

Slave Narratives and Neo-Slave/Freedom Narratives

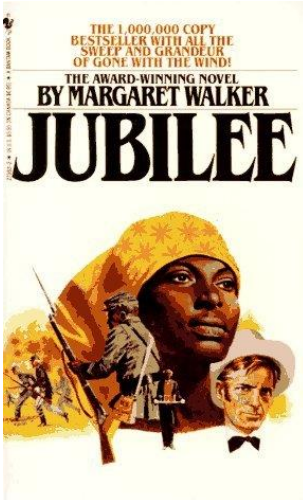
Dr. Delia Steverson

AML 4685 sec 305C/AFA 4931 sec 309G
 Class time/location: MWF P.3 Matherly 115

Office Hours: T 10am-12pm or by appt.

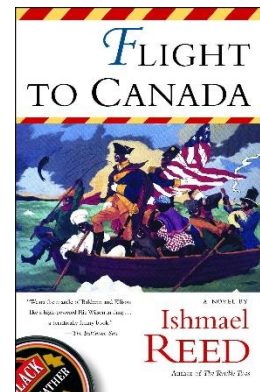
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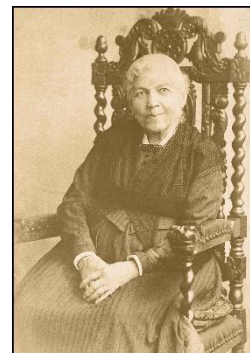
In 1966 Margaret Walker published *Jubilee*, a quasi-fictional novel that recounts a black woman's experience through slavery, the Civil War, and the Reconstruction. This text would serve as the beginning of a genre of African American writing that Ishmael Reed would later pen *neo-slave* or *freedom narratives*. As Ashraf Rushdy posits in *The Cambridge Companion to the African American Novel*, neo-slave narratives were not created in a vacuum, but rather are a continuation of African American oral and literary traditions, specifically the slave narrative. In order to understand the tradition by which the neo-slave narrative arose, it will be important to first identify the traditions of the slave narrative. Other than for the abolishment of slavery, what were the purposes of slave narratives? How did African

American authors consider issues of violence, agency, authenticity, and sponsorship when crafting their slave narrative? What are the larger themes in slave narratives and how do neo-slave narratives rework those themes?



Required Texts:

- Frederick Douglass – *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845)*
- Harriet Jacobs – *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861)*
- Booker T. Washington – *Up from Slavery* (1901)*
- Zora Neale Hurston – *Barracoon: The Story of the Last "Black Cargo"* (2018)
- Margaret Walker – *Jubilee* (1966)
- Ishmael Reed – *Flight to Canada* (1976)
- Octavia Butler – *Kindred* (1979)
- Dolen Perkins-Valdez – *Wench* (2010)
- Other readings available via Canvas and/or UF libraries



*indicates available for open access online

Course Requirements and Grades Distribution

Analysis of Historical Document of Slavery (25%) due Sun, April 26th at 5pm

- ✚ For this assignment, you will choose one text from the preselected list and write a **minimum 1200-word** analysis of your text. Based upon what you learned about writings from slavery, including the two library visits, how can you apply those reading and research skills to evaluate the text's themes in relation to authenticity, white sponsorship, audience, purpose, respectability politics, and so on? What can we learn about the author, slavery itself, and the production of ex-slave writing through a careful analysis of your text? *Your analysis should include no more than a paragraph summary.*

Creative Monument of Slavery (20%) due Wed, April 22nd at 9:35am

- ✚ Monuments dedicated to slavery range from Stephen Hayes's "Cash Crop" to Haiti's *Le Marron Inconnu* to the most recent Legacy museum of Montgomery, Alabama, not to mention the numerous confederate monuments (which currently spark debates about how and what history is remembered). Additionally, Dolen Perkins-Valdez imagined her novel *Wench* after learning about Tawawa House, a resort, closed in 1855 in Xenia Springs, Ohio, rich in black history. Based upon our discussions about history and memory, choose any primary text from the course and **construct a creative monument dedicated to that text**. What might a monument dedicated to that text look like? Is there a pivotal moment that you want to represent? A theme? Will you use figures, words, objects? What medium would your monument be best expressed? Watercolor, construction paper, poster board, digitally-created image, 3d printed structure, etc? The medium and the size is up to you.
- ✚ This should be a fun, thought-provoking, and creative assignment! Your monument should be accompanied by a **min 300-word** explanation of its contents. What is the name of your monument? What does it depict? Why did you make the decisions that you did? Where would your monument be?

Discussion Group Responses (25%) min 900 words due by 9:35am

- ✚ You will be required to submit a response for that day's discussion. In some way, your response should cover all of the material leading up to that day's discussion number. Your response should explore more in-depth observations of the readings, thinking about larger connections you've made. You must upload the response to Canvas *before* class begins. Some of the responses I will grade for completion. Others will be more formally graded. Please refer to the handout labeled "Discussion Group Response" for more information on effective responses. Late discussion responses will be docked half a letter grade each day.

Lead Discussion Group (10%)

- ✚ Once throughout the semester, you will be responsible for being the discussion leader for your group. On this day, you DO NOT have to write the min.900-word response; rather, you will **upload to Canvas, by 5pm** the Tuesday before (if your discussion falls on Wednesday) or Thursday before (if your discussion falls on Friday), your **lesson plan** for the day. Your lesson plan should give an outline of your objectives/ goals and structure for the discussion. It should **include 2-3 discussion questions**. Setting an agenda and being prepared will lead to a successful discussion. Please see the handout labeled “Leading Discussion Group” on Canvas for more information. Late lesson plans will be docked half a letter grade each day.

Quizzes, In-Class Assignments, and Participation (20%)

- ✚ Be prepared to take a short reading comprehension quiz most days that I assign readings (5 points per quiz). In-class assignments will often serve as a place of departure for our discussion and can be in the form of handouts, writing assignments, or other avenues. You will work individually, with a partner, or with a group.
- ✚ It should go without saying that attendance and participation are mandatory for your success in this class. It is imperative that you are present and on time. There are no excused or unexcused absences; rather, you are allowed 3 absences. After the third absence, (that means absence number 4 and 5) I will subtract two points per absence from your final grade. If you have 6 or more absences, you will fail the course. Remember that quizzes CANNOT be made up, regardless of the circumstance. In-class assignments can be made up, but must be turned in a week after your absence – otherwise it’s a zero. Make sure you get with a classmate to catch you up. If you are on time and have perfect attendance, you will be rewarded FIVE extra points on your Historical Document of Slavery analysis.

Accommodations Statement

I strive for the classroom to be as accessible as possible. Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the UF Disability Resource Center (352.392.8565) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodations. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Schedule of Readings

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| Week 1 1/6 | Introduction |
| 1/8 | Syllabus Review 19 th Century historical background |
| 1/10 | Philip Gould – “The rise, development, and circulation of the slave narrative” Discussion Groups assigned |
| Week 2 1/13 | Frederick Douglass – <i>Narrative of the Life</i> Preface and Chapters 1-9 James Olney – “‘I Was Born’: Slave Narratives, their Status as Autobiography, and as Literature” |
| 1/15 | <i>Narrative of the Life</i> Chapters 10-11 and appendix Dickson Bruce, Jr – “Politics and Political Philosophy in the Slave Narrative” |
| 1/17 | Frederick Douglass – <i>Narrative of the Life</i> |
| Week 3 1/20 | No Class – MLK Holiday |
| 1/22 | Harriet Jacobs – <i>Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl</i> (1861) Preface, Chapters I, II, V, X, XII, XIV, XVII John Sekora – “Black Message/White Envelope: Genre, Authenticity, and Authority in the Antebellum Slave Narrative” |
| 1/24 | Jacobs – <i>Incidents</i> Chapters XXI, XXIX, XXXIX, XL, XLI Stephanie Smith – “Harriet Jacobs: a case history of authentication” |
| Week 4 1/27 | Booker T. Washington – <i>Up From Slavery</i> (1901) Chapters I, II, III, V, X William Andrews – “The Representation of Slavery and the Rise of Afro-American Literary Realism, 1865-1920” |
| 1/29 | Library Day Meet in Judaica Suite – Smathers Library East |
| 1/31 | Zora Neale Hurston – <i>Barracoon: The Story of the Last “Black Cargo”</i> (2018) Foreword, Introduction, Editor’s Note and Barracoon Preface – Ch.II |
| Week 5 2/3 | <i>Barracoon</i> Chapters III – VI Norman Yetman – “Ex-Slave Interviews and the Historiography of Slavery” |

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| 2/5 | <i>Barracoon</i> Chapters VII--End |
| 2/7 | Discussion Groups 1 |
| Week 6 2/10 | Margaret Walker – <i>Jubilee</i> Chapters 1-6 Ashraf Rushdy – “The Neo-slave Narrative” in <i>Cambridge Companion to African American Novel</i> |
| 2/12 | <i>Jubilee</i> Chapters 7-16 |
| 2/14 | <i>Jubilee</i> Chapters 17-28 |
| Week 7 2/17 | <i>Jubilee</i> Chapters 29-40 Margaret Walker – “How I Wrote <i>Jubilee</i> ” |
| 2/19 | Discussion Groups 2 |
| 2/21 | <i>Jubilee</i> Chapters 41-49 |
| Week 8 2/24 | Library Day Meet in Judaica Suite – Smathers Library East |
| 2/26 | <i>Jubilee</i> Chapter 50 - End Amy Levin – “The Violation of Voice: Revising the Slave Narrative” |
| 2/28 | Dolen Perkins-Valdez – <i>Wench</i> (2010) Chapters 1-10 |
| Week 9 | No Class – Spring Break |
| Week 10 3/9 | <i>Wench</i> Chapters 11-22 |
| 3/11 | Discussion Groups 3 |
| 3/13 | <i>Wench</i> Chapters 23-33 Renee Ater – “Slavery and Its Memory in Public Monuments” |
| Week 11 3/16 | <i>Wench</i> Chapters 34-End Trudier Harris – “Does Northern Travel Relieve Slavery?: ‘Vacations’ in Dolen Perkins-Valdez’s <i>Wench</i> ” |
| 3/18 | Ishmael Reed – <i>Flight to Canada</i> (1976) Chapters 1-8 |

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| | Darryl Dickson-Carr – “Introduction” in <i>African American Satire: The Sacredly Profane Novel</i> |
| 3/20 | <i>Flight to Canada</i> Chapters 9-19 (to page 124) |
| Week 12 3/23 | <i>Flight to Canada</i> Chapters 20-End Trudier Harris – “Strength and the Battle Ground of Slavery: Ishmael Reed and Mammy Barracuda” in <i>Saints, Sinners, Saviors</i> |
| 3/25 | Discussion Groups 4 |
| 3/27 | Octavia Butler – <i>Kindred</i> (1979) Prologue-The Fall Ch.2 (pages 1-65) |
| Week 13 3/30 | <i>Kindred</i> The Fall Ch. 3 - The Fight Ch.4 (pages 65-126) |
| 4/1 | <i>Kindred</i> The Fight Ch. 5 - End of The Fight (pages 126-188) Sherryl Vint – “Embodiment and the Limitations of Realism in Neo-Slave Narratives” |
| 4/3 | No Class – Dr. Dee at a conference |
| Week 14 4/6 | <i>Kindred</i> The Storm - End of the novel Angelyn Mitchell – “Not Enough of the Past: Octavia Butler’s <i>Kindred</i> ” in <i>The Freedom to Remember</i> |
| 4/8 | Discussion Groups 5 |
| 4/10 | Selections from Toni Morrison – <i>Beloved</i> (1987) |
| Week 15 4/13 | Film: <i>Beloved</i> |
| 4/15 | Film: <i>Beloved</i> |
| 4/17 | Film: <i>Beloved</i> |
| Week 16 4/20 | Film: <i>Beloved</i> |
| 4/22 | Creative Monument of Slavery due in class Class evaluations In-Class Assignment |

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