

LIT 3003—Forms of Narrative (Section- 0174)

Narrative Forms of the Black Atlantic

SUMMER A, 2020



Ebony G. Patterson, *...a wailing black horse...for those who bear/bare witness (detail)*, 2018. Courtesy of Monique Meloche Gallery, Chicago.

Instructor Name: Kedon Willis

Course meeting times: MTWRF 3:30 to 4:45 pm

Office Hours: MW period 4, 12:40 to 1:45pm

Instructor Email: kedonkwillis @ufl.edu

Course description

The role of narrative, the very basic act of storytelling, has been crucial to the recognition of the Black experience in the Americas since the advent of European settlement in the region. This course will engage with a variety of written works from African-descended authors in the Americas to investigate the forms, techniques and ideas that unite them, despite differences of history, culture and time. The historical scope of the course also traces the development of literary forms, movements and genres to examine how these changes respond to the shifting realities of African-descended subjects “in the West.” In line with this investigation, students will engage with questions such as: how was the autobiographical form suited to the purposes of Black antebellum authors? What are the modernist elements of certain Harlem Renaissance texts and what is the breakdown of literary conventions meant to reflect? How can we analyze music as a narrative? And how do we rationalize the dystopian current in contemporary works from the Caribbean? The diverse texts will introduce students to writings and settings from a range of locations, including Barbados, Jamaica, Panama, Puerto Rico, Trinidad and Tobago and the U.S.

Note on the course format

Our online classes will follow a hybrid synchronous/asynchronous model. On synchronous days (Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays), we will be meeting live via Zoom to participate in discussions and perform writing activities. Tuesdays and Thursdays are “asynchronous,” which means you will be expected to complete reading and writing tasks on your own. This hybrid model allows you the opportunity to participate in written discussion as well as in group work to analyze assigned readings and to share written assignments. As a visual reminder, on the syllabus schedule, our Zoom meeting days are highlighted in red. On a final note: Even though they are days in the week we do not meet, you may not enroll in other classes scheduled at the period as this class (Period 6).

Texts:

1. *Tropic Death* by Eric Walrond. ISBN 978-0871406859
2. *Macho Camacho's Beat* by Luis Rafael Sánchez. ISBN 1564782581
3. *A Mercy* by Toni Morrison: ISBN 978-0307276766

(Supplementary readings available on Canvas)

Assignments: total points—100 (see below for grading rubric):

Quizzes, Classwork and Participation: 15

Short Writing Assignment: 5

Analytical Discussion Posts: 40

Short Paper: 15

Final Paper: 25

Assignment descriptions:

Quizzes, Classwork and Participation

The hybrid model of the course makes participation a crucial element to ensuring that class objectives are being met. Synchronous meetings will depend on lively and informed class discussions, which means that students are expected to come to sessions having read the texts and prepared to contribute talking points or raise questions during discussion. Some class periods will feature group work and free writing. Participation grades may also include reading quizzes during live sessions if I notice a lull in the conversation.

Short Writing Assignment (250 to 300 words)

This first writing assignment tasks you with summarizing a portion of the introductory chapter to *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, a seminal text on the concept of the Black Atlantic. The assignment mainly requires that you identify the major

claims of the reading and select two key examples used to illustrate them. Beyond encouraging critical engagement with one of the course's organizing concepts, this writing exercise will provide a platform for our discussion on how to interrogate and assess scholarly articles

Analytical Discussion Posts

For four weeks out of the semester, you will submit posts to the Discussion Board on Canvas in response to a given prompt. Two of the prompts will be traditional analysis-oriented questions while the others will be more creative. All the prompts will encourage you to engage with the ideas and/or techniques we will have encountered in the course. As a follow up, you will be asked to respond to two other classmates' posts.

Short Paper (2 to 3 pages)

In the fourth week of the semester, you will be expected to complete a thesis-driven response papers of roughly 1000 words. Your assignment will be in response to one of several prompt questions that will be applicable to all the reading you will have already done. It may also be an exploration of a thesis idea or technical concept you are considering for the final paper. Your paper is expected to make a contestable claim supported by textual evidence and your own analyses which go beyond mere summary and observation.

Final Project (4 to 5 pages)

You will have three options for your final project: a traditional research paper, a creative book review or an analysis of music forms in narrative.

For the **traditional research paper**, you will use the skills developed throughout the course and in previous papers. This assignment is a sustained, formally researched critical analysis in which you will make an original argument about one or more texts through a particular theoretical, historical, or critical lens. This assignment is an opportunity to develop unique, interesting arguments. The paper should incorporate both primary and secondary texts and offer evidence of your critical thinking and interpretive abilities. And you will be expected to follow the MLA format for citation and bibliography.

In the **creative review** you will loosely follow the conventions of the book review to assess the functionality of at least three narratives concepts within one of the novels from the course. Furthermore, you are tasked to do this in what could be considered the narrative voice of the work. Despite being a "creative assignment," the review demands keen attention to the tenets of a traditional paper, including effective summarization, argumentation and incorporation of outside sources to support particular claims. You will be expected to follow the MLA format for citation and bibliography.

For the **analysis of music forms**, you will be tasked with making a contestable claim about the functioning of music as a narrative form in select works from the syllabus. Available options would be jazz in selected works of Langston Hughes, work songs in selected stories of Eric Walrond, popular music in *Macho Camacho's Beat* and calypso in selected poems of

Rajiv Mohabir. As a thesis driven paper, the analysis also demands keen attention to the tenets of a traditional research paper. You will be expected to follow the MLA format for citation and bibliography.

POLICIES:

1. You must complete all *assignments* to receive credit for this course.
2. *Attendance:* As with a regular classroom, those students who attend scheduled sessions and keep up with their work will do well, and those who rush things through at the last minute after skipping class and ignoring readings will do poorly. Your effort to “attend” to the material presented in this course will be reflected in your class performance and grade.

Given the hybrid nature of the course, students may miss ONLY TWO live sessions without penalty. For each absence after, I will deduct three percent from the students’ final grade in the course. Under normal circumstances, you will not need to tell me why you are absent unless your reason falls under acceptable allowances for absences as outlined in the official UF attendance policy — these include serious illness, family emergencies, military service and religious holidays (for the full list of allowances, please see the [UF attendance policy linked here](#)). For these allowances, please be aware that you will have to contact me and provide documentation. I also understand that, given the nature of remote learning, and the public health crisis we are currently facing, there are difficult or unexpected situations that may emerge. In cases such as these, please contact me as soon as possible.

Please note that THREE tardies (arriving to session after I have taken registration) will count as ONE absence. If you are more than 10 minutes late to session, that will count as an automatic absence (though I still encourage you to make it to log in).

3. *Participation:* The quality and frequency of your contributions determine your participation grade. Learning to participate effectively and to move the conversation forward will help you understand the texts and develop important professional skills. If you’re shy about offering opinions, try asking questions. Remember that if you are confused about a text, others are, too!
4. *Classroom behavior and netiquette:* This is an online class, and all discussions will need to adhere to the same professionalism and civility necessary in an in-class environment. Students are free to disagree with classmates so long as that disagreement is constructive and polite. Some examples of proper netiquette follow.
 - a. Avoid writing messages in all capital letters. THIS IS GENERALLY UNDERSTOOD AS SHOUTING.

- b. Be careful what you put in writing. Even if you are writing an email message to one person, assume that anyone could read it. Though you may send an email to a single person, it is very easy to forward a message to hundreds or thousands of people.
 - c. Spelling, grammar, and punctuation matter. Online courses demand the same standard of academic communication as face-to-face courses.
 - d. Never use profanity in any area of an online course. Transcripts of online course communications are savable.
 - e. When responding to messages, use "Reply to All" only when you really intend to reply to all.
 - f. Avoid sarcasm and use humor with care. In the absence of nonverbal cues such as facial expressions and voice inflections, the context for your comments may be lost, and your message may be misinterpreted.
5. *UF's policy on Sexual Harassment:* The University of Florida is committed to providing a safe educational, working, and residential environment that is free from sexual harassment or misconduct directed towards any and all members of the community: <https://titleix.ufl.edu/policy-statement/>
6. *Paper Format and Submission:* On weeks they are due, discussion posts are due at 8:00 AM EST post replies are due 8:00 AM EST that Thursday. All other assignments will be turned in to Canvas at 11:59 PM EST the day an assignment is due. For these assignments, please *put your e-mail address* on the front page of the paper and number your pages. Use this format: Times New Roman, 12 point font, 1-inch margins, double spacing, numbered pages. Grammatical errors will cost you, so please proofread.
7. *Late Papers/Assignments:* Late work will be 10% for every day it is late. I may issue extensions on a case-by-case basis, but these will only be considered if they are requested at least 24 hours before the assignment deadline.
8. *Paper Maintenance Responsibilities.* Keep duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course. Save all returned, graded work until the semester is over.
9. *Academic Honesty and Definition of Plagiarism.* UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge: "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: 'On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.'" The Honor Code (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honorcode/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions.>

From the UF Student Honor Code:

A Student must not represent as the Student's own work all or any portion of the work of another. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to:

- a. Stealing, misquoting, insufficiently paraphrasing, or patch-writing.
 - b. Self-plagiarism, which is the reuse of the Student's own submitted work, or the simultaneous submission of the Student's own work, without the full and clear acknowledgment and permission of the Faculty to whom it is submitted.
 - c. Submitting materials from any source without proper attribution.
 - d. Submitting a document, assignment, or material that, in whole or in part, is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment the Student did not author.
10. Students with *disabilities* who are requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/), which will provide appropriate documentation to give your instructor early in the semester.
11. *Students who are in distress* or who are in need of counseling or urgent help: please contact umatter@ufl.edu or 352-392-1575 so that a team member can reach out to you. UF's Counseling and Wellness Center offers additional support: 352-392-1575, or contact them online: <https://counseling.ufl.edu/>
12. Students who judge the grade received for an assignment does not accurately reflect its merit may can contact me to appeal the grade. Grade appeals must be made within one week of receiving the final grade on an assignment. Appeals thereafter will not be considered. If an appeal is made and a resolution is not reached, students may contact the English Department's Associate Chair and Undergraduate Coordinator Kenneth Kidd or its Program Assistant Carla Blount to make a further appeal. For more information on UF Grading policies, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>
13. *Course Evaluations*. Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

Policy on environmental sustainability. In this online course, all materials will be electronic. Consider purchasing electronic editions of assigned texts when they are available, or used copies of print texts. If you do not elect to keep your print books, consider sharing them

with others after the semester ends. (For example, you could donate them to the Alachua County [Friends of the Library](#) annual book sale.)

SYLLABUS

Week	Days	Readings	Due
1	M 5/11 (Zoom)	Discussion: course introduction H. Porter Abbott, <i>The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative</i> — chapters 2 and 4 (25pgs)	
	T 5/12	<i>The History of Mary Prince: A West Indian Slave</i> (sections 1 to 12)	
	W 5/13	James Olney, “I Was Born’: Slave Narratives, Their Status as Autobiography and as Literature” (21 pgs) <i>The History of Mary Prince: A West Indian Slave</i> (sections 13 to 23)	Discussion Post
	R 5/14 (Zoom)	W.E.B. DuBois, <i>The Souls of Black Folks</i> , chapter 1 (6 pgs)	
	F 5/15	Paul Gilroy, “The Black Atlantic as a Counterculture of Modernity,” from <i>The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness</i> (40 pgs) <i>The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative</i> , chapter 5 (9pgs)	Reply
2	M 5/18 (Zoom)	Discussion: So what is the “Black Atlantic”? Video: Crash Course on the Harlem Renaissance	Short Writing Assignment
	T 5/19	“Introduction” from the <i>Norton Anthology of American Literature, 1914-1945</i> (15 pages)	
	W 5/20	Imani Owens, “‘Hard Reading’: US Empire and Black Modernist Aesthetics in Eric Walrond’s <i>Tropic Death</i> (14 pgs) Video: Crash Course US Imperialism	Discussion Post

	R 5/21 (Zoom)	Eric Walrond, <i>Tropic Death</i> , Introduction and "Drought" (26 pages)	
	F 5/22	Eric Walrond, <i>Tropic Death</i> , "Panama Gold" to "The White Snake" (110 pgs)	replies
3	M 5/25 (holiday)	<i>The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative</i> , chapters 6 and 7 (30pgs)	
	T 5/26	Eric Walrond, <i>Tropic Death</i> — "The Vampire Bat" and "Tropic Death" (46 pgs)	
	W 5/27	"Common Themes and Techniques of Postmodernism in Literature" (11pgs)	Discussion Post
	R 5/28 (Zoom)	Luis Rafael Sánchez, <i>Macho Camacho's Beat</i> , Introduction to "HAVE JUST BEGUN" (30pgs)	
	F 5/29	Luis Rafael Sánchez, <i>Macho Camacho's Beat</i> , "WITH HER NAILS" to "BECAUSE, LADIES AND gentlemen" (70 pgs) <i>The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative</i> , chpt 8 (10 pgs)	Replies
4	M 6/01 (Zoom)	Luis Rafael Sánchez, <i>Macho Camacho's Beat</i> , "WHAT I MEAN" to "AND THE ECSTASY"(28 pgs)	
	T 6/02	Luis Rafael Sánchez, <i>Macho Camacho's Beat</i> , "GRACIELA THUMBS THROUGH" to "AND LADIES AND gentlemen" (40 pgs)	Discussion Post
	W 6/03	Luis Rafael Sánchez, <i>Macho Camacho's Beat</i> , "A BOMB AT" to end	
	R 6/04 (Zoom)	<i>Cambridge Introduction to Narrative</i> , chpt 12 (18pgs)	Replies
	F 6/05	Toni Morrison <i>A Mercy</i>	
5	M 6/08 (Zoom)	Toni Morrison, <i>A Mercy</i>	
	T 6/09	Toni Morrison, <i>A Mercy</i>	Discussion Post

	W 6/10	Toni Morrison, <i>A Mercy</i> Discussion: <i>re-presenting</i> history	
	R 6/11 (Zoom)	Toni Morrison, <i>A Mercy</i>	Short Paper
	F 6/12	Valerie Babb, "E Pluribus Unum? The American Origins Narrative in Toni Morrison's <i>A Mercy</i> "	
6	M 6/15 (Zoom)	Rajiv Mohabir, "Canis latrans," "Canis lupus lupus" and "The Taxidermist's Cut" (poems) How to read a poem	
	T 6/16	Rajiv Mohabir, "Indenture," and "Rum and Coca Cola" (poems)	
	W 6/17	Session activity: Peer Review/Writing	
	R 6/18 (Zoom)	Writing Day	
	F 6/19	Final discussion: "Cultural Productions and the Politics of Representation"	Final Paper Due

Grading Scale and Rubric

Grading Scale

A	4.0	93-100	C	2.0	73-76.9
A-	3.67	90-92.9	C-	1.67	70-72.9
B+	3.33	87-89.9	D+	1.33	67-69.9
B	3.0	83-86.9	D	1.0	63-66.9
B-	2.67	80-82.9	D-	0.67	60-62.9
C+	2.33	77-79.9	E	0.00	0-59.9

Grading Rubric

Each assignment has its own requirements, but for each paper I will evaluate:

1. Content, including argument, development, and support
2. Organization, including paragraph structure, overall flow of ideas, transitions
3. Mechanics, including grammar, spelling, and style.

A PAPER

An A-paper has a strong thesis and makes a coherent and original argument. It follows the assignment, is well organized, communicates ideas clearly, and there are (almost) no mechanics mistakes. It meets and/or exceeds the assignment requirements.

B PAPER

A B-paper does the same things as an A-paper, but is somewhat lacking in one area: perhaps organization is lacking (either on the paragraph level or in the essay as a whole), the writer provided insufficient evidence or analysis of the evidence, or there are myriad mechanics mistakes.

C PAPER

The C-paper follows the assignment, but is lacking in two of the areas mentioned above (content, organization and mechanics). Usually, a C-paper also needs to try and move beyond a superficial engagement with the text.

D PAPER

The D-paper either does not follow the assignment, is lacking in all three areas, or both.

E PAPER

The E-paper is reserved for essays that are not turned in, or for work that is plagiarized.