

# Skyline College

## Official Course Outline

Date: April 2007

1. **TITLE:**

Literature 266: Black Literature  
3.0 units, 3 lecture hours per week  
Prerequisite: English 100 or English 105 or equivalent

2. **COURSE CLASSIFICATION:**

Credit course applicable to the Associate Degree

3. **COURSE DESCRIPTIONS:**

**Catalog description:**

A survey of Black American literature from 1619 to the present. Literature, such as autobiographical works, poetry, short stories, drama, folk tales, novellas, and novels, will be included to introduce and explore the qualities of Black American writing. Transfer credit: UC; CSU (C2).

**Schedule of Classes description:**

A survey of Black American literature from 1619 to the present. Transfer: UC; CSU (C2).

4. **COURSE JUSTIFICATION:**

This course is intended for English majors for the A.A. degree and satisfies the transfer requirement for English majors for many California State Universities and Universities of California. Because the literature of Black American writers reveals important insights into the Black American Culture and the American Culture, the study of their works offers students an appreciation and understanding of the timeless, universal themes of the human dilemma and a study of the evolving American character. Essential for English majors, the course complements the work of social science, psychology, history, and other disciplines, and offers more work in critical reading, thinking, and writing skills. The course, therefore, serves all students. Transfer: UC; CSU (C2).

5. **STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES (SLO'S):**

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Identify, analyze, and evaluate major themes and literary techniques in Black literature
- Critically read, discuss, and interpret texts
- Write coherent, analytical, and original responses to course content

6. **SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES:**

During the course, students will be asked to:

- Analyze and synthesize the works of a variety of writers
- Understand the cultural and literary contexts of various works
- Trace the cultures' developing themes, characters, and imagery
- Understand the relevance of the various works' ideas to the present
- Compare/contrast the various works to works of others
- Draw sound inferences from the literature

## 7. COURSE CONTENT:

The course covers a representative sample of the entire range of Black American literature, appropriate historical and literary backgrounds and analyses, and writing essays/research paper, demonstrating independent analytical responses.

- I. Historical background and context
- II. Literary background and context
- III. The language of Black American
- IV. Universality of their works
- V. Slave Narratives: at least one work in depth and others for discussion: *The Life and Times of Olaudah Equino; Harriet Jacobs: Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl; Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, and others
  - A. Historical background
  - B. Sources
  - C. Themes, character, setting, plot structure, dramatic conventions
- VI. Novels: at least one work in depth and others for discussion: *The Souls of Black Folk, Their Eyes Were Watching God, Black Boy, Song of Solomon*, and others
  - A. Historical background
  - B. Sources
  - C. Themes, character, setting, plot structure, dramatic conventions
- VII. Short Stories: at least one work in depth and others for discussion by authors, such as Alice Walker, Maya Angelou, Charles Johnson, Ralph Ellison, Jamaica Kincaid, and others
  - A. Historical background
  - B. Sources
  - C. Themes, character, setting, plot structure, dramatic conventions
- VIII. Dramas: at least one work in depth and others for discussion, such as Imamu Amiri Baraka, Owen Dodson, Lorraine Hansberry, and others
  - A. Historical background
  - B. Sources
  - C. Themes, character, setting, plot structure, dramatic conventions
- IX. Poetry: at least one work in depth and others for discussion from each period, such as Phyllis Wheatley, Countee Cullen, Gwendolyn Brooks, and others
  - A. Colonial Period
  - B. Harlem Renaissance Period
  - C. Modern Period

## 8. REPRESENTATIVE METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:

Lecture, small/large group discussion, guided readings, reading journals, critical essays, oral reports, field trips to live performances as appropriate, film, dramatic presentations, and collaborative/individual projects.

Reading assignments will cover segments of or complete works assigned per class, plus reading background materials, with a total of at least one work of each genre, including a substantial body of poetry and short stories per semester. Students will keep reading journals in response to specific questions on the texts.

Writing critical essays, totaling at least 2,500 words, which will demonstrate understanding of the material and independent analytical responses that are supported by references to the texts.

## 9. ASSIGNMENTS: Typical assignments might include the following:

Course Objective	Instructional Methods	Assignment	Method of Evaluation
Identify, analyze, and evaluate	<b>Lecture:</b> Instructor gives oral presentation to	<b>Reading Journal:</b> Students reflect on the	<b>Essays:</b> Students present written

<p>major themes in Black American's works</p> <p>Critically read and interpret Black American's works</p> <p>Analyze Black American's language, including his use of imagery, iambic pentameter</p>	<p>introduce students to the specific genre being studied—origins, themes, literary history; identifies major themes and concerns of Black American works; and denotes connections with modern literature.</p> <p><b>Student Discussion:</b> Student-led oral discussions based on journal reading; structured group interaction.</p> <p><b>Guided reading in-class:</b> Students read aloud a passage from the play, role-playing. Instructor explains difficult language, highlights certain passages to critically analyze</p> <p><b>Group work:</b> Groups report on findings in their assigned speech, etc., contributing to a general analysis of the play.</p> <p><b>Collaborative/individual projects:</b> Student-initiated projects related to coursework or related material (biographical/historical context, etc.)</p>	<p>associations of the word “tragedy,” for example; write responses to specific questions on the text for discussion</p> <p><b>Guided reading:</b> Students are assigned a play or part of a play to read in advance, and again in class.</p> <p><b>Group work:</b> In groups, students continue analysis modeled by instructor by preparing analysis of a speech or a moment of interaction, looking for tone, rhythm, sound, imagery, etc.</p> <p><b>Collaborative/individual projects/reports:</b> Students work in groups or individually to create a visual project, perhaps with the aid of media or performing or visual arts, which demonstrates understanding of coursework or background materials (biographical/historical context, etc.)</p> <p><b>Exercises/homework:</b> Students will be assigned practical exercises and other brief homework activities to practice interpretive skills and modern translations of the texts.</p>	<p>textual analyses which show understanding of the context and ideas of the work. Essays must also present original ideas supported by references to the texts.</p> <p><b>Oral participation:</b> Participating in and initiating discussions demonstrates understanding of the works and their context; also leading discussions and participating actively in small and large group (class) discussions demonstrates how far students have developed original responses.</p> <p><b>Presentation of report or project:</b> Students will be judged on the quality of their research as well as their presentation skills.</p> <p><b>Exams and quizzes:</b> Students will be evaluated on their understanding of texts and contexts as well as on their interpretation of contents.</p>
---	---	--	--

**Suggested Out-of-class Assignments:**

- **Readings**—Selected supplementary scholarly essays by Black American topics
- **Journals**—Written responses to questions or course materials (readings, videos, film, lectures, etc.)
- **Essays**—Write critical compositions of 500 to 1,250 words analyzing and evaluating themes and issues in Black Americans’ works, supported by references to the texts and other sources
- **Projects/reports**—Oral/written presentations of individual or collaborative research on relevant subjects

- **Viewing**—Students may be asked to watch/listen to a relevant videotape, audiotape, or other presentations with appropriate written responses and analyses

## 10. EVALUATION OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE:

Letter grade will typically be based on

**Essays**—Organized, coherent, and developed critical essays demonstrating understanding of material and presenting independent analytical responses, supported by references to the texts.

**Oral participation**—Active participation in class discussions, demonstrating understanding of and responses to the texts.

**Journals**—Written critical responses to assigned readings and class discussions, demonstrating understanding and analysis of important concepts in the texts.

**Oral presentations/reports**—Students will be judged on the quality of their work as well as on the delivery of the information.

**Quizzes**—Students will be quizzed on comprehension of materials.

**Homework/exercises**—Students will be required to practice various techniques of literary criticisms in short, written exercises.

**Final exam**—Students will be required to demonstrate that they have learned to recognize, analyze, and evaluate concepts and themes in the works of Black American writers.

## 11. RECOMMENDED or REQUIRED TEXT(S):

Lee, Valerie. *The Prentice Hall Anthology of African American Women's Literature*. New York: Prentice Hall, 2005. ISBN: 0130485462.

Painter, Nell Irvin. *Creating Black Americans: African American History and Its Meanings 1619 to the Present*. USA: Oxford University Press, 2006. ISBN: 0195137558.

Douglass, Frederick, Harriet Jacobs, Kwame Anthony Appiah. New York: Modern Library, 2000. ISBN: 0679783288.

### Other supplemental texts:

Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*

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

Langston Hughes:

*I Wonder as I Wander*

*The Big Sea*

*Simple's Uncle Sam*

*Something in Common*

*The Best of Simple*

*Selected Poems*

*Not Without Laughter*

Richard Wright:

*Native Son*

*Black Boy*

*Eight Men: Short Stories*

*The Outsider*

Ralph Ellison:

*Invisible Man*

*Juneteenth*

Shadow and Act  
Flying Home and other stories  
Living With Music: Ralph Ellison's Jazz Writings  
The Collected Essays of Ralph Ellison

Malcolm X:  
The Autobiography of Malcolm X  
By Any Means Necessary  
Malcolm X: he Last Speeches

Frances E. W. Harper  
Complete Poems of Frances E.W. Harper  
Iola Leroy

Zora Neale Hurston:  
Dust Tracks on a Road  
I Love Myself  
Their Eyes Were Watching God  
Moses Man of the Mountain  
Tell My Horse

Ishmael Reed, Flight to Canada

Audre Lorde, Collected Poems

Octavia Butler, Kindred

Arna Bontemps, Black Thunder

Charles W. Chestnutt, The Morrow of Tradition

Iceberg Slim:  
Mama Black Widow  
Pimp  
Trick Baby

Henry Louis Gates (Editor), Nellie Y. McKay (Editor), The Norton Anthology of African American Literature

Valerie Lee, The Prentice Hall Anthology of African American Women's Literature

Toni Morrison  
Love  
Song of Solomon  
Beloved  
Paradise  
Sula

Alice Walker  
The Color Purple

African American Literature (by genre) from:

[http://www.usc.edu/libraries/archives/ethnicstudies/africanamerican/black\\_lit\\_main.html](http://www.usc.edu/libraries/archives/ethnicstudies/africanamerican/black_lit_main.html)