

African American Short Story

Afroamerická povídka

The aim of this course is to offer the students an introduction into African American literature via the genre of the short story. We will be reading short stories by some of the best-known African American male and female authors of the nineteenth and the twentieth century. The chronological approach will help the students get an idea of some of the most important aspects of black American history as well as some of the most pressing issues of this minority group's literary and cultural production. The primary texts will be supplemented by secondary, critical readings.

Assessment: full attendance, active participation in discussions, in-class presentation (20 minutes), final essay (1st cycle students: 1500 words, 2nd cycle students: 3000 words)

Day 1: Introduction, Frederick Douglass's "The Heroic Slave;" Francis Harper's "The Two Offers;" Pauline Hopkins's "The Mystery Within Us"
Krista Walter's "Trappings of Nationalism in Frederick Douglass's 'The Heroic Slave'"
Francis Harper's "Fancy Etchings"

Day 2: Charles Chesnutt's "The Sheriff's Children;" Paul Laurence Dunbar's "The Scapegoat;" W.E.B. Du Bois's "On Being Crazy;" Jean Toomer's "Fern"
A selection of Charles Chesnutt's letters and journals
W.E.B. Du Bois's "Criteria of Negro Art"
Alain Locke's "Art or Propaganda?"

Day 3: Langston Hughes's "The Blues I'm Playing;" Zora Neale Hurston's "Sweat;" Nella Larsen's "Sanctuary;" Ann Petry's "Mother Africa"
Langston Hughes's "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain"
Zora Neale Hurston's "How it Feels to be Colored Me," "What White Publishers Won't Print"

Day 4: Richard Wright's "Big Boy Leaves Home;" James Baldwin's "Sonny's Blues;" Ralph Ellison's "King of the Bingo Game;" Amiri Baraka's "The Alternative;"
Richard Wright's "Blueprint for Negro Writing"
James Baldwin's (from) "Everybody's Protest Novel"
Amiri Baraka: "Cultural Revolution and the Literary Canon"

Day 5: John Edgar Wideman's "Fever;" Charles Johnson's "The Education of Mingo;" Alice Walker's "Nineteen fifty-five;" Toni Cade Bambara's "Gorilla, My Love"

John Edgar Wideman's "Preface" (From *Breaking Ice: An Anthology of African American Fiction*)
Charles Johnson: "From Narrow Complaint to Broad Celebration: A Conversation with Charles Johnson"
Alice Walker's "Definition of Womanist"

READING MATERIALS:

PRIMARY:

- Baldwin, James. "Sonny's Blues." *Going to Meet the Man*. New York: Dell, 1965. 86-122.
- Bambara, Toni Cade. "Gorilla, My Love." *Gorilla, My Love by Toni Cade Bambara*. New York: Random, 1960. 13-20.
- Baraka, Amiri. "The Alternative." *Calling the Wind: Twentieth-Century African-American Short Stories*. Ed. Clarence Major. New York: Harper, 1993. 261-274.
- Chesnutt, Charles. "The Sheriff's Children." *The Best Short Stories by Negro Writers: An Anthology from 1899 to the Present*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1967. 1-16.
- Du Bois, W.E.B. "On Being Crazy." *From the Roots: Short Stories by Black Americans*. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1973. Ed. Charles L. James. 43-44.
- Ellison, Ralph. "King of the Bingo Game." *Flying Home and Other Stories*. New York: Random, 1996. 123-136.
- Douglass, Frederick. "The Heroic Slave." Online:
<http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/douglass1853/menu.html>
- Dunbar, Paul Laurence. "The Scapegoat." *The Best Short Stories by Negro Writers: An Anthology from 1899 to the Present*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1967. 17-29.
- Harper, Francis. "The Two Offers." *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*. Eds. Henry Louis Gates and Nellie Y. McKay. New York: Norton, 1997. 423-30.
- Hopkins, Pauline. "The Mystery Within Us." *Short Fiction by Black Women, 1900-1920*. Ed. Elizabeth Ammons. New York: Oxford UP, 1991. 21-26.
- Hughes, Langston. "The Blues I'm Playing." *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*. Eds. Henry Louis Gates and Nellie Y. McKay. New York: Norton, 1997. 1271-82.
- Hurston, Zora Neale. "Sweat." *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*. Eds. Henry Louis Gates and Nellie Y. McKay. New York: Norton, 1997. 999-1008. 1011-19.
- Johnson, Charles. "The Education of Mingo." *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*. Eds. Henry Louis Gates and Nellie Y. McKay. New York: Norton, 1997. 2509-18.
- Larsen, Nella. "Sanctuary." *Calling the Wind: Twentieth-Century African-American Short Stories*. Ed. Clarence Major. New York: Harper, 1993. 34-38.
- Petry, Ann. "Mother Africa." *Miss Muriel and Other Stories*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1945. 127-62.
- Toomer, Jean. "Fern." *Cane*. New York: Harper, 1969. 24-33.
- Walker, Alice. "Nineteen fifty-five." *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down: Stories by Alice Walker*. San Diego: Harcourt, 1971. 3-20.
- Wideman, John Edgar. "Fever." *Fever: Twelve Stories*. New York: Henry Holt, 1989. 127-161.
- Wright, Richard. "Big Boy Leaves Home." *From the Roots: Short Stories by Black Americans*. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1973. Ed. Charles L. James. 139-171.

SECONDARY:

- Baldwin, James. "Everybody's Protest Novel." *Within the Circle: An Anthology of African American Literary Criticism from the Harlem Renaissance to the Present*. Ed. Angelyn Mitchell. Durham: Duke UP, 1994. 149-55.
- Baraka, Amiri. "Cultural Revolution and the Literary Canon." *Callaloo* 14.1 (1991): 150-56.
- Brodhead, Richard H. *The Journals of Charles W. Chesnutt*. Durham: Duke UP, 1993. (selection)
- Du Bois's, W.E.B. "Criteria of Negro Art." *The Norton Anthology of African*

- American Literature*. Eds. Henry Louis Gates and Nellie Y. McKay. New York: Norton, 1997. 752-59.
- Ghosh, Nibir K. "From Narrow Complaint to Broad Celebration: A Conversation with Charles Johnson." *MELUS* 29.3/4 (2004): 359-378.
- Harper, Francis. "Fancy Etchings." *African American Literary Criticism, 1773 to 2000*. Ed. Hazel Arnett Ervin. New York: Twayne, 1999. 30-31.
- Hughes, Langston. "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain." *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*. Eds. Henry Louis Gates and Nellie Y. McKay. New York: Norton, 1997. 1267-71.
- Hurston, Zora Neale. "What White Publishers Won't Print." *I Love Myself When I Am Laughing... and Then Again When I Am Looking Mean and Impressive: A Zora Neale Hurston Reader*. Ed. Alice Walker. Old Westbury: The Feminist Press, 1979. 169-173.
- Hurston, Zora Neale. "How it Feels to be Colored Me." *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*. Eds. Henry Louis Gates and Nellie Y. McKay. New York: Norton, 1997. 1008-11.
- Locke, Alain. "Art or Propaganda?" *African American Literary Criticism, 1773 to 2000*. Ed. Hazel Arnett Ervin. New York: Twayne, 1999. 49-50.
- McElrath, Joseph R., Jr. and Robert C. Leitz, III, eds. "To Be an Author." *Letters of Charles W. Chesnut 1889-1905*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1997. (selection)
- Walker, Alice. *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*. Harcourt: New York, 1983. (Definition of "Womanist," p. xi)
- Walter, Krista. "Trappings of Nationalism in Frederick Douglass's 'The Heroic Slave.'" *African American Review* 34.2 (2000): 233-247.
- Wideman, John Edgar. "Preface in *Breaking Ice: An Anthology of African American Fiction*." *African American Literary Criticism, 1773 to 2000*. Ed. Hazel Arnett Ervin. New York: Twayne, 1999. 303-308.
- Wright, Richard. "Blueprint for Negro Writing." *Within the Circle: An Anthology of African American Literary Criticism from the Harlem Renaissance to the Present*. Ed. Angelyn Mitchell. 1937. Durham: Duke UP, 1994. 97-106.

About the instructor:

Mgr. Nina Bosničová, Ph.D.

Nina Bosničová has an M.A. degree in English and Slovak from Masaryk University in Brno and a Ph.D. degree in English and American Literature from Charles University in Prague. She has studied and done research both in the United States (Bard College, New York University) and Europe (University of Thessaloniki, Greece; JFK Institute in Berlin, Germany). Dr. Bosničová has presented papers at international conferences and published articles in a number of academic journals. Her academic focus is on African American literature and culture, multiculturalism and gender. Currently, she works as a manager for the Prague-based NGO Gender Studies, o.p.s.