “Imagination”

5/28  No Class: Memorial Day

5/29  “The Slave Auction”

      “Miss Molly Means”

5/30  “October Journey”

      “First Fight, Then Fiddle”

      “We Real Cool”

      “Willie”

      “125th Street and Abomey”

      “A Letter to Dr. Martin Luther King”

      “My Father’s Wars”

      “Queen of the Ebony Isles”

5/31  “Homage to My Hips”

      “Quilting”

6/1   “Nikki-Rosa”

6/4   “Banneker”

      “Canary”

6/5   “Rite-ing”

      “The Venus Hottentot”