**General Education Course Inclusion Proposal**

**SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN A DIVERSE WORLD**

*This proposal form is intended for departments proposing a course for inclusion in the Northern Michigan University General Education Program. Courses in a component satisfy both the Critical Thinking and the component learning outcomes. Departments should complete this form and submit it electronically through the General Education SHARE site.*

**Course Name and Number:** EN 379: Modern African American Literature

**Home Department: English**

**Department Chair Name and Contact Information** (phone, email): Lynn Domina, [ldomina@nmu.edu](mailto:ldomina@nmu.edu), 227-2711

**Expected frequency of Offering of the course** (e.g. every semester, every fall): Every Fall (1-2 sections)

**Official Course Status**: Has this course been approved by CUP and Senate? YES

*Courses that have not yet been approved by CUP must be submitted to CUP prior to review by GEC. Note that GEC is able to review courses that are in the process of approval; however, inclusion in the General Education Program is dependent upon Senate and Academic Affairs approval of the course into the overall curriculum.*

**Overview of course** (please attach a current syllabus as well): *Please limit the overview to two pages (not including the syllabus)*

A. Overview of the course content

Through a consideration of modern and contemporary African American literature and its social and historical contexts, students will learn that African American literature is both a distinct literary tradition and an intrinsic part of the American literary canon. Students will examine a variety of texts by African American authors, including short stories, nonfiction, poetry, novels, and/or drama, and engage in critical literary study through classroom discussion and a series of formal assignments such as essays, presentations, and exams.

B. Explain why this course satisfies the Component specified and significantly addresses both learning outcomes

EN 379 requires students to read a range of modern and contemporary literature by African American authors and to study distinct literary movements such as the Harlem Renaissance, the Black Arts Era, Black Theatre, the rise of the literary critic, and the newest modes of cultural expression. Students will analyze these texts within historically specific perspectives, taking into account the particular ideologies, histories, and experiences that influence the texts. Through these activities, students will fulfill the requirements of both Critical Thinking (analytical reading and writing) and Social Responsibility in a Diverse World (research, reading, and writing about African American culture and literatures).

***Critical Thinking***

Critical thinking undergirds all of the written and oral work students engage in for EN 379. This course requires students to consider the literature taking shape throughout the 20th century and beyond, including literary movements such as the Harlem Renaissance, the Black Arts Era, Black Theatre, the rise of the literary critic, and the newest modes of cultural expression. Students will critically analyze texts from within culturally-specific perspectives, taking into account the cultures, histories, and identities of authors which influence the texts. Students will compose several written, oral, and multimodal assignments.

* In order to satisfy the ***Evidence*** learning outcome dimension, students will be required to recognize key literary elements in short stories, nonfiction, and drama and generate and support assertions.
* For the ***Integration*** learning outcome dimension, students will synthesize and integrate knowledge of genre and context with respect to African American literature of the 20th century and beyond (for example, Ralph Ellison’s *The Invisible Man* with examinations of black militant parties).
* For the ***Evaluate*** learning outcome dimension, students will incorporate and explore multiple ideas about works from U.S. minority authors, examine literary genres and demonstrate knowledge of course texts.

**Social Responsibility in a Diverse World**

The major focus of EN 379 is critical analysis of nonfiction, short stories, and drama written by African American authors in the 20th century and beyond. To that end, students in EN 379 will examine texts through careful close-reading and historical, social, and cultural contexts, engaging in textual and multimodal essays/projects that require that they synthesize and integrate knowledge of genre and context.

* In order to satisfy the ***Knowledge of Cultural Worldview Frameworks*** learning outcome dimension, students will recognize key literary elements in short stories, nonfiction, and drama and integrate that knowledge through various written/oral/multimodal projects (argumentation, analysis, and research).
* To address the ***Intercultural Awareness*** learning outcome dimension, students will learn to find, evaluate, and integrate primary and secondary information in a minimum of one major assignment (research). They will trace specific themes through the genre and examine how authors explore particular subjects and meanings in different ways and analyze how authors complicate understandings of minority cultures in America.
* To address the ***Intercultural Engagement*** learning outcome dimension students will analyze and engage with literatures from within particular U.S. minority cultural perspectives including: spirituality, race, gender, etc. This engagement will be reflected in artifacts such as researched presentations, analytical essays, and class discussion.
* To satisfy the ***Ethical Issue Recognition*** learning outcome dimension, students will analyze how particular historical and cultural contexts surrounding a text impact how we understand the text. Students will demonstrate knowledge through artifacts such as reading quizzes, short essays, discussions prompts, performance, exam, etc.

C. Describe the target audience (level, student groups, etc.)

This course satisfies the American literature requirement for the English major and Secondary English Education major; it also counts as an upper division elective for the English minor and as an American literature survey or period course for the Secondary English Education minor. It is also a Humanities (Division II) and an upper division option in the current Liberal Studies program. Consequently, its primary audience is upper-level students who wish to learn more about the life and literatures of African American citizens.

D. Give information on other roles this course may serve (e.g. University Requirement, required for a major(s), etc.)

EN 379 requires sophomore standing and passing “EN 211” with a grade of C or higher. It attracts students from all majors.

E. Provide any other information that may be relevant to the review of the course by GEC

EN 379 is a popular course that introduces students to one of America’s most celebrated literary traditions as well as the cultures, histories, and experiences that have given rise to that tradition. It enhances students’ understanding of literature generally, American literature specifically, and the complex relationship among art, culture, politics, and history that characterizes African American literature. It introduces students to the diversity of the American literary canon and of the American body politic and includes instruction in race and racism as significant historical and cultural phenomena.

**PLAN FOR LEARNING OUTCOMES  
CRITICAL THINKING**

*Attainment of the CRITICAL THINKING Learning Outcome is required for courses in this component. There are several dimensions to this learning outcome. Please complete the following Plan for Assessment with information regarding course assignments (type, frequency, importance) that will be used by the department to assess the attainment of students in each of the dimensions of the learning outcome. Type refers to the types of assignments used for assessment such as written work, presentations, etc. Frequency refers to the number of assignments included such as a single paper or multiple papers. Importance refers to the relative emphasis or weight of the assignment to the entire course. For each dimension, please specify the expected success rate for students completing the course that meet the proficiency level and explain your reasoning. Please refer to the Critical Thinking Rubric for more information on student performance/proficiency in this area. Note that courses are expected to meaningfully address all dimensions of the learning outcome.*

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| **DIMENSION** | **WHAT IS BEING ASSESSED** | **PLAN FOR ASSESSMENT** |
| **Evidence** | Assesses quality of information that may be integrated into an argument | **Task Type:** Students will participate in course conversations (face-to-face or online), and/or provide analysis on assigned readings, and/or create discussion questions, and/or produce creative presentations. *Evidence* dimension is assessed via assignment-specific rubrics.  **Frequency:** at least twice  **Overall Grading Weight:** 20% - 40%  **Expected Proficiency Weight:** The criterion weight level for *proficient* is at 75% because EN 379 is an upper division literature course |
| **Integrate** | Integrates insight and or reasoning with existing understanding to reach informed conclusions and/or understanding | **Task Type:** Students will compose thesis-driven essays, and/or submit analytical responses, and/or interpretive projects on the assigned texts by applying critical theory. Integration dimension is assessed via assignment-specific rubrics.  **Frequency:** at least twice  **Overall Grading Weight:** 20% - 40%  **Expected Proficiency Weight:** The criterion weight level for *proficient* is at 75% because EN 379 is an upper division literature course. |
| **Evaluate** | Evaluates information, ideas, and activities according to established principles and guidelines | **Task Type:** Students will create a final project or compose a final seminar paper or complete a final exam, drawing from their work over the semester to identify key ideas and concepts and to synthesize what they have learned. Evaluation dimension is assessed via assignment-specific rubrics.  **Frequency:** at least once  **Overall Grading Weight:** 20% - 40%  **Expected Proficiency Weight:** The criterion weight level for *proficient* is at 75% because EN 379 is an upper division literature course |

**PLAN FOR LEARNING OUTCOMES  
SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN A DIVERSE WORLD**

*Attainment of the SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN A DIVERSE WORLD Learning Outcome is required for courses in this component. There are several dimensions to this learning outcome. Please complete the following Plan for Assessment with information regarding course assignments (type, frequency, importance) that will be used by the department to assess the attainment of students in each of the dimensions of the learning outcome. Type refers to the types of assignments used for assessment such as written work, presentations, etc. Frequency refers to the number of assignments included such as a single paper or multiple papers. Importance refers to the relative emphasis or weight of the assignment to the entire course. For each dimension, please specify the expected success rate for students completing the course that meet the proficiency level and explain your reasoning. Please refer to the Rubric for more information on student performance/proficiency in this learning outcome. Note that courses are expected to meaningfully address all dimensions of the learning outcome.*

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| **DIMENSION** | **WHAT IS BEING ASSESSED** | **PLAN FOR ASSESSMENT** |
| **Knowledge of cultural worldview frameworks** | Knowledge of elements important to members of another culture | **Task Type:** Students analyze texts in historic and culturally-specific contexts through participation in online and face-to face discussions and will demonstrate their understanding of the connections between culture and literature through group projects, and/or individual presentations, and/or composing analytical essays.  **Frequency:** at least twice  **Overall Grading Weight:** 20% - 40%  **Expected Proficiency Weight:** The criterion weight level for *proficient* is at 75% because EN 379 is an upper division literature course. |
| **Intercultural Awareness** | Awareness of multiple cultural perspectives | **Task Type:** Students compose written responses to the literature within multiple, distinct African and African American communities by analyzing Euro-American and African American literary conventions.  **Frequency:** at least twice  **Overall Grading Weight:** 20% - 40%  **Expected Proficiency Weight:** The criterion weight level for *proficient* is at 75% because EN 379 is an upper division literature course |
| **Intercultural Engagement** | Being willing to engage with cultures other than one’s own | **Task Type:** Students will complete essays/projects and/or exams in which they examining literary texts within African American cultural histories and perspectives.  **Frequency:** at least twice  **Overall Grading Weight:** 20% - 40%  **Expected Proficiency Weight:** The criterion weight level for *proficient* is at 75% because EN 379 is an upper division literature course |
| **Ethical Issue Recognition** | Awareness of ethical issues as they relate to cultures | Through their careful study of early African American literature, students will be engaging with and carefully considering diverse ethical issues as they pertain to U.S. history and U.S. literary history.  **Task Type:** Students – through presentations, or essays, or class discussions - will examine African American literary texts and discuss diverse ethical issues as they pertain to U.S. history and U.S. literary history.  **Frequency:** at least twice  **Overall Grading Weight:** 20% - 40%  **Expected Proficiency Weight:** The criterion weight level for *proficient* is at 75% because EN 379 is an upper division literature course |

Lesley Larkin English 379

llarkin@nmu.edu Fall 2012

Gries 241 M/W 1-2:40 p.m.

Office hours: M/W 8-11 a.m. & by appt. Jamrich 240

Modern African American Literature

**Required Texts\***

Langston Hughes, *The Collected Works* (1921-1967)

Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937)

Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (1952)

James Baldwin, *Giovanni’s Room* (1954)

Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (1988)

\*Additional texts to be distributed electronically or as handouts.

**Course Objectives**

In this course you will:

* Learn about major authors, movements, themes, and controversies in modern African American literature (1900-present).
* Participate in rigorous discussions of literary form, content, context, and theory.
* Write focused analyses of modern African American literature.
* Perform independent research on a recent African American literary work.

**Course Description**

African American literature is both a distinct literary tradition and an intrinsic part of the American literary canon. Modern American literature as we know it would not exist without the cultural, artistic, and literary contributions of black authors. Furthermore, much of the most compelling, most incisive, most aesthetically challenging literature of the last century has been written by black writers; indeed, our reading list includes several of the most important American writers of the 20th century. At the end of the semester, you will have the opportunity to read and write about recent contributions to this rich tradition.

As we explore this tradition, we must keep in mind a few important concepts:

* **Race and racism are central themes in African American literature**. Black writers publish their work in a social context that defines them as a “minority.” This context has shaped black writing, and part of our work as readers is to understand how.
* **Race and racism remain significant forces in American life—and literature—and affect the way we read.** These can be difficult and uncomfortable topics, but we must engage them directly in order to understand the work African American literature has done in the past and continues to do today.
* **African American writers have taken many different approaches to art and politics.** One of our goals in this class is to understand the diversity of African American writing and thought.
* **Race and racism are not the only important themes addressed by black writers.** The works on our reading list also address reading and literacy; sex, gender, and sexuality; national and international identity; historical trauma; popular, folk, and “high” culture; and so on.
* **African American literature is not “about” the social or political at the expense of the aesthetic.** African American literature should not be understood as a series of historical or social documents, nor should the African American literature class be understood as a history or sociology course. Our work is to understand how modern African American writers communicate various personal, social, political, and artistic commitments through aesthetic forms.
* **The works we are reading represent only a fraction of the contribution African American writers have made to modern literature.** At the end of the semester, you will have an opportunity to explore this tradition further by selecting and writing about a contemporary black literary work.

**Grading**

Quizzes/Homework 10%

Critical Analysis Essay 20%

Final Examination 20%

Final Essay & Presentation 30%

Participation 10%

Attendance 10%

**Quizzes/Homework**

* Quizzes and homework will be frequent, unscheduled, and focused on current readings and discussions.
* Quizzes and in-class writing assignments cannot be made up for ANY REASON.
* Your two lowest quiz/homework grades will be dropped at the end of the semester.

**Critical Analysis Essay** (5-7 pages)

* You will make an original argument about a literary work or works from our reading list and support that argument with detailed textual analysis.
* Specific essay guidelines will be distributed separately.
* You will submit your essay electronically.
* Your essay grade will be reduced by 10% for each day late.

**Final Examination**

* The final examination will be given before Thanksgiving break.
* The exam will cover material from the course as a whole, with special emphasis on the second six weeks of the semester.
* Please note: your class notes are your primary exam study guide. I will not provide a study guide.

**Final Essay** (7-9 pages) **& Presentation** (5-10 minutes)

* Your final essay will focus on a recent African American literary work of your selection.
* Your chosen text must be book-length and must have been published after 1990. (I will distribute a list of recommended texts.)
* You will make an original argument about your chosen text and support that argument with detailed textual analysis.
* You will also refer to at least two scholarly sources about your text, its author, or its context in the course of making your argument.
* Your essay must make a connection to at least one text from our reading list.
* You will give a 5-10 minute presentation based on your final essay at the end of the semester.

**Format Requirements**

* All essays must follow MLA guidelines for source citation and format.
* All essays must be typed in Times New Roman 12-point font, double-spaced, with one-inch margins, page numbers, a title, and a heading on the first page with student name, course number, assignment number, and date.
* Hard copy papers must be stapled.
* Essays that fail to follow these requirements will be returned for correction.

**Plagiarism**

Plagiarism includes:

* Using an idea or language from an outside source without attributing credit.
* Using an outside source as an outline or template without attributing credit.
* Copying or paraphrasing another student’s essay or other unpublished source.
* Copying or paraphrasing published sources (essays, books, websites, etc.) without

using quotation marks and/or without attributing credit.

* Buying or borrowing a paper to turn in as your own or as part of your own.
* Allowing someone else to write or rewrite portions of your essay.

Plagiarized work will receive a failing grade and may result in disciplinary action.

**Participation**

EN 379 is a discussion-intensive course. Your primary responsibility is to read all assigned material and be prepared to discuss it in class.

A: Frequent and outstanding contributions

B: Regular and very good contributions

C: Occasional and satisfactory contributions

D: Minimal contributions

F: Unsatisfactory contributions

**Attendance**

You may miss up to three class periods without penalty. It is your responsibility to catch up on missed work. Contact your peers before contacting your professor. In-class work and quizzes cannot be made up for any reason. Frequent absences will affect your participation grade.

A: 0-3 absences

B: 4-5 absences

C: 6-7 absences

F: 8 absences or more

**Extra Credit**

**1) Response Paper (limit 2)**

* Attend an academic or cultural event.
* Write a 2-3 page response paper describing the event and connecting it in some way to our course.
* Response papers should follow instructions for essay formatting and style outlined above.
* Response papers will be graded on a √ / √- basis. Full credit will be given to papers that demonstrate serious, critical engagement with the event.
* Each full-credit response paper will add 2.5% to your final essay grade.

**2) Facebook Participation**

* Participation is optional.
* Set your privacy controls to friends only, or create a separate account for school use.
* Participate by contributing to on-line discussions; posting news stories, videos, and music clips; commenting on other posts; and organizing group activities on-line.
* Course etiquette guidelines apply to on-line discussions.
* Full credit (2 posts per week, on average) will add 10% to your final participation grade.

**Course Etiquette**

***Failure to follow these rules may result in dismissal from class.***

* Please bring notebooks, pens, books, reading notes, and printed electronic readings.
* Keep your laptop closed during class unless otherwise instructed**.**
* Silence your cell phone and refrain from texting during class.
* Refrain from eating during class.
* Listen attentively and respectfully when others are speaking.
* Use formal language when addressing your instructor in conversation or in writing. Emails should begin: “Dear Dr. Larkin.”
* Do not email your instructor with questions you could answer by re-reading the syllabus or asking a peer. You will not receive responses to such queries.
* Refrain from racist, sexist, and other degrading language. The material of this course may cause us to read, hear, and occasionally quote such language. Our citation of degrading language should always be done with attentiveness to the injury it can do.
* A note on pronouns: “We” and “they” (or “us” and “them”) should always be used with caution. These terms can be intellectually problematic and personally destructive by setting up false oppositions and excluding or marginalizing persons within our classroom and beyond.

**Non-Discrimination Statement**

Northern Michigan University does not unlawfully discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, height, weight, marital status, familial status, handicap/disability, sexual orientation, or veteran status in employment or the provision of services, and provides, upon request, reasonable accommodation including auxiliary aids and services necessary to afford individuals with disabilities an equal opportunity to participate in all programs and activities. If you wish to make a civil rights inquiry, please contact the Equal

Opportunity Office, 502 Cohodas Hall (906-227-2420).

# Disability Services

If you have a need for disability-related accommodations or services, please inform the Coordinator of Disability Services in the Disability Services Office at 2001 C. B. Hedgcock (227-1700). Reasonable and effective accommodations and services will be provided to students if requests are made in a timely manner, with appropriate documentation, in accordance with federal, state, and University guidelines.

**EN 379 Course Schedule**

This schedule is *tentative*. Texts marked with an asterisk (\*) will be distributed in class and/or on Educat. Electronic texts *must* be printed and brought to class.

**Week One**

M 8.27 Introductions

Toni Morrison, Nobel Acceptance Speech\*

W 8.29 Toni Morrison, “Recitatif” (1986)\*

Preface to *Playing in the Dark* (1993)\*

**Week Two**

M 9.3 No class (Labor Day)

W 9.5 W. E. B. Du Bois, “Of Our Spiritual Strivings”\*

Paul Laurence Dunbar, selected poetry\*

**Week Three**

M 9.10 George Schuyler, “The Negro-Art Hokum”\*

Langston Hughes, “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain”\* & selected poetry

W 9.12 Hughes

**Week Four**

M 9.17 Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

W 9.19 Hurston

**Week Five**

M 9.24 Hurston

Henry Louis Gates, selections from *The Signifying Monkey\**

W 9.26 Richard Wright, “Blueprint for Negro Writing”\* & “The Ethics of Living Jim Crow”\*

**Week Six**

M 10.1 Langston Hughes, *Montage of a Dream Deferred*

W. 10.2 Ralph Ellison, Introduction to *Invisible Man*

**F 10.4 Essay #1 due by midnight**

**Week Seven**

M 10.8 Ellison

W 10.10 Ellison

**Week Eight**

M 10.15 Ellison

W 10.17 Ellison

**Week Nine**

M 10.22 James Baldwin, “Everybody’s Protest Novel”\* & *Giovanni’s Room*

W 10.24 Baldwin

**Week Ten**

M 10.29 Baldwin

W 10.31 Black Arts poetry

**Week Eleven**

M 11.5 Toni Morrison, “The Site of Memory”\* & *Beloved*

W 11.7 Morrison

**Week Twelve**

M 11/12 Morrison

W 11.14 Octavia Butler, “Bloodchild”\*

**Week Thirteen**

M 11.19 **Final Examination**

W 11.21 No class--Thanksgiving

**Week Fourteen**

M 11.26 TBD

W 11.28 TBD

**Week Fifteen**

M 12.3 **Final Presentations**

W 12.5 **Final Presentations**

**Final Examination Week**

T 12/11 12:00 noon to 1:50 p.m.

**Final Presentations**

**Final Essay due**