AML 3284: Black Women Writers

Phone: 352-294-2853

Dr. Debra Walker King

Fall 2023 Email: dwking@ufl.edu
Place: Turlington 2322 Office hours: T/R 9th period and
Class Time: T 6th-8th periods Via Skype by Appointment

<u>Description</u>: This course examines the subject positions of African American women within the social and cultural context of the United States, focusing foremost on representations of the captive female body as explored in works published from 1975-1985. Since Feminist and Womanist praxis and epistemology of this period were grounded in notions of freedom of the body to "labor" and achieve full self expression, this course asks: how far have we come in accomplishing such "freedoms"? What can we learn about our progress as cultural and social beings in the twenty-first century by reviewing the culture work of Black women during the twentieth century's "renaissance" in Black women's writing and cultural assessment? What gaps must be brought to light in order for the current discourse of Womanist "wholeness" to achieve a broader articulation? What cultural configurations are (and might be) derived from taking a look back at the past and comparing it to the lives and challenges women face today?

<u>Format:</u> The readings and teaching methods of this course are eclectic in pursuit of a variety of texts and experiences. The class sessions include lectures, discussions, and student reports. We will focus on five novels and one choreopoem. As investigators and scholars, our inquiries will play in the spaces between practice and theory in order to address the commonalties, disruptions, gaps, absences, and silences that exist among the primary texts.

Required Texts and Materials:

You will need a pack of 3x5 cards for this class

- 1. Shange, Ntozake. For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide, 1975
- 2. Jones, Gavl. Corregidora, 1975
- 3. Butler, Octavia. Kindred, 1979
- 4. Morrison, Toni. Sula, 1982
- 5. Walker, Alice. The Color Purple, 1983
- 6. Naylor, Gloria. Linden Hills, 1985

Other readings can be found under "Files" or by online links in the syllabus.

Course Schedule

Week 1—8/29

Course Introduction: Purpose and Goals

Week 2 –9/5

"Writing the Body / Reading the Flesh"

Consider the following questions and be prepared to discuss them in class: How would you define Black Feminism? To what degree or in what ways do the texts you have read in the past articulate that point of view? How do they fall short? How would you define *the captive female body* present and past?

Required Readings:

- 1. Henderson, Mae G. "Speaking in Tongues: Dialogics, Dialectics, and the Black Woman Writer's Tradition." You can find a copy under *Files* in Canvas.
- 2. Cixous, "Laugh of the Medusa." You can find a copy under *Files* in Canvas.

Lecture (viewed in class): YouTube video-- 2017 Albright Lecture--Layli Maparyan --"Womanism" (If you wish to pre-view the lecture, cut and paste the URL)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lbdVPGQ1KxE&list=PLym_KPSNKNHw3WjGNVAYTWWg-RyAt9gcs&t=1930s&index=14

Suggested Reading:

Hortense Spillers. "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe." https://people.ucsc.edu/~nmitchel/hortense_spillers_-mamas_baby_papas_maybe.pdf or find a copy under Files in Canvas.

*Assignment Tips: Begin your journal entries with this reading assignment. Be prepared to discuss your entry if asked in class. This week's readings are **Reading Response Journal Entry #1**

Week 3 -9/12

Lecture: "Liminal States of Being"

Note: Impromptu Discussions begin today

Required Reading:

Butler, Octavia. Kindred (1979) "Prologue"- "The Fire"

Assignment: Reading Response Journal Entry #2

Please Note: Panel Group assignments are available in CANVAS. You will find the list under "People."

Week 4 -9/19

Required Reading:

Butler, Octavia. Kindred (1979) "The Fall"- End of novel

Assignment: Reading Response Journal Entry #3

Week 5 -9/26

Ntozake Shange's 1975 choreopoem, For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf.

Assignment: Reading Response Journal Entry #4

Viewing Film: Tyler Perry's 2010 film adaptation of Ntozake Shange's 1975 choreopoem, For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf.

Week 6 - 10/3

In class discussion of the chorepoem and film: Ntozake Shange's 1975 choreopoem, For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf.

Week 7 -10/10

Required Reading:

Jones, Gayl. Corregidora (1975)

Assignment: Reading Response Journal Entry #5

Week 8 –10/17 Take Home/ online MIDTERM EXAM (Due by 11:59 pm tonight)

Week 9-10/24 Required Group Preparation Session:

This class session is for the benefit of group session preparations. Please come prepared to work with your group. Attendance will be reported for roll call records.

Assignment: **Reading Response Journal Entry #6** (write about your assigned novel and portion of novel)

Week 10 –10/31 Please Note: Reading Response Journals due next week

Group Session I

Required Reading:

Naylor, Gloria. Linden Hills (1985) Read through section "December 21st" Linden Hills (1985)

Week 11 - 11/7 Reading Response Journals due today in CANVAS by 1:30.

Group Session II (Group 1 session summary paper due today)

Required Reading:

Linden Hills (1985). Read from section "December 22nd" to the end.

Week 12 -11/14

Group Session III (Group II session summary paper due today)

Required Reading:

Alice Walker, *The Color Purple* (1983) The beginning through page 125, which ends with the words: "They postmark right here."

Week 13 –11/21 THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY --NO CLASS

Week 14 –11/28

Group Session IV (Group III session summary paper due today)

Required Reading:

Alice Walker, *The Color Purple* (1983) Read from page 126, which begins: "Dear Celie, *the first letter say*," to the end of the novel.

Week 15-12/5 Last day of class

Required Reading:

Toni Morrison's Sula (1982)

Assignments and Grade Distribution

200 points: Reading Response Journals -- due in CANVAS 11/7

Write one (1) entry for each week's reading assignment so identified in the course calendar (wks. 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, and 10 --a total of six (6) entries. <u>Each journal entry should present your thoughts concerning the reading material within 300 to 500 words (two pages maximum)</u>. Number each entry in the upper left corner of the entry's first page and date it.

This is not the place for self-evaluation and life meditations. Here you demonstrate your knowledge, compare theories, and engage the text -- the more original your contemplations and assessments, the better your grade. Keep the course objectives in mind when writing (but you may also expand your comments beyond this boundary). Refer to previous entries to demonstrate your growth in understanding and knowledge. Research the text and share your thoughts. I evaluate journals beginning on the due date: 11/7. If you run into problems, see me before the journal due date. (My office hours are listed above.)

Below is an example of a thoughtful and original journal entry. It was submitted by a student (in a class with a different focus than ours). It will be helpful for you to read and provides a guideline for my expectations. This is what your entries will resemble. Note: the submission is written within page requirements (375 words) and includes commentary about texts read or individually researched (at least one researched entry is required) during the semester, previous knowledge, meaningful analysis and questions for further consideration:

Meridian may be either a perfect or a perfectly tragic way to end the semester's discussion. Most of the narrative offers a rather grim postmortem of the Civil Rights and Black Nationalist-eras' failures pertaining to race and gender, as well as how these seemingly irreconcilable issues tear people apart at both the political and personal levels. Pamela Barnett's article, "'Miscegenation,' Rape, and 'Race'" in Alice Walker's Meridian" offers a reading of the novel that seems to echo Truman Held's "sinking, hopeless feeling about opposites, and what they do to each other" (135). Although the text elucidates, complicates, and

undermines these opposites, Barnett argues that ultimately, it "tragic[ally]" "reinstalls" them.

Bennett writes that Camara, the "miscegenetic" child, who exists at the extreme margins of the narrative and is ultimately "erased" with her murder representing the impossibility of reconciling the "opposites" Black and White (and perhaps also between personal and political concerns, desire and the reality principle, etc.).

While Camara can be read as what Fredric Jameson, by way of A.J. Greimas, calls an "impossible synthesis" of opposed terms, I think that Meridian herself, through her "journey" and rebirth (or "collapse?") offers, possibly, after this long and painful story, a rekindled but unrepresented hope for an inchoate or as-yet-indiscernible future. Instead of a synthesis (which contains, although it sublimates, both opposites) Meridian would represent what Greimas calls the "neutral," the negation of negation that nullifies both terms (for Meridian these are many: Black/White, male/female, Lynne/Truman, mother/infanticide, housewife/activist, dying/killing, "ambivalen[t]"/"unorthodox" as Truman puts it) to become a "neither/nor that is something radically "else" entirely. I would suggest we ought to read the text like Lacan reads Antigone, not as tragedy, but as transformative, with Meridian as an "anamorphosis" that exists outside these oppositions and which, at the end of the novel, we still lack the perspectival angle to "see" correctly. -Student

50 points: Group Presentation Sessions

These forty minute panel sessions probe previously discussed questions and explore new ones. You will find panel assignments in Canvas under "People."

Be creative in your presentations. Do not line up and give reports. I repeat: DO NOT. Have fun with this project! Present your analysis and interpretations through narration while acting out a scene or revising a scene; stage a debate or a trial; juxtapose the novel with artwork, music, or poems. Be sure to involve the class. Only your imagination limits the possibilities!

One class period is dedicated to panel planning so there should be no excuse for any member's lack of participation. From this planning period, the panel is expected to produce a one paragraph abstract of the proposed presentation and submit it to me during the next class period. The first group should plan to do this earlier (if my assistance is required). In addition, each panel group is asked to write a brief summary of the group's work, individual effort, and the panel's contribution to the class objectives. This two or three page summary is due the week following the panel presentation. A grade is assigned for this papers and averaged with panel presentation grades. I record only the final score.

Other Expectations & Assignments—250 points

Points breakdown 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 two unexcused class absences, your grade will automatically drop a half letter grade after the second unexcused absence. If you reach nine absences (three full class sessions) you will automatically fail the course and should withdraw from the class or you will receive an "E" for the

semester. Remember, this class meets once a week, representing three class sessions. That is three absences--if the entire class is missed. 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 absence. Unfortunately, given the nature of the course, if you miss more than three weeks of class (equaling nine sessions) you will automatically fail and receive an E. For additional information, please see our University guidelines as indicated in the "Course Policies" section of this syllabus.

Entrance Passes: Purchase a pack of 3x5 index cards. These cards are rolecall passes and will be used to inform me of your attendance and reading progress. 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 and turn them in when asked. 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 and a question 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 brief, intelligent, thoughtful and scholarly. Identify why the material is valuable to our class discussion (or objectives). Ask an engaging discussion question prefaced by brief contextualizing commentary. Occasionally, these cards will be graded for content and returned so do your best work at all times. I will present cards for class / group discussions randomly. Your contribution during these discussions will be evaluated. Take home projects for entrance passes may be graded. Even if I do not ask you to turn in these assignments, your in-class responses to them are required. Be prepared at all times.

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

IMPROMPTU Discussions

Beginning on September 12th I will select several students each week (during class) to enter into discussions guided by issues raised in your entrance cards. You must bring depth to the idea on the floor for discussion as well as offer your own card remarks for consideration. Discussions will proceed as follows:

1st Speaker—offers entry card commentary on the assigned reading

2nd Speaker—responds with reflections on the opening statement

You may agree with the opening speaker or disagree, but you must discuss why.

1St Speaker—responds to the reflections of speaker #2 with depth of insight

2nd Speaker—adds additional information from his or her own entry

1st Speaker—responds to the additional information

You may agree with the opening speaker or disagree, but you must discuss why.

2nd Speaker—responds to the reflections of speaker #2 with depth of insight

Speaker #2—concluding statements

Speaker #1—concluding statements

Speaker #3—Summary of the issues raised

Summary participants review the main points of what was argued or discussed and offer insights overlooked or not fully considered. The selected 3rd speaker must not only summarize but also introduce

related information from additional texts read that week, from texts read in previous weeks, or from his/her own entry pass and open the floor for class discussion.

Open Class Discussion—volunteers from the class and professor offer insights This pattern will repeat with new speakers. I hope to have at least six (6) assigned participants in discussions such as this each week. Be prepared for participation without prior notice. Please note: this assignment is worth a minimum of 50 points per assigned impromptu discussion.

Strong participation includes:

- 1. only excused absences with no recorded tardiness
- 2. adherence to course policies and guidelines
- 3. entrance pass 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 entrance card 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.
 - "B" level participation, albeit promising, is notably weak in *two* key areas.
 - "C" level participation is notably weak in *three* key areas.
 - "D" level participation is significantly weak in *Three* or more of the key areas.

Exams, Quizzes and Other assignments: There will be a midterm exam. There may pop quizzes—no makeup quizzes. Your performance during class, progress evaluations (tests and quizzes) and in-class discussions will determine whether 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 on an issue or author under discussion. You decide what you want to do. All reports must be approved prior to presentation, however. Submit a short proposal describing what you plan to do. The assignment will earn scores ranging from 1/2 to 5 points (added to your overall course score).

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 possible score percentages with no curve. You are guaranteed an A or A- if you earn 450 points or more out of 500 possible points (90 %).

435 to 449 (87% ⁺)	$\mathbf{B}^{\scriptscriptstyle +}$	385 to 399 (77 % ⁺)	$\mathbf{C}^{\scriptscriptstyle +}$	335 to 363 (67% ⁺)	$\mathbf{D}^{\scriptscriptstyle +}$
415 to 434 (83% ⁺⁾	В	365 to 384 (73 % ⁺)	\mathbf{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.

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 and Wikipedia 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
- -the formatting of document in keeping with prescribed guidelines—including length of journal entries Rubric

The "A or A-" submission has strong content, strong organization, AND strong grammar/mechanics. 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.

The "B" submission is notably weak in ONE of the above key areas.

The "C" submission, albeit promising, is notably weak in TWO or more of the above key areas.

The "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

- "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:
- 1. Each different word misspelled,
- 2. Each sentence fragment,
- 3. Each run-on sentence or comma splice,
- 4. Each mistake in capitalization,
- 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,
- 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 and will suffer a half letter grade deduction. Only one resubmission is allowed. Penalties for final course papers / journals (where there is no time for a resubmission) will be based on the relative importance of the assignment to the determination of the final

course grade. This policy applies to all assignments, excluding entrance cards and portfolio progress grading.

- Cell phones and computers: 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 presentations only. Anyone using a computer for any other purpose will be asked to deliver the devise to me for retrieval after class. You may record the class (presentations, for instance) with my permission only.
- Papers / Journals: 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.
- 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, error, or oversight, I will not consider grade changes. Please do not ask; I consider it harassment. You may consult the English Department Associate Chair, for grade appeals, however. Please note: appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade.
- 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.
- <u>Journal Submission guidelines</u>: This assignment must be submitted electronically. Unreadable documents will be returned ungraded. Submit your project via Canvas by 1:30 p.m. on the due date (11/7). Late submissions will suffer a half letter grade reduction. Include the course number in the subject heading.
- "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

In-Class Recording

• Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A "class lecture" is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is 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. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, 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.

Campus Resources

Health and Wellness

- U Matter, We Care: If you or a friend is 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.).
- UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center: For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; Visit the UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website. GatorWell Health Promotion Services: For prevention services focused on optimal wellbeing, including Wellness Coaching for Academic Success, visit the GatorWell website or call 352-273-4450.

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.

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/ugrad/current/advising/info/student---honor---code.aspx 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: http://www.hr.ufl.edu/eeo/sexharassment.htm

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."