African American Literature Syllabus

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Artifact type: Syllabus
Developed for: Lower-level undergraduate class
Audience: Both English and non-English majors
Time required: Semester-long project that involves in-class and out-of-class activities.
Method and tool: Digital exhibits with Scalar

Description:
My African American Literature course is designed for students to explore the collection, cleaning, analysis, and visualization of various data and metadata: geospatial, material, textual, and visual. Beyond these technical practices, the course encourages students to have conversation about the social and cultural foundations for those tools and methods, in particular in the context of African American Studies. This course is recognized as a Service Learning course because of its components of community-based learning and public engagement. Upon the completion of this course, students will receive a Service Learning certificate. In addition, my students have an opportunity to display their works during the Experiential Learning celebration that invites both the campus and local communities. This course has a potential to be developed as a certificate program that combines Humanities, information technology, and computational analysis courses in the near future.

For final projects of this course, students in groups of five to six members collaborate to contribute a group project to a course site (created with Scalar) outside of CANVAS, the learning management system used at my college, through archival research, textual analysis, creative narrative, and presentation of their web publication. Here is an example from the past students: http://scalar.usc.edu/works/quilting-african-american-experiences-in-northeast-ohio/index. Moving toward this goal of a collaboratively built course website, each week we learn about Digital Humanities broadly, and digital tools for our project specifically. Student learn text analysis with Voyant and interactive maps with Google Maps, and also explore various digital humanities projects on African American literature and culture and use digital newspapers such as Chronicling America and Ohio History Connection, Students must utilize at least three of these tools and resources for their group's project.

When working as a group, students are given specific role assignments to produce a final project. For instance, students decide who takes a charge of one aspect of project production such as Scalar manager (uploading and publishing via Scalar), researcher (getting permissions and checking copyrights of media), writers (gathering and completing researched materials), and so on. At the beginning stage of a project, all of the group members research and draft their findings together. I have witnessed that students tend to go back to old ways of textual analysis, which requires close reading skills of a literary text. Therefore, for this course project, students are required to use at least three DH tools, which in my class focuses on distant reading and forms of quantitative text analysis and visualization. While learning how to use various DH tools to research and analyze texts, students receive specific feedback on their group works throughout the semester.

Supporting materials:
Syllabus and handout for final project.

ENGL 266: AFRICAN AMERICAN LITERATURE
FALL 2019, SC 209, 1:00 – 2:15 PM ON WEDNESDAY

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Dr. Jewon Woo
Office: SC 232 (Arts and Humanities)
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Secondary Email: jwoo@lorainccc.edu
Office Phone: (440) 366-7104
Office Hours: 8:00 AM – 9:30 AM, 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM on Monday and Wednesday

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is a Service Learning course, as you engage in community-based learning and writing for public. Upon your completion of this course, you will receive a Service Learning certificate and medallion at your graduation. For details, see "Service Learning Program Student Guide" on our course page.

This course focuses on black citizenship as a main theme of African American intellectual history rather than broadly covers from the beginning to the present of African American literature. Of course, African American literature is not limited to the theme of black citizenship but extended to universal themes that we can find in world literature. However, just like any other literature, specific historical and ideological backgrounds have shaped what African American literature is. Among these backgrounds, we center African Americans' struggle to gain recognition as citizen (not only political but also social/cultural in everyday practice) on our understanding of this literature, as the issue of black citizenship resulted in or affected slavery, racism, class, colonization, immigration, and U.S. democracy.

To learn how to appreciate African American literature, we will overcome the boundary of genres, as Black Arts transcend transition categories in way that they express the depth of African American experience and intellectual history. Therefore, while centering literary texts as our major focus, we attempt to understand the intersection of arts, language, history, and culture by expanding our scope to film, music, visual arts, and performance by African American artists. By reading and writing constantly throughout the course, we will practice a research-based analysis of literature, which anchors toward our last project. In addition, we will utilize digital humanities tools for data mining, cleaning, text analysis, topic modeling, digital writing, and publishing our final projects online. By doing so, we will expand our understanding of African American literature and culture in our digital age to become not only a learner but also a producer of knowledge.

During dynamic discussion both in the classroom and online, we may encounter discomfort, disagreement, and insensitivity toward certain topics. However, in a respectful manner, try to speak up what and how you think and feel. Remember that this is an interactive course. While each class includes lectures, we will have group activities that are designed to stimulate critical thinking and analysis.

COURSE FORMAT

This course is delivered in a blended format. Class meets one time per week—1 PM on Wednesday, and the remaining components of the class are online in **Canvas** and other **Digital Humanities Project on line.** This means that **both** in-class and online instruction are important and integrated. You are required to participate in on-campus and online activities.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS, MATERIALS AND TECHNOLOGY

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK

Colson Whitehead, *The Underground Railroad*, Little Brown Books Group. ISBN 978-0708898406
Octavia Butler, *Kindred*. ISBN 978-0807083697

- Other course materials can be found in the links on Canvas.
- You can check those books out of our library or any local libraries.

GRADING PROCEDURES

You are required to do all the work of the course. A handout for each assignment will be included in a lecture note. You must submit all the papers on CANVAS unless I announce any change—no email attachment or hard copy. I will consider that only the file submitted by you on a CANVAS drop box is the final version of your assignment. Therefore, do not post a wrong file on a drop box. You can check up your grades and attendance on the gradebook. However, an exact grade can be seen at the end of this semester because CANVAS shows you average of only submitted assignments or "0" points for assignments that you haven't done yet but are not overdue. Please consider this if you want to ask me about your grade in the mid semester.

Grading Scale: A (90-100%), B (80-89%), C (70-79%), D (60-69%), and F (59% or below): the following are the grading criteria for English 161 and 162 designed by the Division of Arts and Humanities.

ASSIGNMENTS
- Syllabus Quiz = 20 points or 2%
  : You must take a syllabus quiz in the first week of the semester. Once you take it, I believe that you agree to follow the policies described in this syllabus.

- Weekly Forums (12 forums * 30 points) = 360 points or 36%
  : Each Wednesday, you will be given specific writing and research activities for forum. For a posting, you should write at least 300 words in academic style. Rubric will be provided for each forum.

- Digital Humanities Project = 620 points or 62%: for detail, see a separate handout.
  Group works (3 group works in writing * 30 points) = 90 points
  Peer evaluation = 30 points

Project Proposal (at least 300 words) = 50 points
Rough Draft (at least 700 words) = 50 points
Presentation on Scalar = 50 points
Final Draft (at least 1200 words) = 350 points
= 1000 points or 100%

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

To participate fully in this class, you must have regular **access** to:

- A PC or Mac desktop, laptop or tablet with high-speed internet access.
- Laptop computers are available during class;
- LCCC's Computer Labs are available across campus.   For locations and hours, go to:
  https://www.loraincc.edu/campus-technology/computer-labs/
- Access **Canvas** using Mozilla Firefox, Google Chrome, Edge or Safari Browsers.
- You will need Word processing software using Google Docs, Microsoft 365, and/or Microsoft 2016.
- LCCC's offers students free Microsoft 365 Accounts Go to:
  http://www.loraincc.edu/Current+Students/Office+365+for+Students.htm
- **All written work must be saved and submitted in .doc or .docx file formats.**

[Course policies and other information are omitted in this artifact.]

COURSE SCHEDULE

(You must read <u>before</u> coming to the class on Wednesday, write forum postings <u>before</u> the end of each Saturday, and perform group works before each Tuesday. Specific writing assignments for weekly forums will be offered during each class period. This schedule is subject to change.)

Week 1 (8/28): Introduction to the course, final project, and research for Digital Humanities

Digital Humanities: What we expect to learn and produce through DH tools

Reading: (1) Common's "Letter to the Free" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TRlTnJr_7ec
(2) Phillis Wheatley's "To the Publick," "On Being Brought from Africa to America," and "On Imagination"; (3) "In Motion: The African-American Migration Experience"
http://www.inmotionaame.org/home.cfm?bhcp=1

Writing: Forum 1 (by 8/31, Saturday, 11:59 p.m. on Canvas)
Quiz: Syllabus quiz (by 8/31, Saturday, 11:59 p.m. on Canvas)

Week 2 (9/4): Indelible marks of Blackness

Digital Humanities: How history becomes visual in DH studies

Reading: (1) Excerpt from Isabel Wilkerson's *The Warmth of Other Suns;* (2) Ta-Nehisi Coates' "Between the World and Me," Chapter 1
https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/07/tanehisi-coates-between-the-world-and-me/397619/ ; (3) "The 1619 Project"
https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/1619-america-slavery.html

Writing: Forum 2 (by 9/7, Saturday, 11:59 p.m. on Canvas)
Group Work 1 for Introduction and brainstorming (by 9/10, Tuesday, 11:59 p.m. on Canvas)

Week 3 (9/11): Runaway slave advertisements

Digital Humanities: How we interpret collected data by using Voyant-tools.org

Reading: (1) "Runaway from the Subscriber: Runaway Slave Advertisements 1745-1775"
http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai/enslavement/text8/virginiarunawayads.pdf ; (2)
Glen Ligon's *Runaways* series <https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/glenn-ligon-untitled-from-the-runaways-1993>

Writing: Forum 3 (by 9/14, Saturday, 11:59 p.m. on Canvas)
Group Project Proposal Due (by 9/17, Tuesday, 11:59 p.m. on Canvas)

Week 4 (9/18): Henry "Box" Brown's performance

Digital Humanities: How we can find images from digitized archives

Reading: (1) Henry "Box" Brown's *Narrative of Henry Box Brown, Who Escaped from Slavery* <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/boxbrown/boxbrown.html>; (2) Erasure Poetry https://poets.org/text/erasure-poetic-form; (3) Tyehimba Jess's "Pre/Face Berryman/Brown" from *Olio*

Writing: Forum 4 (by 9/21, Saturday, 11:59 p.m. on Canvas)

Week 5 (9/25): Frederick Douglass' (hu)manhood

Digital Humanities: What we read in archive: in case of Frederick Douglass archive <https://www.loc.gov/collections/frederick-douglass-papers/about-this-collection/>

Reading: Frederick Douglass's *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave. Written by Himself* < https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/douglass/menu.html>

Writing: Forum 5 (by 9/28, Saturday, 11:59 p.m. on Canvas)

Week 6 (10/2): The Reconstruction and lynching

Digital Humanities: What we read in historic newspapers by using *Chronicling America* <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/#tab=tab_advanced_search>

Reading: (1) Ida B. Wells-Barnett's *A Red Record*, Chapter 1, 6, and 10. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/14977/14977-h/14977-h.htm>; (2) [video watching in class] PBS "Reconstruction" https://www.pbs.org/show/reconstruction-america-after-civil-war/

Writing: Forum 6 (by 10/5, Saturday, 11:59 p.m. on Canvas)

Week 7 (10/9): Harlem Renaissance and Civil Right Movements

Digital Humanities: How we incorporate digital media into literary studies

Reading: Selected poems by Claude McKay, Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, and other Harlem Renaissance artists <http://ebooks.ohiolink.edu/xtf-ch/>;

Writing: Forum 7 (by 10/12, Saturday, 11:59 p.m. on Canvas)
Group Work 2 (by 10/15 Tuesday, 11:59 p.m. on Scalar)

Week 8 (10/16): Black Feminism before Our "Beyonce" Age

Digital Humanities: Pop-culture and Black Feminism

Reading: (1) Selected poems by Gwendolyn Brooks <http://ebooks.ohiolink.edu/xtf-ch/>; (2) bell hooks' "Moving Beyond Pain" <http://www.bellhooksinstitute.com/blog/2016/5/9/moving-beyond-pain>; (3) [video watching in class] Beyonce's *Lemonade*

Writing: Forum 8 (by 10/19, Saturday, 11:59 p.m. on Canvas)

Week 9 (10/23): Black Historiography 1

Digital Humanities: How we trace family history through a literary text by using US Census and Ancestry.com Library Edition

Reading: Octavia Butler's *Kindred* (by half of the book)

Writing: Forum 9 (by 10/26, Saturday, 11:59 p.m. on Canvas)

Week 10 (10/30): Black Historiography 1

Digital Humanities: American genealogy, family book, and unwritten history in case of David Drake
https://gcma.org/david-drake/

Reading: Octavia Butler's *Kindred* (by end)

Writing: Forum 10 (by 11/2, Saturday, 11:59 p.m. on Canvas)

Week 11 (11/6): Neo-slave narrative 1

Digital Humanities: How we create/interpret an interactive map
<http://www.eduplace.com/kids/socsci/books/applications/imaps/maps/g5s_u6/#top>

Reading: Colson Whitehead's *The Underground Railroad* (by half of the book)

Writing: Forum 11 (by 11/9, Saturday, 11:59 p.m. on Canvas)
Group Work 3 (by 11/12, Tuesday, 11:59 p.m. on Scalar)

Week 12 (11/13): Neo-slave narrative 2

Digital Humanities: Big data and its limitation, from Alvaro Bedoya's "Big Data and Underground Railroad"
<http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/future_tense/2014/11/big_data_underground_railroad_history_says_unfettered_collection_of_data.html>

Reading: Colson Whitehead's *The Underground Railroad* (by end)

Writing: Forum 12 (by 11/16, Saturday, 11:59 p.m. on Canvas)

Week 13 (11/20): Group Project 1

In-class Group Work: Discuss your group's topic with group members and update sources. Make progress on editing your group's Scalar page. We will meet in LC 209 during the class period.

Week 14 (11/27): Group Project 2

In-class Group Work: Update project process on your group's Scalar page. Draft narratives collaboratively. At least one of the group members should bring a laptop for this collaboration.

Writing: Submit your group's rough draft of presentation narratives by 12/3, Tuesday, by 11:59 p.m. on Canvas. I will return them with my comments next day (12/4).

Week 15 (12/4): Group Presentation and Celebration of Our Digital Humanities Project

Your group will present by showing the Scalar page. Submit your peer evaluation to Canvas by 12/4, Wednesday, 11:59 p.m. on Canvas.

Week 16 and Final (12/9 – final)

Submit your group's final draft for web publication by 12/10, Tuesday, on Scalar. The website will be completed by 12/13, Friday, for publication.

Digital Humanities Project: Quilting African American Experiences in Northeast Ohio

For our final project for this course, we as a group of five to six members will collaborate to contribute our group project to a course website outside of CANVAS through archival research, creative narrative, and presentable performance. Moving toward this anchor, each week we will learn about Digital Humanities, and digital tools for our Digital Humanities Project. Your group must utilize at least three of those tools for a group project.

Throughout the semester, we will observe how the intellectual history of African Americans has shaped our understanding of American citizenry. Despite the constant oppression against them, African Americans have expressed their humanity, individuality, and through them their civic qualification for American citizenship. African American literature is not only shaped by a few well-known authors such as Frederick Douglass, Toni Morrison, and James Baldwin. But, their literary inventions were also possible in their recognition of the value of African Americans' everyday experiences—unrecorded and untold histories in conventional ways. For instance, even though runaway slaves did not leave any written testimonies to their humanity and unquenchable desire for freedom, runaway slave advertisements, written by their owners, ironically reveal their voice as louder as self-authored slave narratives. Nevertheless, it is impossible to portray African American experience in a monolithic image. Because the term "African American" broadly represents African descents whose origins are in fact various over racial, geographical, ethnic, and cultural boundaries, we can witness dynamic differences within African American community, which demands our sensitivity to any attempt to stereotyping African American and further American experience.

Therefore, we contribute our final project to diversifying African American experience through our research and narration about it. In particular, we will discover local history or family history in the vein of our examination of African American literature and culture. Here are some possible project topics:

1. Archiving Black family (less known or unwritten) history: make a narrative on family Bible, artworks, photos, and letters. (i.e. quilt for Underground Railroad http://www.quilthistory.com/ugrrquilts.htm)

2. Rediscovering African Americans in Northeast Ohio: rewrite an event that was once reported biased by that contemporary bias against African Americans such as lynching, accomplishments, and Black leaders. (i.e. "Cleveland girl's spelling victory created racial controversy, national headlines in 1908" <http://www.cleveland.com/metro/index.ssf/2017/05/cleveland_was_center_of_spelli.html>)

3. Illuminating Black artists from historical perspective: introduce (if you find a local artist, that must be exciting!) Black artists who echo one of the historical figures and authors we

encounter in this course. (i.e. bell hooks and Beyonce, artists about #BlackLivesMatter https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/arts-and-entertainment/wp/2016/07/13/the-most-powerful-art-from-the-blacklivesmatter-movement-three-years-in/?utm_term=.d20e5ba95345)

4. Examining the Underground Railroad and 19th-century African American life: research mid-19th-century African Americans' experience, especially in Northeast Ohio, regarding the Underground Railroad. We can find many actual sites of the Underground Railroad and antislavery movements throughout the Northeast Ohio area. (i.e. the Underground Railroad and Oberlin http://www2.oberlin.edu/external/EOG/OYTT/ch7.html)

5. Documenting African American churches in Northeast Ohio: visit and document historical African American churches (or sites) around you. Those churches served not only as a religious gathering place but also as a political site where people confirmed their action for abolitionism, democracy, and Civil Rights movements. (i.e. Black churches in Cleveland and history http://www.clevelandrestoration.org/projects/know_our_heritage/blackchurch.php)

6. Revealing "innocent but cruel" pleasure of racism in media: Analyze advertisements, images and illustrations, performance, and written depictions before early 20th century that misrepresent African Americans or their achievements. (i.e. "Zip the Pinhead" http://www.obitoftheday.com/post/82196444636/zipthepinhead)

7. You can be creative to find out your own project! In particular, I appreciate a work on Black women because their stories are even more rare than those of the male counterpart. You can develop and expand those topics. Feel free to talk with me.

For related sources and databases, see the final project module on our CANVAS course.

Your team's work must demonstrate scholarly analysis of one of these topics. In other words, your analysis and research have to follow academic convention through exact citations and formal language. Your final projects will be published at the end of this semester, just like scholars publish their research for other scholars and general public's interest.

Your team's project is supposed to include visual materials such as images and videos in addition to at least 1200-word analytical description. While aiming at web publication, a project file must be formatted according to MLA format in its use of sources. Project presentation is scheduled on December 4, Wednesday. Each project will be completed and uploaded during the final week.

We will publish our projects at the end of this semester through Scalar, which is a free, open source authoring and publishing platform. This enables users to assemble media from multiple sources and juxtapose them with their own writing in a variety of ways, with minimal technical expertise required.

Please familiarize yourself with Scalar: < https://scalar.me/anvc/>
Here is Scalar 2 user's guide: http://scalar.usc.edu/works/guide2/index

Once you have made your account, follow this step:

1. Adding content
   http://scalar.usc.edu/works/guide2/working-with-media?path=index

   http://scalar.usc.edu/works/guide2/working-with-content

2. Connecting content
   http://scalar.usc.edu/works/guide2/working-with-structure

3. Design and visualize
   http://scalar.usc.edu/works/guide2/visualizations

Schedule and Grade

- Digital Humanities Project = 620 points or 62%

  Group works (3 group works in writing * 30 points) = 90 points
  Peer evaluation = 30 points
  Project Proposal (at least 300 words) = 50 points
  Rough Draft (at least 700 words) = 50 points
  Presentation on Scalar = 50 points
  Final Draft (at least 1200 words) = 350 points

  Useful sites for data collection/analysis and publication: See "Research Sources" on module