

AML 4311

Spring 2021

T 2-3, R3 periods

Place: Online via ZOOM

Professor: Dr. King

Office Hrs.: T 4th; R 4-5th 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 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)

Suggested reading:

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

Course Calendar

Complete assigned readings and asynchronous assignments before class Tuesday of each week.

WK 1: 1/12, 14

Introduction

WK 2: 1/19, 21

Tuesday: (*synchronous via ZOOM*)

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

Thursday -- (*synchronous via ZOOM*) -- *The Origin of Others (full text)*

WK 3: 1/26, 28 *The Bluest Eye ("Autumn" and "Winter")*

Tuesday-- Open Discussion (*synchronous via ZOOM*)

Thursday (*asynchronous session / discussion board assignment*) -- *The Bluest Eye (full text)*

WK 4: 2/2, 4 *The Bluest Eye (full text)*

Tuesday-- Open Discussion (*synchronous via ZOOM*)

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

Thursday (*asynchronous session / discussion board assignment*) -- *Sula (Part 1: "Forward" - "1927")*

WK 5: 2/9, 11 *Sula (Part One) -- "Forward" through "1927"*

Tuesday-- Open Discussion (*synchronous via ZOOM*)

Continue Critical reading reports 1

Thursday (*asynchronous session / discussion board assignment*) -- *Sula ("1937" through end)*

WK 6: 2/16, 18 *Sula (full text)*

Tuesday-- Open Discussion (*synchronous via ZOOM*)

Critical reading reports 2 (*Sula -- full text*)

Thursday (*asynchronous session / discussion board assignment*) -- *Song of Solomon (Part 1)- Chpt. 1-9*

WK 7: 2/23, 25 *Song of Solomon (Part 1) -- Chapters 1-9*

Tuesday-- Open Discussion (*synchronous via ZOOM*)

Continue Critical reading reports 2

Thursday (asynchronous session / discussion board assignment) -- *Song of Solomon*. (Chpt. 10-ending)

WK 8: 3/2, 4 *Song of Solomon* (full text)

Tuesday-- Open Discussion (synchronous via ZOOM)

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

Thursday (asynchronous session / see discussion board assignment) -- *Beloved* ("Part One")

WK 9: 3/9, 11 *Beloved* (Part One)

Tuesday-- Open Discussion (synchronous via ZOOM)

Continue Critical reading reports 3

Thursday (asynchronous session / see discussion board assignment) -- *Beloved* ("Part Two" - end)

WK 10: 3/16, 18 *Beloved* (full text)

Tuesday-- Open Discussion (synchronous via ZOOM)

Critical reading reports 4 (*Beloved* - full text)

Thursday (asynchronous session / discussion board assignment) - *Jazz* (Part One ending w/ "In the City.")

WK 11: 3/23, 25 *Jazz* (Part One) "Forward" through page 114 (ending with "In the City.")

Tuesday-- Open Discussion (synchronous via ZOOM)

Continue Critical reading reports 4

Thursday (asynchronous session / discussion board assignment) -- *Jazz* - end (from pp. 117 beginning with "And when spring comes to the city...")

WK 12: 3/30- 4/1 *Jazz* (full text)

Tuesday-- Open Discussion (synchronous via ZOOM)

Critical reading reports 5 - (*Jazz* - full text)

Thursday (asynchronous session / see discussion board assignment) -- *Paradise* ("Ruby"- "Seneca")

WK 13: 4/6, 8 *Paradise*-- ("Ruby"- "Seneca")

Tuesday-- Open Discussion (synchronous via ZOOM)

Continue Critical reading reports 5

Thursday-- (asynchronous session / see discussion board assignment) -- *Paradise* ("Divine" – end)

WK 14: 4/13, 15

Tuesday-- Open Discussion (synchronous via ZOOM)

Critical reading reports 6 (*Paradise* - full text)

Thursday (asynchronous session / discussion board assignment) -- *God Help the Child*

WK 15: 4/20

Tuesday-- Open Discussion (synchronous via ZOOM)

Continue Critical reading reports 6

Please Note: 4/27 *God Help the Child* focused FINAL PAPERS DUE in Canvas by 11:59 pm

Grade Distribution

Final Papers —200 pts.

This **6-8**-page paper should emphasize some aspect of the course objectives using *God Help the Child* as your primary text and one other. You may include aspects of your critical reports in this final project or choose something new. You are required to use at least two scholarly research articles, books, or book chapters. This assignment is due in Canvas on Friday, **April 27th by 11:59 pm.**

Critical Reading Reports —50 pts.

This is a research assignment, meaning you are to complete independent, scholarly research on your assigned text. Each student must present one (1) critical essay and present a 10-minute assessment and response to the class. You will also lead a 5-minute class discussion concerning the material presented. You are required to coordinate with your group so there are not duplications of the article/essay/book chapter to which you are responding. This is the only required use of the groups. Study the selected text, 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 will conduct a 10-minute presentation during which you do the following:

- a close examination of the selected critical text
- make use of technology during the presentation
- prepare two open-ended, class discussion questions
- lead a five-minute discussion of at least one of the two questions (following 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: Every session will not be recorded; 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 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 actual 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 to be announced): You have six days between class meetings to complete this assignment each week: from Wednesday to Monday. Write an initial post for the assigned reading and respond to TWO (2) of your classmate's posts before the Tuesday synchronous class session. Close readings are expected of your personal post. I do not want you to tell me and your classmates that you liked a particular reading, for instance. Intelligent responses to two (2) other student posts not only demonstrates good preparation, but they are required. All posts must be thoughtful and scholarly, demonstrating your completion of the reading material assigned for that week. Formal writing is required.

Although most discussion board entries will receive an incomplete/complete grade, your work in this area will be graded occasionally for 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 (recorded under the discussion board assignment in the Canvas grade book) as well as the ten points attributed to your preparation grade.

Sample Student Performance Grading:

(Please see "Assignments" for actual point values)

SAMPLE TOTAL ----- 11 Posts ----- possible sample points 150
9 Complete Posts ----- no preparation points lost
2 Incomplete Posts ----- 20 preparation points lost
Subtotal: Preparation points earned ----- 80:100 points
3 "pop" posts completed with excellence----- 30 discussion board points earned
1 "pop" post incomplete ----- 10 discussion board points lost
1 "pop" post completed below expectations ---- 7:10 graded discussion posts earned
Subtotal: Discussion points earned ----- 37:50 points
Total Points earned ----- 117:150 or 78%

Participation: 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 may be a few pop quizzes—no makeup quizzes. 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

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 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 please 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), 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.**

Papers with more than **three (3) fatal errors on any one page** or more than **seven (7) for the entire document** (potentially a failing submission) 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. 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.
- 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.
- *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.
- 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 11:59 pm 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.aspx> (Links 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.).

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.) .

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.) .

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.](#)).”