
SEMINAR IN AMERICAN LITERATURE II: BLACK WRITERS FROM PAGE
TO SCREEN

SPRING 2020

ENGL 6120

TLC 1204

TH 5:30-8:00

INSTRUCTOR'S NAME: DR. DIONNE BREMYER

OFFICE LOCATION: TLC 2229

OFFICE HOURS: M 9AM-11AM (ONLINE) W 8:30AM-12:30PM (FACE TO FACE) ([CLICK HERE TO
MAKE AN APPOINTMENT](#))

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“NARRATIVE HAS NEVER BEEN MERELY ENTERTAINMENT FOR ME,” SHE SAID IN HER NOBEL LECTURE. “IT IS, I BELIEVE, ONE OF THE PRINCIPAL WAYS IN WHICH WE ABSORB KNOWLEDGE.” —TONI MORRISON



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Course Description

Novels by Black writers have become popular source material for screenplays. However, the process of adapting the work of Black artists is inherently complicated by the ways in which adaptation itself is interlaced with commerce, culture, and (sometimes) appropriation. In this course, we will analyze texts by Black writers in both their original and adapted forms. Texts will include *Beloved*, *The Color Purple*, *For Colored Girls Who have Considered Suicide*, and *If Beale Street Could Talk*, among others. We will think and write about modes of representation in each text and explore how different artists (working in different mediums) engage with a variety of cultural traditions.

Required texts and other readings/materials

Books

Beloved by Toni Morrison

The Color Purple by Alice Walker

If Beale Street Could Talk by James Baldwin

For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf by Ntozake Shange

Native Son by Richard Wright

The Autobiography of Malcolm X by Malcom X

Lady Sings the Blues by Billie Holiday

Films

Beloved dir. Jonathan Demme

The Color Purple dir. Steven Spielberg

If Beale Street Could Talk dir. Barry Jenkins

For Colored Girls dir. Tyler Perry

Native Son dir. Rashid Johnson

Lady Sings the Blues dir. Sidney J. Furie

Malcom X dir. Spike Lee

N.B All films should be watched outside of class and you should come to class prepared to discuss them.

Learning Outcomes

1. Demonstrate advanced mastery of film adaptation consider how theories of fiction relate to the cinema.
2. Demonstrate scholarly writing that includes pertinent critical assumptions, methodologies, and practices.
3. Demonstrate a keen awareness of contemporary issues cultural influences on black literature and film.
4. Consider adaptive and translative choices based on theoretical lens of Black Arts.
5. To consider the practice the adaptation of one literary medium into another medium.
6. Establish a criteria for successful and unsuccessful adaptation.
7. To develop an awareness of the social forces, historical events, and cultural interests that impact the adaptation of black writers work.

Program Goals

Click [this link](#) to locate the English Department's program goals.

Assignment	Description	Percentage of Grade	Learning Outcomes
(2) Critical Response Essays	You will write two essays this semester analyzing some idea related to the adaptation of a particular text.	40% (each worth 20%)	1,2,3,4,5
Journals	Please keep a reading/watching journal in which you do the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summarize key points in the reading • Incorporate page numbers and comments on key quotations and scenes in a film (record time) • Record your personal reaction • Writer interpretive commentary on the reading 	40%	1,2,3,4,5,6,7

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generate discussion questions sparked by the reading <p>This journal should generate 2-4 pages of single spaced material for each week's class. These journals should be typed. You should bring a copy to class AND upload a copy in Course Den.</p>		
Critical Framework Presentations	Each student will be responsible for writing a critical introduction to one novel or film this semester.	10%	1,2,3,4,5,7
Class participation	You should come to class prepared to discuss and contribute to the discussion.	10%	1,3,4,5, 6,7

Assessment

A: 90-100, B: 80-89, C: 70-79, D: 60-69, F: lower than 60

Course Schedule

Reading and writing assignments are due at the beginning of class on the day for which they are listed. The following is a tentative daily schedule. Modifications may be needed as we proceed. I will advise of any deviations ahead of time and will provide detailed instructions for any assignments. You are responsible for keeping up with any changes and work missed due to absences. Please bring assigned texts to class for discussion.

Date	Texts	Assignment	Presentation
TH 1/9	Class Intros: "Blueprint for Negro Writing," by Richard Wright (Course Den)		
Th, 1/16	<i>The Color Purple</i> by Alice Walker		Dr. Bremyer
Th, 1/23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The Color Purple</i> dir. Steven Spielberg "The Theory and Practice of Adaptation," by Robert Stam 		Jasmine Day-Duncan
Th, 1/30	<i>If Beale Street Could Talk</i> by James Baldwin		Melissa Johnson
Th, 2/6	<i>If Beale Street Could Talk</i> dir. Barry Jenkins		Ingrid Pritchett
Th, 2/13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Lady Sings the Blues</i> by Billie Holiday <i>Lady Sings the Blues</i> dir. Sidney J. Furie 		
Th, 2/20	<i>Beloved</i> by Toni Morrison		
Th, 2/27	<i>Beloved</i> dir. Jonathan Demme		Juli Olson
Th, 3/5	<i>Native Son</i> by Richard Wright	AWP: No CLASS	
Th, 3/12	<i>Native Son</i> by Richard Wright		
T, 3/17- Th, 3/19	Spring Break	Critical Essay One Due	
Th, 3/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Native Son</i> dir. Rashid Johnson "What Novels Can do that Films Can't (and Vice Versa)" by Seymour Chatman 		Lauren Bridges
Th, 4/2	<i>The Autobiography of Malcolm X</i> by Malcom X		Daiyaan Hutson
Th, 4/9	April 9, finalist for the 2019 National Book Award, poet Toi Derricotte, 6:00pm in Kathy Cashen.		
Th, 4/16	<i>Malcom X</i> dir. Spike Lee		Diannah DuBose
Th, 4/23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf</i> by Ntozake Shange. <i>For Colored Girls</i> dir. Tyler Perry 		Alexis Poole
TH 4/30	Final Exam Time 8-10 pm	Critical Essay Two Due	

Important Dates

- March 3rd Poet Graham Barnhart, 6:00pm in Kathy Cashen.
- April 9, finalist for the 2019 National Book Award, poet Toi Derricotte, 6:00pm in Kathy Cashen.
- April 15, Tayari Jones, author of *An American Marriage* 7pm in the Campus Center Ballroom

Policies and Procedures

SUPPORT

- [24/7/365 D2L Help Center](https://d2lhelp.view.usg.edu/): [Call 1-855-772-0423]: <https://d2lhelp.view.usg.edu/>
- [Accessibility Services](https://www.westga.edu/cas/) [Call: 678-839-6428]
- [Center for Academic Success](http://www.westga.edu/cas/) [Call: 678-839-6280]: <http://www.westga.edu/cas/>
- [Center for Disability Services](https://www.westga.edu/student-services/counseling/accessibility-services.php): <https://www.westga.edu/student-services/counseling/accessibility-services.php>
- [Common Language](https://www.westga.edu/administration/vpaa/common-language-course-syllabi.php): <https://www.westga.edu/administration/vpaa/common-language-course-syllabi.php>
- [CourseDen D2L Home Page](https://westga.view.usg.edu/): <https://westga.view.usg.edu/>
- [Counseling](mailto:counseling@westga.edu): counseling@westga.edu
- [D2L UWG Online Help](http://uwgonline.westga.edu/students.php) (8 AM – 5 PM) [Call: 678-839-6248 or 1-855-933-8946 or email: online@westga.edu]: <http://uwgonline.westga.edu/students.php>
- [Distance Learning Library Services](https://www.westga.edu/library/resource-sharing.php): <https://www.westga.edu/library/resource-sharing.php>
- [Ingram Library Services](http://www.westga.edu/library/): <http://www.westga.edu/library/>
- [Proctored Exams](http://uwgonline.westga.edu/exams.php#student): <http://uwgonline.westga.edu/exams.php#student>
- [Student Services](http://uwgonline.westga.edu/online-student-guide.php): <http://uwgonline.westga.edu/online-student-guide.php>
- [University Bookstore](http://www.bookstore.westga.edu/): <http://www.bookstore.westga.edu/>
- [UWG Cares](http://www.westga.edu/UWGCares/): <http://www.westga.edu/UWGCares/>
- [UWG Statements of Accessibility](https://docs.google.com/document/d/16Ri1XgaXiGx28ooO-zRvYPraV3Aq3F5ZnJYbVDGVnEA/edit?ts=57b4c82d#heading=h.yrqueffvts1f): <https://docs.google.com/document/d/16Ri1XgaXiGx28ooO-zRvYPraV3Aq3F5ZnJYbVDGVnEA/edit?ts=57b4c82d#heading=h.yrqueffvts1f>

STATEMENT OF COMMUNICATION

I will respond to emails within 24 hours Monday-Friday and within 48 hours on the weekend. The best way to reach me is via email or Course Den

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance

Come to class. Be on time. Your daily contributions and participation are absolutely critical.

I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences. You may miss **two** class meetings without penalty. After three missed classes your final grade will go down 10% for each subsequent missed class. **However, if you miss class on a workshop day, your drafts, comments and journal grade will automatically drop by half.**

Three late arrivals to class equal one absence. I do not allow any late or emailed work; so missing class also means missing credit.

Breaks

Given that this class is a graduate seminar, we will have a scheduled class break at approximately 6:40 p.m. each day. Save coffee and snack runs, leg stretching, and other such business for the scheduled break. Also, please return promptly to class by the designated time to avoid missing important material.

Late Work

No late work will be accepted. All work is due at the beginning of class on the days listed below. Any assignment turned in late will result in a grade of '0' for the assignment.

How to Succeed

- Engage in Discussion.
- Read actively.
- Take Notes.
- Follow up with me during my office hours.

N.B. Keeping Up and Staying in Contact: If you are struggling, please let me know **before** it starts to affect your performance in class or ability to complete assignments. I welcome the opportunity to meet with you outside of class, whether it is to discuss a draft of your essay or one of the reading assignments. Please take advantage of office hours or email me to schedule an appointment.

Reading and Writing

The important intellectual work we do over the course of the semester will train you to be a thoughtful reader and writer. Over the course of the semester we will engage in a lot of reading and writing. This is to train you to become better writers and literary citizens. While each piece we read may not be your favorite and each assignment may not be your best piece of writing, your engagement with the piece will lead to your development as a writer.

Extra Credit

I do not typically offer extra credit. However if there are extra credit opportunities to be given over the semester you will only be able to avail yourself of one of these opportunities and it will typically be used to replace a low grade.

Classroom Etiquette & Disruptive Behavior

Before class begins, I will expect you to “silence” your cell phone. (Do not put your phone on “vibrate” mode.) Do not take it out again until you exit the classroom.

However, we will tweet during class on occasion. You may use your phone to do this, but you should not be on your phone during class. (That is, if you are on your phone, I should see something pop up from you on twitter moments later.)

Computers: Unless you have a documented special need, laptop computers will not be permitted during class.

The Student Conduct Code, section 3.00 (Appendix A in the Student Handbook) prohibits disruptive behavior on campus, defined as “interfering with normal university sponsored activities, including, but not limited to: studying, teaching, research, university administration, disciplinary or public service activities, or fire, police or emergency services.”

Disruptive behavior includes cell phone use, eating in class, talking while the instructor is talking, coming late or leaving early, sleeping, etc.

Plagiarism

There are different forms of plagiarism, from blatant theft of entire papers to negligence in acknowledging a source in your writing. However, you will be held responsible for any form of plagiarism—whether intentional or not. Consequences and responses to plagiarism are at the discretion of the instructor. Please pay specific attention to the English Department’s site on plagiarism: www.westga.edu/academics/coah/english/plagiarism.php. I expect all out-of-class work to abide by MLA Format (See: *MLA Handbook for the Writers of Research Papers*) for proper documentation of sources (primary and secondary).

Academic dishonesty on the part of the student shall be interpreted to mean cheating, i.e., the obtaining and using of information during an examination by means other than those permitted by the instructor, including the supplying of such information to other students. Academic dishonesty shall also include plagiarism, i.e., the purchase and use of ghost-written papers and reports, or excessive collaboration (incorporating into a report, term theme, research paper, or project, ideas and information obtained from another resource or person without giving credit to resource or the person from whom such information was obtained). Further, inclusion of the published or unpublished writings of another person without duly noting these sources according to normal scholarly procedures shall be considered plagiarism. No material prepared to meet the requirements in one course may be used to fulfill the requirements in another without permission of the instructor.

Excessive Collaboration

By the end of the term, students should demonstrate the ability to produce *independent writing*. Although classroom activities and out-of-class assignments may highlight collaborative learning and collaborative research, *excessive collaboration* (defined as collaboration that results in the loss of a student's voice/style to course-related work) is considered another form of academic dishonesty and therefore will not be permitted.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

DROP / ADD: Students who wish to add or drop courses must do so during the scheduled Add and Drop periods. There is no Reinstatement period for students whose schedules are dropped.

Please see the [Common Language for Course Syllabi](#) for official information on UWG’s Academic Integrity Policy.

The W Date: Students may withdraw from classes up before **Wednesday, 10/9/19** and receive a “W.” This is the final withdrawal deadline. After this date, a student must seek a hardship withdrawal to withdraw from the class without a grade

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT STATEMENT

If you are a student who is disabled as defined under the Americans with Disabilities Act and require assistance or support services, please seek assistance through the [Center for Disability](#). UWG also provides [Accessibility Statements for Technology](#) that you may be required to use for this course.

For more information on the Americans with Disabilities Act, UWG Email, Credit Hour, and UWG Honor Code policies as well as information on Academic Tutoring, Student Services, and Technical Requirements, Privacy Policy, and Accessibility Statements, please see the [Common Language for Syllabus](#) document.

A NOTE ABOUT THE FILMS

Below is a listing of the films we are watching. Because some of these films are difficult to find I have arranged some dates for screenings however I will need to know ahead of time if students will attend these screenings.

Where to find the films

Film	Amazon Prime	You Tube	UWG Library	Other
<i>The Color Purple</i>	Rent \$3.99	Rent \$3.99	DVD via interlibrary loan	
<i>Malcolm X</i>	Rent \$3.99	Rent \$3.99	DVD in the library	Used DVD on Amazon \$1.65
<i>Lady Sings the Blues</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	DVD on Amazon \$5.00
<i>Native Son</i>	To buy \$9.99	To buy \$9.99	N/A	HBO Subscription
<i>Beloved</i>	Rent \$2.99	Rent \$2.99	DVD via interlibrary loan	DVD on Amazon \$5.99
<i>If Beale Street Could Talk</i>	Rent \$3.99	Rent \$3.99	DVD via interlibrary loan	
<i>For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf</i>	Rent \$2.99	Rent \$3.99	DVD via interlibrary loan	Free with Amazon Prime

Screenings

Date	Film
M 1/20	<i>The Color Purple</i> dir. Steven Spielberg
M 2/3	<i>If Beale Street Could Talk</i> dir. Barry Jenkins
M 2/10	<i>Lady Sings the Blues</i> dir. Sidney J. Furie
M 2/24	<i>Beloved</i> dir. Jonathan Demme
M 3/23	<i>Native Son</i> dir. Rashid Johnson
M 4/20	<i>For Colored Girls</i> dir. Tyler Perry