

**RARITAN VALLEY COMMUNITY  
COLLEGE ACADEMIC COURSE  
OUTLINE**

**ENGL 231: AFRICAN AMERICAN  
LITERATURE**

**I. Basic Course Information**

- A. Course Number and Title: ENGL 231 African American Literature
- B. New or Modified Course: Modified
- C. Date of Proposal: Semester: Spring      Year: 2022
- D. Effective Term: Fall 2022**
- E. Sponsoring Department: English
- F. Semester Credit Hours: 3
- G. Weekly Contact Hours: 3                      Lecture: 3  
   Laboratory: 0  
   Out of class student work per week: 6
- H. Prerequisite: ENGL 111 English Composition I
- I. Laboratory Fees: None
- J. Name and Telephone Number or E-Mail Address of Department Chair and Divisional Dean at time of approval: Ronald A. Tyson [ronald.tyson@raritanval.edu](mailto:ronald.tyson@raritanval.edu)  
Patrice Marks [patrice.marks@raritanval.edu](mailto:patrice.marks@raritanval.edu)

**II. Catalog Description**

**Prerequisite: ENGL 111 English Composition I.** This multidisciplinary course is designed to define and assess African American literature and its contributions to American culture and the American literary canon. The course will cover/explore Colonial times through the present, including antebellum and postbellum poetry and prose, African American Modernism, the Harlem Renaissance, African American Postmodernism, the Black Aesthetic Movement, African American Neo-Realism, and African American Speculative Fiction.

In order to understand and appreciate the oral and written traditions/literary expressions

of African Americans, students read a variety of texts; folktales, short stories, poetry, novels, and dramatic works, and analyze works in the African American oral/spoken word and musical traditions. Students also read contemporary literary criticism, as well as pertinent theoretical works from other disciplines.

### **III. Statement of Course Need**

- A. African American Literature is designed to expose students to the literary contributions of African Americans and the African Diaspora in the United States. African American Literature is a course that is included in the curriculum of college English departments and meets an elective requirement of the English Department's Associates of Arts degree in English. The focus and course content of African American Literature reflect the college's efforts to infuse multicultural perspectives into the classroom to prepare students for more thoughtful and effective participation in the global community.
- B. This course does not have a Lab component.
- C. This course generally transfers as a Humanities/English Literature general education course.

### **IV. Place of Course in College Curriculum**

- A. Free Elective
- B. This course serves as a General Education course in Humanities or English Literature. It can also satisfy the Global and Cultural Awareness requirement.
- C. This course meets a Category C elective requirement in the English AA degree.
- D. To see course transferability: a) for New Jersey schools, go to the NJ Transfer website, [www.njtransfer.org](http://www.njtransfer.org); b) for all other colleges and universities, go to the individual websites.

### **V. Outline of Course Content**

- A. African Americans in Colonial North America
- B. African/African American Slave Narratives
- C. The Literature of the Reconstruction
- D. African American Realism/Naturalism
- E. African American Modernism and the Literature of the Harlem Renaissance
- F. African American Postmodernism
- G. Literature of the Protest Movement and the Civil Rights Era
- H. The Black Aesthetic Movement
- I. Contemporary African American Literature

### **VI. General Education and Course Learning Outcomes**

- A. **General Education Learning Outcomes:**

**At the completion of the course, students will be able to:**

1. Analyze African American literary texts within their historical and social contexts, both orally and in writing (GE-NJ 1, 6, 7, 8, \*)
2. Use textual evidence to support logical and persuasive claims in writing (GE-NJ 1, 6, \*)
3. Demonstrate how responses of African American writers to historical events and social structures are influenced by their time, culture, and perspective (GE-NJ 7, \*)
4. Assess and utilize commonly accepted approaches and criteria for analyzing literary works (GE-NJ 6, \*)

(\*Embedded critical thinking)

**B. Course Learning Outcomes:**

1. Analyze the thematics and aesthetics of African American literature.
2. Evaluate African American literary production as it relates to the general body of American literature.

**C. Assessment Instruments:**

1. research papers
2. oral and audio/visual presentations
3. essays
4. journals
5. response papers
6. discussion questions
7. exams
8. quizzes

**VII. Grade Determinants**

- A. essays and/or response papers that communicate effectively in standard English, with attention to grammar and mechanics
- B. projects
- C. exams
- D. presentations
- E. discussion questions
- F. reading quizzes
- G. class participation
- H. journals

This course may include the following modes of teaching:

- A. lecture/discussion
- B. small-group work
- C. guest speakers
- I. student oral presentations
- J. student collaboration
- K. independent study

## VIII. Texts and Materials

Samples of specific texts:

- A. An anthology of African American Literature (e.g., Norton, Prentice Hall)
- B. Rene Boyer-Alexander, *Expressions of Freedom: Anthology of African-American Spirituals, Complete Edition*
- C. Antebellum slave narratives: e.g., Harriet A. Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave. Written by Himself*
- D. Tony Morrison, *Beloved*
- E. Alain Locke (ed.), *The New Negro*
- F. Jean Toomer, *Cane*
- G. John Oliver Killens, *The Cotillion*
- H. Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*
- I. Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*
- J. Nella Larsen, *Passing*
- K. James Baldwin, *Go Tell It on the Mountain*
- L. Autobiographic narrative: e.g., Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery*, Richard Wright, *Black Boy*, Audre Lorde, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*, Anne Moody, *Coming of Age in Mississippi*
- M. Octavia E. Butler, *Kindred*
- N. Charles W. Chesnutt, *The Conjure Woman*
- O. African American Theatre: e.g., Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun*, August Wilson, *Fences*, Amiri Baraka, *Dutchman*
- P. African American essays: e.g., Frederick Douglass, "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?", Anna Julia Cooper, *A Voice from the South*, David Walker, *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*
- Q. Winston Napier (ed.), *African American Literary Theory*
- R. Danzy Senna, *Caucasia*
- S. Ann Petry, *The Street*
- T. Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps (eds.), *The Poetry of the Negro, 1746-1970*
- U. Clarence Major (ed.), *The New Black Poetry*
- V. Ishmael Reed, *Flight to Canada*
- W. Colson Whitehead, *The Underground Railroad*
- X. Margaret Walker, *Jubilee*
- Y. John A. Williams, *The Man Who Cried I Am.*

Please Note: The course outline is intended only as a guide to course content and resources. Do not purchase textbooks based on this outline. The RVCC Bookstore is the sole resource for the most up-to-date information about textbooks.

## **IX. Resources**

Students will need to use library databases and other library resources for critical research assignments if the individual instructor chooses to assign a research project.

## **X. Honors Options**

There is no Honors Option for this course.