

AML 4311

Spring 2024

Tuesday 6-8 periods

Place: Online via ZOOM

Professor: Dr. King

Office Hrs.: T 9-11th periods

via Zoom by appointment

Email: dwking@ufl.edu

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

Our class sessions may be audio visually recorded for students in the class to refer back to and for use of enrolled students who are unable to attend live. Students who participate with their camera engaged or utilize a profile image are agreeing to have their video or image recorded. If you are unwilling to consent to have your profile or video image recorded, keep your camera off and do not use a profile image. Not using a profile image may limit my ability to recall you when necessary (participation grading and letters of recommendation, for instance). Likewise, students who un-mute during class and participate verbally are agreeing to have their voices recorded. If you are unwilling to consent to have your voice recorded during class, you will need to keep your mute button activated and communicate exclusively using the "chat" feature, which allows students to type questions and comments live. The chat will not be recorded or shared. As in all courses, unauthorized recording and unauthorized sharing of recorded materials is prohibited.

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: Before her death in 2019, Toni Morrison 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 Bluest Eye* (1970)
- *Sula* (1974)
- *Song of Solomon* (1977)
- *Beloved* (1987)

- *Jazz* (1992)
- *Paradise* (1997)
- *God Help the Child* (2015)

Suggested readings:

The Origin of Others (2017)

The Source of Self-Regard: Selected Essays, Speeches, and Meditations (2019)

[Links to an external site.](#)

Course Calendar

WK 1: 1/9 Course Introduction

Please Note

1. Complete asynchronous assignments before we begin class on the assignment date. Full text responses are required where indicated. This means you may discuss any chapter or "Part" of the text. You may even follow and discuss thematic or motif development and other analyses throughout the text.
2. Critical Reading Reports are assigned and due beginning **Week 3 (1/23)** of our class sessions. Papers supporting this report are due the same day. Check "Groups" under "People" in Canvas to see which report grouping you are assigned. You will find the week your group is expected to present in this syllabus.
3. Assignment to a Critical Reading Report group does not indicate *group work* but offer an opportunity for preparation and coordination as participants during assigned sessions. Due dates are indicated below by assigned readings, presentation dates, and Group numbers. See the "Grade Distribution" section of this syllabus (below) for a detailed description of the assignment and report expectations.
4. The 5-1-1 Rule applies to all electronic, presentation formats.

WK 2: 1/16 Open Discussion of Required Readings

Required Readings: "Definition of Womanism" (under "files" in Canvas); "Morrison's Nobel Lecture" located under "Files"

Highly Suggested Reading: *The Origin of Others* (full text)

WK 3: 1/23 *The Bluest Eye*

Open Discussion (synchronous via ZOOM)

Critical reading reports due Group 1 -- *The Bluest Eye* (full text)

*Remember: Papers supporting your reports are due today--do not read them to the class!
Discuss your work. If you use a PowerPoint or other presentation platform follow the 5-1-1
(five words per slide, one image used only one time) format.*

WK 4: 1/30 *The Bluest Eye*

Open Discussion (synchronous via ZOOM)

asynchronous session / discussion board assignment (full text)

WK 5: 2/6 *Sula*

Open Discussion (synchronous via ZOOM)

Critical reading reports due Group 2 --Sula (full text)

*Remember: Papers supporting your reports are due today--do not read them to the class!
Discuss your work. If you use a PowerPoint or other presentation platform follow the 5-1-1
(five words per slide, one image used only one time) format.*

WK 6: 2/13 *Sula*

Open Discussion (synchronous via ZOOM)

asynchronous session / discussion board assignment (full text)

WK 7: 2/20 *Song of Solomon*

Open Discussion (synchronous via ZOOM)

Critical reading reports due Group 3 --Song of Solomon (full text)

*Remember: Papers supporting your reports are due today--do not read them to the class!
Discuss your work. If you use a PowerPoint or other presentation platform follow the 5-1-1
(five words per slide, one image used only one time) format.*

WK 8: 2/27 *Song of Solomon*

Open Discussion (synchronous via ZOOM)

asynchronous session / discussion board assignment (full text)

WK 9: 3/5 *Beloved*

Open Discussion (synchronous via ZOOM)

Critical reading reports due Group 4 --Beloved (full text)

*Remember: Papers supporting your reports are due today--do not read them to the class!
Discuss your work. If you use a PowerPoint or other presentation platform follow the 5-1-1
(five words per slide, one image used only one time) format.*

WK 10: 3/12 ---Spring Break--

WK 11: 3/19 *Beloved*

Open Discussion (synchronous via ZOOM)

asynchronous session / see discussion board assignment (full text)

WK 12: 3/26 *Jazz*

Open Discussion (synchronous via ZOOM)

Critical reading reports due Group 5 -- Jazz (full text)

Remember: Papers supporting your reports are due today--do not read them to the class! Discuss your work. If you use a PowerPoint or other presentation platform follow the 5-1-1 (five words per slide, with one image used only one time) format.

WK 13: 4/2 *Jazz*

Open Discussion (synchronous via ZOOM)

asynchronous session / see discussion board assignment (full text)

WK 14: 4/9 *Paradise*

Critical reading reports due Group 6 -- Paradise (full text)

Remember: Papers supporting your reports are due today--do not read them to the class! Discuss your work. If you use a PowerPoint or other presentation platform follow the 5-1-1 (five words per slide, one image used only one time) format.

WK 15: 4/16 *Paradise*

Open Discussion (synchronous via ZOOM)

asynchronous session / discussion board assignment-- (full text)

WK 16: 4/23 **Last Day of Class**

Completion Day: Presentation of any Critical Reports remaining

Required Reading: *God Help the Child* (full text)

Suggested reading: *ELLE MAGAZINE* (OCT. 2019)Links to an external site.

Please Note

Friday, 5/3: *God Help the Child* focused FINAL PAPERS are **DUE** in Canvas between 10 am and NOON (our scheduled exam time). You may submit them early as today (4/23). There will be no extensions.

Grade Distribution

Critical Reading Reports –100 pts.

This is a research assignment, meaning you are to complete independent, scholarly research on your assigned text. Each student must present one (1) 3-page critical essay (uploaded to Canvas assignment "Critical Reports" before the assigned class section) and present to the class a 10-minute assessment and response to the researched material. You will also lead a 5–10-minute class discussion concerning the material presented. You are required to coordinate with your group so there are no duplications of articles, essay, or book chapters to which you are responding. This is the only required use of the groups. Study the selected research, explain its thesis and arguments; respond with your own insights, agreements, additions, or disagreements. No excessive reading, please! Tell us what you want us to know. Again, for this assignment, you are required to write a 3-page paper and conduct a 15-20 minute presentation, offering the following:

- a close examination of the selected critical text
- use of technology during the presentation
- two open-ended, class discussion questions
- a five-ten-minute discussion of at least one of the two questions (following your 10-minute presentation)
- class leadership for a total of 15-20 minutes

Final Papers –200 pts.

This five (5)-page paper emphasizes some aspect of the course objectives using *God Help the Child* as your primary text and one other, which we read together this term. You may include aspects of your critical report in this final project or choose something new. You must use at least two **scholarly** research sources (articles, books, or book chapters). A "Bibliography" is required but should not be included in the essay page count. This assignment is due in Canvas Friday, **May 3rd by NOON--no extensions.**

Other Expectations and Assignments –200 pts.

Points breakdown is available in Canvas under "Assignments"

Attendance: Every session will not be recorded; so, if you miss a day of class, you will have missed the lesson for that week. Therefore, I take attendance very seriously and expect you to come to class every session 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 six synchronous class absences, you will automatically fail the course and should withdraw from the class or you will receive an "E" for the semester. Canvas records the time spent on the site so be sure to check in during the asynchronous sessions for assignment prompts and later for assignment upload.**

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.

Discussion Board Assignments/Preparation:

Preparation (see Canvas under "Assignments" for total point value): All readings and discussion board assignments must be prepared and ready for each synchronous class session. I will not tell you what to write but expectations are outlined in the "Grading Criteria" and "Rubric" located below--just above the Course Policies. Offer a close reading or write a comment demonstrating your preparation for the session. Poorly constructed, irrelevant or perfunctory comments will result in point reductions in this area of grading.

Discussion Board Assignments (actual, graded point values between (50-100) to be announced): You have six days between class meetings to complete this assignment each week. Write a post for the assigned reading before the Tuesday synchronous class session--paired with the assignment by week number in this syllabus. Close readings are expected of your post. I do not want you to tell me you liked a particular reading without giving a strong and mature, textual analysis explaining some aspect of why, for instance. If an in-class quiz is announced, you may be asked to write an intelligent response to one (1) other student's post. Quiz grades are recorded separate from the "complete / incomplete" grades recorded for each discussion board entry. All posts must be thoughtful and scholarly, demonstrating your completion of the reading material assigned for that week. Formal writing is required--always.

Although most discussion board entries will receive an incomplete/complete grade, your work in this area will be graded occasionally for quiz grades ranging from 50-100 Points without prior notice. Each incomplete assignment post will result in a 10 point deduction in the area of preparation. If an incomplete post assignment is also a "pop," or unannounced, graded assignment, you lose all points contributed to the "pop" grade as well as points attributed to your preparation grade.

Sample Student Performance Grade:

(Please see "Assignments" for actual point values)

SAMPLE TOTAL -----6 Discussion Board Posts -----

Sample original entry and 2 responses point value: 60

4 Complete Posts ----- 40 earned no preparation points lost

2 Incomplete Posts ----- **20 points lost preparation points**

Subtotal: Preparation points earned ----- 40:60 points

3 Original Posts graded as unannounced quizzes----Total 40 quiz points

1 "pop" post completed with excellence----- 15 quiz points earned

1 "pop" post incomplete ----- 10:10 quiz points lost

1 "pop" post completed below expectations ---- 10:15 quiz points earned

Subtotal: Quiz points earned ----- 25:40 points

Total Points earned ----- 65:100

Participation: Participation in our class is fundamental since improving oral conversation skills is a key objective of the course. Thus, students are expected to have their cameras on from start to finish during our classes on Zoom. A default setting for our sessions in Zoom is that participants will be muted when they enter. You will unmute yourself when you comment orally during our whole-group conversations and when you are in small groups. Students will also reply in the chat box for activities so assigned.

Oral comments on camera and written comments in the chat box are considered activities for participation. If you have technical issues, please immediately consult UF IT Help to resolve them and then contact Dr. King. All Zoom sessions will not be recorded and may not be recorded by students without consent. As in all courses, unauthorized recording and unauthorized sharing of recorded material is prohibited.

Students should complete all readings and assignments prior to the class meeting and participate fully in 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 one's 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
- grades below 59 points represent failing level participation

Exams, Quizzes and Other assignments: There will be a few "pop" discussion board assignments and/or quizzes—no makeup work allowed for either. 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: 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 and for me to read.

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 475 points out of 500 points (95 %). 450 points out of 500 earns an A-. Other grade point values are as follows:

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

Written assignments will be graded on how proficiently they meet expectations in the key areas of content, organization, and grammar/mechanics and prose style. Formal writing is required.

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 and essay 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> [Links to an external site.](#)

Course Policies

- ***“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 (In this class we capitalize Black and White when referring to individuals, communities, or ideas for instance);
 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), or other poor quality writing (immature or informal writing, for instance);
 10. Poor paragraphing or lack of paragraphing;
 11. Lack of conformity with assignment format or details, including cover page.

I stop reading papers with more than **three (3) fatal different errors on any one page** or more than **seven (7) errors of any type in the entire document** (a failing submission). Such work 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.

- 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 (and, of course, Zoom meetings), at the request of the professor, and for presentations only.

- Papers: All papers must be typed and double spaced using the 8 1/2 x 11page layout with one-inch margins all around. Use Courier or New York Times font at 12-point size. Provide a cover page for essay assignments. Documentation and form should follow the MLA style manual. Number all pages after the first within the upper right margin.
- *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.
- 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.
- Midterm Assessment Reports: Ongoing individual grades will be available in Canvas, indicating your current status in the class. These reports offer information on all graded aspects of the course completed as recorded in the e-learning grade book. You should consider these performance-tracking grades carefully and govern yourself accordingly.
- 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.
- Paper submission guidelines: Like all written assignments, papers **must be submitted electronically**. Microsoft Word compatible documents only please. Unreadable documents will be returned ungraded. Submit your project via Canvas by 11:59 p.m. the evening of the due date (unless stated otherwise in this syllabus). Late submissions will suffer a half letter grade reduction.
- "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.aspxLinks> to an external site."

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/Links to an external site.](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/Links%20to%20an%20external%20site.)

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/Links to an external site.](https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/student-responsibilities/Links%20to%20an%20external%20site.) .

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/Links to an external site.](https://hr.ufl.edu/forms-policies/policies-managers/sexual-harassment/Links%20to%20an%20external%20site.) .

Campus Resources Health and Wellness

U Matter, We Care: If you, or a friend, are in distress please contact umatter@ufl.edu or 352 392-1575 so that a team member can reach out to the student.

Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc>, and 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS) Student Health Care Center, 392-1161.

University Police Department at 392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies), or <http://www.police.ufl.edu/> ([Links to an external site.](#)).

Academic Resources

E-learning technical support, 352-392-4357 (select option 2) or e-mail to Learning-support@ufl.edu. <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml>.

Career Resource Center, Reitz Union, 392-1601. Career assistance and counseling. <https://www.crc.ufl.edu/>.

Library Support, <http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask>. Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

Teaching Center, Broward Hall, 392-2010 or 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring. <https://teachingcenter.ufl.edu/>.

Writing Studio, 302 Tigert Hall, 846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers. <https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>.

Student Complaints Campus:
https://www.dso.ufl.edu/documents/UF_Complaints_policy.pdf.

On-Line Students Complaints: <http://www.distance.ufl.edu/student-complaint-process>.

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>[Links to an external site.](#) . 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>[Links to an external site.](#).”