

AML 4311
Spring 2019
T 2-3, R3 periods
Place: T in TUR 2336; R in TUR 2346

Professor: Dr. King
Office Hrs.: T 4th; R 4-5th periods
or by appointment
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TONI MORRISON



“When you really look at the stereotypes of Black women, the worst you can say about them, that is once you disregard the vocabulary and the dirty words and deal with the substance of what is being said is quite complementary. Think about it. What is being said is that Black women are wonderful mothers and nurturers (mammies), that we are sexually at home in our own bodies (oversexed), and that we are self-sufficient and tough (henpecking and overbearing). And isn’t that exactly what every woman wants to be: loving and nurturing, sexually at home in her body, competent and strong?”

-Toni Morrison in an interview with *Ebony Magazine*, July 1988

Description: This course introduces students to an extraordinary woman whose work, both fictional and critical, has shaken the foundations of American literature (and criticism) to reconstitute both it and the boundaries of its canon. Students will investigate why critics herald Toni Morrison as the “most formally sophisticated novelist in the history of African-American literature” while also discovering why she is its most renowned. Morrison’s work has earned the highest accolades in contemporary literary circles: The National Book Critics Circle Award and the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters Award for *Song of Solomon* in 1977, the Pulitzer Prize and the Robert F. Kennedy Award for *Beloved* in 1988, the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1993 and the Presidential Medal of Freedom (2012) (among others). Her novels explore themes of naturalistic fiction while also engaging womanist thought, responsibility and respectability, and the more dramatic themes of modernism: death, love, rebirth, and memory. They are lyrical prose memorials to suffering and loss that move beyond characters’ victimization towards rectification, reconciliation, renewal, and revival.

Focus: Toni Morrison has published eleven novels, two plays, a libretto, two short stories, five children’s books and several critical pieces. This semester we will read many of her novels, including what critics call the *Beloved* Trilogy. Our discussions and considerations focus on several themes: the relationship of Morrison’s work to womanist thought, the sacred to the secular, history and heritage, identity, “race, borders and the desire for belonging.” We will evaluate what critics have to say about Morrison (how they construct and reconstruct the artist and her work) as well as evaluate the author’s own critical perspectives on art and society.

Required Texts and Materials:

- *The Origin of Others* (2017)
- *The Bluest Eye* (1970)
- *Sula* (1974)
- *Song of Solomon* (1977)
- *Beloved* (1987)
- *Jazz* (1992)
- *Paradise* (1997)
- *God Help the Child* (2015)
- Pack of 3x5 index card

Suggested reading (forthcoming February 12, 2019):

The Source of Self-Regard: Selected Essays, Speeches, and Meditations

Learn more: bit.ly/2PKiQJe

COURSE CALENDAR

Complete assigned readings by Tuesday of each week.
Critical reading reports will be due on that day.

WK 1: 1/8-10 Introduction

WK 2: 1/15-18

The Origin of Others

Critical Readings Report-
dates Assigned

WK 3: 1/22-24 *The Bluest
Eye* (entire text);

WK 4: 1/29-31 *The Bluest
Eye* (entire text)

📖 Critical reading
reports 1

WK 5: 2/5-7 *Sula*
(Part One)

WK 6: 2/12-14 *Sula*
(entire text)

📖 Critical reading
reports 2

WK 7: 2/19-21 *Song of
Solomon*
(Part One)

WK 8: 2/26-28 *Song of
Solomon*
(entire text)

📖 Critical reading
reports 3

WK 9: 3/5-7 **SPRING
BREAK**

WK 10: 3/12-14 *Beloved*
(Part One)

WK 11: 3/19-21 *Beloved*
(entire text)

📖 Critical reading
reports 4

WK 12: 3/26-28 *Jazz*
(Part One)

WK 13: 4/2-4 *Jazz*
(entire text)

📖 Critical reading
reports 5

WK 14: 4/9-11 *Paradise*
("Ruby"- "Seneca")

WK 15: 4/16-18 *Paradise*
(entire text)

📖 Critical reading
reports 6

WK 16: 4/23 *God Help the
Child* (All)

**FINAL PAPERS DUE in
Canvas by 11:59 PM
4/25/19**

Grade Distribution

FINAL PAPERS —150 PTS

This six-page paper should emphasize some aspect of the course objectives using any of the required texts you wish. You may develop your oral report response papers or choose something new. This assignment is due in Canvas on **April 25th by 11:59 pm**.

CRITICAL READING REPORT —100 PTS

This is a research assignment, meaning you are to complete independent research on your assigned text. Each student must present one (1) critical essay with a ten-minute assessment and response given to the class. You will also lead a 5-minute class discussion concerning the material presented. You are required to submit to me the title of the article/essay/book chapter to which you are responding (so there are no repetitions) no later than the week preceding your report. Study the selected text, explain its thesis and arguments; respond with your own insights, agreements, additions, or disagreements. No reading please! Your response paper should be no more than two pages. Again, for this assignment you will conduct a 10-minute presentation in which you do the following:

- a close examination of the selected critical text
- make use of handouts and/or use technology during the presentation
- provide two open-ended, class discussion questions
- direct a five-minute discussion of at least one of the two questions (after giving your 10-minute presentation)
- expect to be before the class a total of 15 minutes

OTHER EXPECTATIONS AND ASSIGNMENTS –250 PTS

Points breakdown is available in Canvas under “Assignments”

Attendance: Discussions cannot be replicated so if you miss a day of class, you will have missed the lesson for that day. Therefore, I take attendance very seriously and expect you to come to class every day on time. You are allowed **up to three** unexcused absences, your grade will automatically drop a half letter grade after the third unexcused absence. **If you reach nine (totaling three weeks of class) absences, you will automatically fail the course and should withdraw from the class or you will receive an “E” for the semester.** Except for extenuating circumstances (noted in the caveat below), no *Incomplete* grades are given for this course.

Caveat: Excused absences are permitted if you provide a typewritten letter documenting an illness, a family crisis, or participation in a university sponsored event. All students should consult with me to make up material missed during an excused absence. For additional information, please see our University guidelines cited in the “Course Policies” section of this syllabus.

Entrance Passes: Purchase a pack of 3x5 index cards. These cards are your entrance passes and will be used to inform me of your attendance and reading progress (see

additional instructions below). Take them seriously! Bring **one** with you every class session. Without an entrance pass you will be considered absent, so be sure to put your name on them. Tardy attendees' cards will be collected at the end of class. Tardiness will be recorded and considered during grading. Consistent tardiness will result in a final letter grade reduction.

Preparation: All readings, entrance passes, and take-home assignments must be prepared and ready for each class session. Write a comment on your entrance pass cards demonstrating your preparation for the day's session. Poorly constructed, irrelevant or perfunctory comments will result in point reductions in this area of grading. I do not want you to tell me you liked a particular reading, for instance. Your response to assigned readings must be intelligent, thoughtful and scholarly. Identify why the material is valuable to our class discussion (or objectives) or how the material engages the text being studied. **Your work on these cards will be graded without notice**, so do your best work at all times. Remember: I read and grade them. Be prepared at all times.

Participation: Students should complete all readings and assignments prior to the class meeting and participate fully in class discussion. Assessment for participation is made in the areas of attendance, engagement, leadership, teamwork, and originality.

Strong participation includes:

1. only excused absences with no recorded tardiness
2. adherence to course policies, assignments and guidelines
3. response paper submissions providing evidence that readings are completed and ready for class discussions
4. outside research done and shared with class on multiple occasions
5. clear and respectful exchanges with other students and the professor
6. volunteering to enter or begin discussions (brief presentations included)
7. leadership within small group activities noted by reporting out for the group or taking a guiding role
8. an understanding of teamwork and ones responsibility to advancing positive class or group dynamics
9. originality in thought, discussion and response paper information and sharing
10. encouraging others' ability to enter or sustain participation in discussions
11. engaging questions from the professor or other students without hesitation or persuasion

Rubric

- 📚 "A" level participation is strong in all key areas and earns 100-90 points.
- 📚 "B" level participation, albeit promising, is notably weak in TWO key areas and earns from 89-80 points.

- 📚 "C" level participation is notably weak in *three* key areas and earns from 79-70 points.
- 📚 "D" level participation is significantly weak in THREE or more of the key areas and earns from 69-60 points
- 📚 below 59 pts is failing level participation

Exams, Quizzes and Other assignments: There may be a few pop quizzes—no makeup quizzes or rewrites. Your performance during class, progress evaluations (tests and quizzes) and in-class discussions will determine if a final exam is necessary. I will inform you of my decision.

Extra Credit (5 bonus points): *This is an optional assignment.* You may give a fifteen-minute oral report to the class (or, if time does not permit, deliver a Prezi or PowerPoint presentation to me) on an issue under discussion. These reports must be approved prior to the day of presentation. Submit a short proposal describing what you plan to do. Do not wait until the end of the term as time availability may not allow for your presentation. The assignment will earn scores ranging from 1/2 to 5 points (added to your overall course score). Presentation design choice is yours. Any PowerPoint presentation, however, must follow the 1-1-5 rule. By that, I mean one image, used one time with no more than five words per slide. You may, of course, use the presenter's notes for personal guidance during the presentation.

Grade Distribution and Grading Method

All papers and short essay quizzes are evaluated on content, originality, creativity, connections to course objectives, and form (grammar, spelling, bibliography, etc.). Grades will be calculated in terms of score percentages with no curve. You are guaranteed an A if you earn 450 points or more out of 500 points (90 %⁺).

435 to 449 (87% ⁺)	B ⁺	385 to 399 (77 % ⁺)	C ⁺	335 to 363 (67 % ⁺)	D ⁺
415 to 434 (83% ⁺)	B	365 to 384 (73 % ⁺)	C	315 to 334 (63 % ⁺)	D
400 to 414 (80 % ⁺)	B ⁻	350 to 364 (70 % ⁺)	C ⁻	300 to 314 (60 % ⁺)	D ⁻

GRADING CRITERIA

Assignments will be graded on how proficiently they meet expectations in the key areas of content, organization, and grammar/mechanics and prose style.

Strong content includes:

- A clearly delineated and/ or interpreted topic
- A strong, clear, and logically developed thesis that is supported by fully developed ideas in the form of relevant textual evidence and research
- Ideas that show evidence of independent thinking
- Commentary that explains how the concrete details support the thesis. Commentary may include interpretation, analysis, argument, insight, and/or reflection.
- research supporting materials (note: Google searches are fine for starters, but please use academic journals and books for strong research effort)

Strong organization includes:

- The effective arrangement of points that reveals itself in very good incorporation of evidence (use of summary, paraphrase) and the sparing and judicious use of quotations
- Rounded and well-connected paragraphs
- The use of appropriate transitions

Strong grammar, mechanics, and prose style is characterized by:

- Mature sentence structure, syntax, and diction

- Strong audience awareness as evidenced in the use of appropriate style, register, tone, and vocabulary
- Little to no errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation as well as less than three fatal errors in the entire document
- The formatting of document in keeping with prescribed guidelines—including length of response submissions

RUBRIC

The “A” (or A-) submission has strong content, strong organization, AND strong grammar/mechanics and prose style. To receive an “A” or “A-” work needs to offer support in the form of textual evidence and secondary research materials (using direct quotes and paraphrase), present original insight in argumentation, and be organized clearly and logically with sources documented using MLA style guidelines.

A “B” submission is notably weak in ONE of the above key areas.

A “C” submission, albeit promising, is notably weak in TWO or more of the above key areas.

A “D” submission is significantly weak in TWO or more of the above key areas.

Additional information concerning UF grading policies may be found on the undergraduate catalog web page <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

COURSE POLICIES

1) “FATAL ERRORS” POLICY: Students must meet high standards in writing. To this end, all written assignments must meet minimal presentation criteria to be acceptable. These standards address spelling, punctuation, format and basic grammar. The term *Fatal Errors* refers to formal writing errors of form. Specifically, they include the following and will be identified in evaluated written assignments by error number (FE#_):

- ✚ 1. Each different word misspelled;
- ✚ 2. Each sentence fragment;
- ✚ 3. Each run-on sentence or comma splice;
- ✚ 4. Each mistake in capitalization (capitalize Black and White when referring to individuals, communities, or ideas);
- ✚ 5. Each serious error in punctuation that obscures meaning, including errors in the use or failure to use italics and quotation marks;
- ✚ 6. Each error in verb tense or subject/verb agreement;
- ✚ 7. Each instance of ending a sentence with a preposition;
- ✚ 8. Each improper citation, or lack of citation, where one is needed;
- ✚ 9. Each misuse of words (*who* for *that* or unwarranted use of clichés, for instance) and reference problems (note: pronouns refer to the last person mentioned);
- ✚ 10. Poor paragraphing or lack of paragraphing;
- ✚ 11. Lack of conformity with assignment format.

Papers with more than **three (3) fatal errors on any one page** or more than **seven (7) for the entire document** may be returned to the student for revision but will suffer a half letter grade deduction. Only one resubmission is allowed. Penalties for final course papers (where there is no time for a resubmission) will be based on the magnitude of errors and the relative importance of the assignment to the determination of the final course grade. This policy applies to all written assignments, except in class quizzes.

- 2) Cell phones and laptops: Cell phones must be muted during the class session. If an emergency occurs and you have to respond to calls or texts, please leave the classroom. Computers (iPads or other electronics) are allowed for note taking, access to eBooks, at the request of the professor and presentations only. Anyone using a computer for any other purpose will be asked to deliver the device to me for retrieval after class. You may record the class (presentations, for instance) with my permission only. Failure to acquire permission will result in participation point reductions.
- 3) Papers: All papers must be typed and double spaced using the 8 1/2 x 11 page layout with one-inch margins all around. Use Courier or New York Times font at 12-point size. Documentation and form should follow the MLA style manual. Number all pages after the first within the upper right margin.
- 4) Paper Maintenance Responsibilities: Students are responsible for maintaining duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course and retaining all returned, graded work until the semester is over. Should the need arise for a resubmission of papers or a review of graded papers; it is the student's responsibility to have and to make available this material.
- 5) Grade Disputes: Questions about assigned grades are acceptable during my office hours only. If my written responses do not address your concerns, I will explain why a grade was earned. With the exception of miscalculation, I will not consider grade changes. **Please do not ask; I consider it harassment.** You may consult the department of English's Associate Chair, for grade appeals, however. Please note: appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade.
- 6) Midterm Assessment Reports: Individual grades will be available after midterm in Canvas, indicating your current status in the class. These reports will offer information on all graded aspects of the course completed, including attendance, as recorded in the e-learning grade book. You should consider these performance-tracking grades carefully and govern yourself accordingly.
- 7) Missed class sessions: Make up work for approved absences must be addressed within one week of your return. See me for submission deadlines for missed work within this time frame.
- 8) Response Paper submission guidelines: Like all written assignments, this paper **must be submitted electronically**. Microsoft Word compatible documents only please. Unreadable documents will be returned ungraded. Submit your project via Canvas by midnight the evening of the due date. Late submissions will suffer a half letter grade reduction.
- 9) "Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found in the online catalog at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>."

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

DISABILITY SERVICES: The Disability Resource Center in the Dean of Students Office provides students and faculty with information and support regarding accommodations for students with

disabilities in the classroom. It is your responsibility to contact the school administration regarding any disability you may have, and to inform me so we can make any necessary arrangements. For more information, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>.

ACADEMIC HONESTY: Honor Code. “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity.” This oath represents UF’s commitment to academic honesty and integrity. “Cheating, plagiarism, bribery, misrepresentation, conspiracy and fabrication” are violations of the Honor Code. All students must abide by the student honor code. For more information about academic honesty, including definitions of plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/student-responsibilities/> .

HARASSMENT: UF provides an educational and working environment for its students, faculty, and staff free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment. For more about UF policies regarding harassment, see: <https://hr.ufl.edu/forms-policies/policies-managers/sexual-harassment/> .

COURSE EVALUATIONS: “Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu> . Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>.”