ENGL 364
Black Women Writers

"Donvale Luna" by Charlotte March

Course Description and Goals

This course explores literature by black American women writers in the 20th and 21st centuries. Using black feminist thought as our critical framework, we will consider how these writers expand/rewrite/recreate existing narrative spaces by using the figure of the black woman, a figure that seems to exist only in closed and rigid narrative spaces.

In this course you will research and evaluate secondary critical sources about primary texts by black women authors; learn and practice strategies for reading carefully, closely, and critically; and learn and practice strategies for crafting compelling written analysis.

This course counts for both the minor and major in African American Studies. For more information about the program, please see our website: blogs/cofc.edu/aast. It also counts for the Difference and Literary Tradition requirement in the English major.

Course Texts

*Dawn*, Octavia Butler ~ *Sula*, Toni Morrison ~ *Quicksand*, Nella Larsen
*Jennifer’s Journal*, Jennifer Crute ~ *Something Like Love*, Beverly Jenkins
*Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Zora Neale Hurston
*Brown Girl, Brownstone*, Paule Marshall ~ *Third Girl From the Left*, Martha Southgate
*Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*, Audre Lorde
Course Requirements

In Class Responses (20pts, approx.)
You could think of them as pop quizzes. I think of them as a way of keeping you honest. You cannot make up these responses.

3-2-1 Responses (10 pts each)
You will write two of these responses, during the Black Feminist Boot Camp and Canonical and Near-Canonical sections. They are one page responses and designed to generate class discussion.

(P)oint (E)vidence (A)nalysys Response
(25 points each)
You will write three of these, in response to each set of paired novels. This 2-3 page assignment is designed to show off your close reading skill.

Pop Culture Project (25 pts)
Each of you will prepare a five-minute presentation that examines a pop cultural narration of black womanhood. The goal here is to use the course ideas/themes to analyze some aspect of the world you live in.

Grading Scale
Below is the grading scale used to calculate final grades:

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Score</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>100-93</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>92-90</td>
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<tr>
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<td>D+</td>
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<td>D-</td>
<td>63-60</td>
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<td>59 and below</td>
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Researched Analysis (150 pts)
For this assignment, I will randomly assign each of you one of the texts we will read in class. Your final paper will make an argument about that text as part of a larger critical conversation. You will write a proposal and conference with me before you draft the final paper. The final paper will be 10-12 pages.

Exams (Mid-term 50 pts; Final 100 pts)
You will have a mid-term and a final in this course.

Useful Resources
In addition to the usual library resources useful in literature courses (MLA Bibliography, JSTOR, Academic Search Premier), you may also find the following websites and blogs helpful for this course:

Crunk Feminist Collective (http://www.crunkfeministcollective.com)
Clutch Magazine Online (http://www.clutchmagonline.com)
The Root (http://www.theroot.com)
PostBourgie (http://www.postbourgie.com)
The Feminist Wire (http://thefeministwire.com)
Course Policies

Attendance and Participation
Come to class every day. Come to class on time. Come to class prepared. You are allowed 3 absences (excused or unexcused). After 3, your grade will begin to suffer. You cannot do well if you are not there. If a situation arises during the semester that will affect your ability to attend class regularly (such as extended illness), please contact me as soon as possible so we can discuss options.

Late Policy
Missing class is not an excuse for missing work. It is your responsibility to get things in on time. I will deduct two points for every day that an assignment is late. I will not remind you if an assignment is late. I am not your mother.

I do not accept papers over e-mail or a paper slipped under my door. If you're having trouble with any assignment, please come and see me.

Plagiarism and the Honor Code
Lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism are violations of our Honor Code that, when identified, are investigated. Cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean of Students. A student found responsible by the Honor Board for academic dishonesty will receive an XF in the course, indicating failure of the course due to academic dishonesty. This grade will appear on the student's transcript for two years after which the student may petition for the XF to be expunged. The student may also be placed on disciplinary probation, suspended (temporary removal) or expelled (permanent removal) from the College by the Honor Board. For more information about the Honor Code, please consult http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/honor-system/.
How To Take This Course

It's not what you "get" in this course. It's how far you're willing to trek. It is entirely possible to do well in this class without being transformed as a human being, but it won't be as much fun. It's cliché to say that this course (or any course, really) is a journey, but it's true. Imagine, if you will, that we're all standing at the base of a mountain. We all have to decide how we're going to climb it.

Day Hiker
You're sticking to the trail because you're certain of where it goes. You want the basics: names, dates, big ideas. There's nothing wrong with this approach, especially if this material is new to you. A successful day hiker will read all the material, use the graphic organizers, and take careful notes during class discussion. A day hiker can do well on exams, but will have to dig a little deeper for essays.

Backpacker
You're ready to spend a few days on this mountain and you have supplies (already existing knowledge, interest, inclination) to help you. You have a grasp of the basics and are ready to explore beyond them. Backpackers will read all the course materials and ask questions in this class--tons of them. They will use class time to clarify what they do not understand and use assignments to sharpen their analytical skills.

Trailblazer
You are passionate and interested not only in the what and the how, but also the so what. Trailblazers will keep up with course material, ask tons of questions, and also make connections. Trailblazers are thinking about how all the course texts connect to one another, but also how these texts connect to other works from other classes, to works in the larger culture, to ideas in the larger intellectual world. For trailblazers, this course is part of the expedition to discover why literature matters.

Accommodations
If you have a documented disability (learning or otherwise), and you need a reasonable accommodation made for you in this course, please consult with me immediately at the outset of the course so we can design a solution that will help you be successful in this class. The Center for Disability Services is located in the Lightsey Center, Suite 104.

Writing Lab
I encourage you to take advantage of the Writing Lab in the Center for Student Learning (Addlestone Library, first floor). Trained writing consultants can help with writing for all courses; they offer one-to-one consultations that address everything from brainstorming and developing ideas to crafting strong sentences and documenting sources. For more information, please call 843.953.5635 or visit http://csl.cofc.edu/labs/writing-lab/.

Center for Student Learning
I encourage you to utilize the Center for Student Learning's (CSL) academic support services for assistance in study strategies and course content. They offer tutoring, Supplemental Instruction, study skills appointments, and workshops. Students of all abilities have become more successful using these programs throughout their academic career and the services are available to you at no additional cost. For more information regarding these services please visit the CSL website at http://csl.cofc.edu or call (843) 953-5635.

Addlestone
Our reference librarians are eager to help guide your research (in this class and all your other classes). Make use of them whenever possible. Tell them I sent you.

Your Instructor
Don't suffer in silence. You are welcome to email me, or make an appointment to meet me during my office hours. Many questions and issues can be easily resolved this way.
ENGL 364:  
Black Women Writers  

Readings and Assignment Schedule  

The following is a list of due dates. Readings will be discussed on the day they are assigned.  

PDFs and links can be found on OAKS.  

Schedule is subject to change.  

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Course Introduction  

1/8  Introduction  

1/10  READ: "5 Reasons I'm Here for Beyonce, the Feminist"--Crunk Feminist Collective (link)  
      "The Problem With Beyhive Bottom Bitch Feminism"--Real Colored Girls (link)  
      "For My Sisters: An Open Letter to Beyonce's Cult (ummm...I mean fans)"  
      --Colored Girl Confidential (link)  
      QUESTION: What is at stake in this debate about Beyonce's feminism?  

Black Feminist Thought Boot Camp  
REMINDER: Your 3-2-1 assignment is due the day before the readings, by 5pm  

1/13  READ: "F-Word"--Joan Morgan (PDF)  
      Combahee River Collective Statement (PDF)  
      "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House"--Audre Lorde (link)  
      QUESTION: What do black women want from a feminist movement? What is lacking in that movement? What do black women aim to bring to the movement?  

1/15  READ: "Rape and the Inner Lives of Black Women in the Middle West: Preliminary Thoughts on the Culture of Dissemblance"--Darlene Clark Hine (PDF)  
      from Beyond the Black Lady--Lisa B. Thompson (PDF)  
      "Disrespectability Politics"--Crunk Feminist Collective (link)  
      QUESTION: What is gained and lost through respectability politics?  

1/17  READ: "Trajectories of Self-Definition: Placing Contemporary Afro-American Women's Fiction"--Barbara Christian (PDF)  
      from Sister Citizen -- Melissa Harris-Perry (PDF)  
      QUESTION: How do stories matter? Why are stories by and about black women important?  

1/20  MLK Holiday
1/22  READ: "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power" -- Audre Lorde (PDF)
   "Black (W)holes and the Geometry of Black Female Sexuality" -- Evelynn Hammonds (PDF)
   QUESTION: Is there space for the erotic in narratives by and about black women?

1/24  READ: Poems by Phillis Wheatley (link)
   "In Search of Our Mother’s Gardens"--Alice Walker (PDF)
   "The Difficult Miracle of Black Poetry in America"--June Jordan (link)
   "Phillis"--Naomi Madgett (link)
   QUESTION: Why is Wheatley a point of fascination for black feminists? What kinds of questions might we ask about Wheatley’s poetry after our boot camp?

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Canonical and Near-Canonical

1/27-31 READ: Quicksand
1/29  DUE: Quicksand 3-2-1
   QUESTION: What big ideas does Larsen explore in this novel? How does the figure of the black woman help in this exploration?

2/3-7  READ: Sula
2/5    DUE: Sula 3-2-1
   QUESTION: What big ideas does Morrison explore in this novel? How does the figure of the black woman help in this exploration?

2/10-14 READ: Dawn
2/12   DUE: Dawn 3-2-1
   QUESTION: What big ideas does Butler explore in this novel? How does the figure of the black woman help in this exploration?

2/17  Pop Culture Presentations
2/19  Pop Culture Presentations
2/21  Mid-Term

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Black Women In Love
How do Hurston and Jenkins approach the question of love and romance for black women? With whom are they in conversation? How do the genre expectations of the romance novel constrain/liberate Jenkins as a storyteller?

2/24-28 READ: Their Eyes Were Watching God

3/3-7  SPRING BREAK

3/10-14 READ: Something Like Love
Black Female Autobiography
How do Lorde and Crute author black female selves? What enables this authorship? What hinders it? What does the comic form bring to the project of black female authorship?

3/17-21 READ: Zami
3/17 DUE: Black Women in Love PEA

3/24-28 READ: Jennifer’s Journal
3/24 DUE: Final Paper Proposals

3/31 Pop Culture Presentations
DUE: Black Female Autobiography PEA
4/2 Pop Culture Presentations
4/4 Conferences

Mothers and Daughters/Growing Up
How do Marshall and Southgate author black girlhood? What aspects of black girlhood most interest them?

4/7-11 READ: Brown Girl, Brownstone
4/14-18 READ: Third Girl from the Left
4/21 DUE: Mothers and Daughters PEA

4/23 Last Day of Class

4/25 Final Exam 8-11am
DUE: Final Paper