

**University of Florida, Spring 2023**  
**Black Women Transatlantic**  
**Tu 1:55pm-3:50pm Th 12:50-1:40pm**

Dr. Julia Mollenthiel  
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**Course Description:**

This course will survey African American, African, European, and Caribbean literature written by Black women from the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the present. Students will read a variety of texts, each of which centers on materials that are thematically and historically related. Whether considering subjects of an historical, social, psychological, or literary nature, students engage in close examination of texts by Black female artists from both academic and popular realms that may include fiction and non-fiction, prose and poetry, drama and autobiography, in addition to non-print sources such as film and music. We will examine how Black women across these regions utilize certain aesthetics, styles, techniques, genres, and structures, as well as how these traditions explore ideas around freedom and identity. This course is organized thematically, with an emphasis on the movements and ideas of Black feminine social thought and political protest that contextualize Black women's writing across the diaspora.

In this course, we cross national boundaries in order to focus on a range of issues that surface in Black women literatures of the U.S., Africa, Europe, and the Caribbean in order to address connections between these cultures especially as it relates to slavery, Black women's identity and sexuality, nation/narration, home and location/dislocation. This involves taking account of myth and history, politics and language, in relation to the connected worlds of the U.S., Africa, Europe, and the Caribbean. Both Africa and the Caribbean have occupied the place of fantasy for European and American audiences. This course looks more closely at literatures that confront and challenge white hegemonic narratives of Black femininity. Ultimately, this course will provide students with a cross-cultural and evolutionary exposure to the works of Black women writers across these geographical regions. Through literature and documentaries, students will gain exposure to the diasporic works of Black women writers, the societal concerns and barriers that are illustrated within their writing, and the contexts that influence their work.

In addition to this overview, the course allows students to practice and sharpen their critical reading and writing skills. Students carry out in-depth research, weigh competing sources against one another, and forge complex arguments. They continue to refine their strategies for improving their writing based on feedback from instructors and from their classmates. It is my hope that our readings will lead to a host of possible research projects, including those that look at institutional and structural racism, intersections of race and gender, Black feminism, white privilege, colonialism, culture, and writing itself. Your instructor will introduce you to relevant texts and ideas within Black women's literature; via research and analysis, you will be asked to find other sources, and

ultimately produce a research paper that poses an argument related to one of the aforementioned topics.

**Required Materials:**

- A working portfolio for saving all class work, handouts, and every draft of writing assignments
- Internet-accessible computer with Microsoft Word.
- Blackboard account.
- Funds for printing/copying materials.
- Required texts.

*Please make necessary arrangements for these materials as soon as possible.*

**Learning Outcomes:**

By the end of the course, you will be able to:

1. To gain exposure to the works of Black women writers across the diaspora;
2. To discuss, compare, and analyze a broad range of Black women's literature in the U.S., Africa, Europe, and the Caribbean;
3. To understand the concepts of race, gender, class, history, and identity, and how all of these factors shape Black women's literature across the diaspora;
4. To examine the themes and issues commonly explored by Black women writers as they are illustrated in the required readings especially colonialism/postcolonialism, diasporic migration, marriage, cultural customs;
5. To investigate the historical, political, and social factors that influence Black women's literature;
6. To analyze the stylistic components, literary techniques, and traditions used within these authors' works;
7. To synthesize multiple sources to craft original and sophisticated arguments;
8. To find, evaluate, and employ appropriate sources;
9. To engage in close reading of texts;
10. To practice sophisticated rhetorical skills.

**Course Policies**

**Attendance:** Attendance and active participation are essential to successfully complete this course. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of every class. If you arrive after attendance has already been taken, it is your responsibility to notify me at the end of the class to amend the roster. In addition, students are responsible for obtaining and completing any make up work if they have an excused absence. Make up work must be completed by the following class period unless otherwise noted. Unexcused absences will not be provided make up work which could result in a grade deduction. Please see UF's policy on what constitutes an excused absence:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

In order for assignments to be accepted, please contact me as soon as possible and provide documentation of illness or other university-approved absences. Dated

documentation can include, but are not limited to: dated doctor's note, documentation of jury duty, obituary, etc. I reserve the right to contact the appropriate sources to confirm the documentation.

**Late Assignments:** Assignments are due at the beginning of class in class on the due date, turned in by you. **Assignments are NEVER accepted via email.** You must turn in a printed copy of the assignment in class on the due date. You are allowed to turn one essay (with the exception of the final essay) in up to one week late without being penalized (this excludes drafts for workshops). It is your responsibility to notify me that you are using this one-time accommodation. Any other essay or assignment that is turned in late for any reason will be deducted 1 full letter grade.

**Email:** Please feel free to email me if you have any questions related to the course. You can expect a response within 24 hours of your original message. Also, please check your email regularly so that you do not miss important notifications regarding the course.

**UF Lib:** Many of our course materials (and all of the secondary readings) are available online through the library.

**Notification:** Periodically, I will make course announcements via email notification. You are responsible for this information, so check your email every 24 hours. If you do not use your UF email account, you must forward your UF account to one you check daily. If you ask questions that may benefit the class, I may send the notification to the entire class in lieu of only emailing you.

**Classroom Etiquette:** Students are expected to be courteous both to the instructor and to their fellow classmates. This means listening to what others have to say and being respectful when others are speaking. Disrespect of any kind will not be tolerated. This includes, but is not limited to, hate speech, racist/sexist/homophobic language, shutting people down, and name-calling. Due to the nature of this course, we may encounter texts and examples that present sensitive/difficult topics, or ideas that you may not agree with. **Students are encouraged to employ critical thinking and to rely on data and verifiable sources to interrogate all assigned readings and subject matter in this course as a way of determining whether they agree with their classmates and/or their instructor. No lesson is intended to espouse, promote, advance, inculcate, or compel a particular feeling, perception, viewpoint, or belief.**

**Course Recordings:** Our class sessions may be recorded for students in the class to refer back to and for enrolled students who are unable to attend in-person. Students who participate orally in class are agreeing to potentially have their voice recorded. If you are unwilling to consent to have your voice recorded, you will need to complete an alternative assignment for discussion days. **As in all courses, unauthorized recording and unauthorized sharing of recorded materials is strictly prohibited.** Specifically, students may not publish any recorded classes/lectures/content without the written consent of the instructor. Publication without permission of the instructor is strictly prohibited. To "publish" means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access

to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section such as uploading or posting, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

**Essay Format:** All essays must be typed in 12-point font, Times, New Roman, double-spaced, and MLA conventions for format, citations, acknowledgements, and documentation.

**Additional Information:**

**Plagiarism:** Using the work of others without properly crediting them is plagiarism and is a serious violation of the student academic honor code. If it has been determined that you have plagiarized any or all of a document, you may fail the class or be dismissed from the university. Cases of suspected plagiarism and/or cheating will be pursued diligently. You are responsible for knowing the university's standards. See Honor Code: <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>

**Writing Center:** One-on-one tutoring is available at the Writing Center for help in any aspect of writing from brainstorming to organization. Visit <https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/> to schedule an appointment.

**Disability Services:** Accommodations will be made for those with documented disabilities. Please speak to me if such accommodations are necessary. Students with disabilities are responsible for registering with Disability Resource Center/Dean of Students Office in order to receive academic accommodations. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students are encouraged to contact *Disability Resource Center*: <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/students/accommodations>

**Course Evaluation:** Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at [gatorevals.ua.ufl.edu/students/](http://gatorevals.ua.ufl.edu/students/). Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via [ufl.bluera.com/ufl](http://ufl.bluera.com/ufl)

**COVID-19:** If you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms (Click here for guidance from the CDC on symptoms of coronavirus), please use the UF Health screening system and follow the instructions on whether you are able to attend class. Click here for UF Health guidance on what to do if you have been exposed to or are experiencing Covid-19

symptoms. Course materials will be provided to you with an excused absence, and you will be given a reasonable amount of time to make up work.

### **Course Requirements:**

**Class Attendance and Participation:** Regular class attendance and active participation are essential for successfully completing this course. This course is heavily discussion driven and you will be graded each class on your level of engagement with the class readings. Class discussion is essential to the development of critical thinking skills that come from exploring issues in greater detail, as well as oral communication, diplomatic, and interpersonal skills that come from listening and responding to your peers. If on any given day, you do not feel comfortable to participate orally in class, you will need to respond to the discussion questions in paragraph format to avoid losing points. This alternative assignment must be turned in by the following class period.

**Course Requirements – Presentations:** Students will produce a well-organized, informative, and engaging oral presentation on the assigned reading. Student presenters will function as discussion facilitators with the freedom to engage the class in a variety of meaningful ways, including random Socratic questioning, role-playing, power point presentations, written exercises, etc. Your work as facilitators will, first, entail providing background information on the author as well as an in-depth contextual analysis of concomitant events, trends, debates, individuals, and various external influences upon the assigned text. Then, your job will be to provide a summary of the primary and supplementary points of the author's argument, a discussion of methodology, a mention of contribution of this work to its field(s), an analysis of strengths and weaknesses (of the style of the writing, the content provided, as well as the argument), and build a connection between the readings to the week's and course's concerns. Finally, you will present an overview of your topic/argument, key ideas within the assigned reading, connections from previous readings, and/or the writer, his/her agenda, and how his/her work is regarded as foundational to the development of the Black horror aesthetic. Presentations should also push further by opening up questions or problems for whole class discussion. To do this, students should pose a minimum of three questions for the class to discuss.

**Course Requirements - Writing Assignments:** In each of your papers, you will offer analytical arguments, and provide an original and persuasive detailed analysis of texts. Although prompts for papers will be provided, students are welcome to use ideas developed in weekly reading assignments and/or class discussion as the basis for their paper. You should note that drafts of your paper, at any stage, may be duplicated and distributed as a text of the class; thus you should not write anything so personal that you would not want everybody in your class to read it. Save everything you do for this class, including computer versions and hard copies, and back up your work.

**Extra Credit:** You will have the opportunity to revise one of your previous essays (with the exception of the research paper) for a better grade. Please be advised that revising

your essay does not guarantee that you will receive a better grade. Students should use feedback on the final draft of their paper for revisions.

### **Grade Distribution:**

#### **Essays**

Essay 1 (Aesthetic): 100 points

Essay 2 (Theme): 100 points

Essay 3 (Film): 50 points

**Class Participation:** 5 points per discussion (20), 100 points total. This includes regular class discussions and workshop discussions.

\*Note: You can improve your grade for any class discussion by answering the discussion questions in paragraph format and submitting them by the following class period.

**Presentations:** 25 points per presentation (2), 50 points total.

**Total Number of Points Possible:** 400 points.

**Scale by Percentage** (total number of points earned divided by total number of points of possible):

A+ 97-100

A 93-96

A- 90-92

B+ 87-89

B 83-86

B- 80-82

C+ 77-79

C 73-76

C- 70-72

D+ 67-69

D 63-66

D – 60-62

F 0-59

### **Grading and Evaluation Policy**

Grades are based on: (1) the quality (in terms of proficiency and effort) of the projects produced throughout the course; (2) the degree of improvement in the student's inquiry process as demonstrated in the final paper by semester's end; (3) the quality of class participation and contributions, including attendance and promptness, peer critique, writing assignments, activities, and class discussions.

### **Accessibility and Accommodations:**

If you have received accommodations from UF's office of Accessibility Resources (ARC), please let me know. Whether or not you have documentation, I hope to make our learning experience as accessible as possible to all. Please let me know early in the semester if you have any concerns regarding your learning potential, participation, or general access in this course.

### **Schedule of Course Readings**

<b>Week 1: Slavery</b>	<p>January 10<sup>th</sup>: Instructor and student introductions. Introduction to the course (including the foundations of the course, the syllabus, and class expectations).</p> <p>January 12<sup>th</sup>:</p> <p>Philip, M. NourbeSe Philip <i>Zong!</i></p> <p>Amma Asante, <i>Belle</i> (Film)</p>
<b>Week 2: Slavery</b>	<p>January 17<sup>th</sup>: Harriet Jacobs, <i>Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl</i></p> <p>January 19<sup>th</sup>: Kasi Lemmons, <i>Harriet</i> (Film) or <i>Underground Railroad</i></p>
<b>Week 3: Slavery</b>	<p>January 24<sup>th</sup>: Stella Dadzie <i>A Kick in the Belly: Women, Slavery and Resistance</i></p> <p>January 26<sup>th</sup>: <i>Black Girl</i>, Sembene Ousmane or <i>Heritage Africa</i> (Film)</p>
<b>Week 4: Colonialism</b>	<p>January 31<sup>st</sup> - February 2: <i>Nervous Conditions</i> by Tsitsi Dangarembga</p>
<b>Week 5: Colonialism</b>	<p>February 7<sup>th</sup> &amp; 9<sup>th</sup>:</p> <p><i>Imperial Intimacies: A Tale of Two Islands</i>, Hazel V. Carby, and Bernardine Evaristo's <i>Girl, Woman, Other</i></p>
<b>Week 6: Migration</b>	<p>February 14 &amp; 16: <i>Lucy</i> by Jamaica Kincaid</p>
<b>Week 7: Migration</b>	<p>February 21 &amp; 23: <i>Americanah</i> by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie</p>
<b>Week 8: Migration</b>	<p>February 28<sup>th</sup> &amp; Mar 2<sup>nd</sup>: <i>Breath, Eyes, Memory</i> by Edwidge Danticat</p>
<b>Week 9: Migration</b>	<p>March 7<sup>th</sup>: <i>Asmarani</i> by Safia Elhillo</p> <p>March 9<sup>th</sup>: <i>Hair Tales</i> or <i>Nappily Ever After</i></p>

<b>Week 10:</b>	<b>Spring break: Mar 11-19</b>
<b>Week 11: Race and Gender</b>	March 21st & March 23 <sup>rd</sup> : The Heart of the Race: Black Women's lives in Britain, and Black Venus (Film)
<b>Week 12: Race and Gender</b>	Mar 28 & 30: Kopano Matlwa <i>Coconut</i> (200 pages)
<b>Week 13: Race and Gender</b>	Apr 4 & 6: Toni Morrison <i>The Bluest Eyes</i>
<b>Week 14: Marriage</b>	Apr 11 & 13 <sup>th</sup> : Alifa Rifaat's "Distant View of a Minaret and Other Stories," and selections from <i>Women Writing Africa, The Eastern Region</i>  <i>Africa: Will You Marry Me?</i> (Film)
<b>Week 15: Marriage</b>	Apr 18 & 20: Zora Neale Hurston, <i>Their Eyes Were Watching God</i>
<b>Week 16: Marriage</b>	Apr 25 <sup>th</sup> : <i>Bridgerton</i> and Course wrap up

\*Calendar subject to revision.