

ENGL40015 The Black Presence in American Fiction

Credit Points:	12.50
Level:	4 (Undergraduate)
Dates & Locations:	2010, Parkville This subject commences in the following study period/s: Semester 2, Parkville - Taught on campus. On campus
Time Commitment:	Contact Hours: 2 Total Time Commitment: 120
Prerequisites:	Admission to the postgraduate diploma or fourth year honours in English.
Corequisites:	None
Recommended Background Knowledge:	None
Non Allowed Subjects:	None
Core Participation Requirements:	None
Coordinator:	Assoc Prof Elizabeth Maxwell
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Subject Overview:	In this subject students study the ways in which American writing of both the 19th and the 20th centuries has been both haunted and preoccupied by the black presence. Focusing on a range of canonical literary texts and critical articles that relate literary and artistic concerns to sociological and political developments, we will study the way that concepts of race, and in particular the subjects of slavery and the colour line have been approached by both black and white writers. But we will also examine what writers have had to say about the role of heredity, race mixing and miscegenation on the nation's health and prosperity, and on African Americans' ability to achieve equality and freedom. Finally, we will look to see how in these texts categories like gender, class, and sexuality intersect with notions of blackness. Besides the texts listed students study essays and stories by Frederick Douglass, W.E.B. Du Bois, Zora Neal Hurston, Kate Chopin and Flannery O'Connor. On completion of the subject students will have an appreciation and understanding of the ways that racist concepts and ideas have influenced American fiction.
Objectives:	Students who complete this subject will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> # be able to demonstrate a familiarity with some of the key texts, assumptions and political and rhetorical strategies of both Black and white American writers that are preoccupied by the concept of blackness; # have a broad understanding of the political and social changes affecting both black white relations and black as well as white class relations that occurred from the late 19th century to the 1960s and how these were reflected in American literature; # have an overview of the many different political positions regarding the colour line and race relations between black and whites demonstrated by both black and white writers; # have an understanding of the different ways in which social concerns about genetic inheritance of diseases and undesirable social traits in addition to race mixing and miscegenation affected American writers' ideas about race; # have an understanding of how and in what ways in the texts of both Black and white writers categories like gender, class, and sexuality intersect with notions of blackness; # have acquired a transportable set of interpretative skills; # have developed their capacity for independent research; # have developed their capacity for critical thinking and analysis; and # have developed their ability to communicate in writing.

Assessment:	One essay of 5000 words 100% (due at the end of the semester). All students will be required to give a class presentation in order to submit work for assessment.
Prescribed Texts:	A subject reader will be available. Invisible Man (R Ellison), Penguin Passing (N Larsen), Modern Library Benito Cereno and Billy Budd (H Melville), Powells Books The Complete Short Stories (F O'Connor), Faber and Faber The Last of the Mohichans (JF Cooper), Penguin Pudd'nhead Wilson and the Extraordinary Twins (M Twain), Penguin Ethan Frome and Summer (E Wharton), Houghton Mifflin
Recommended Texts:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # Race Men (The W.E.B. Du Bois Lectures) (Hazel Carby), Cambridge: Harvard UP 1998 # Eugenics in American Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance (K Daylanne English), U of North Carolina Press, 2004
Breadth Options:	This subject is not available as a breadth subject.
Fees Information:	Subject EFTSL, Level, Discipline & Census Date, http://enrolment.unimelb.edu.au/fees
Generic Skills:	<p>Students who successfully complete this subject will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> # have the ability to critically analyse and discuss a wide range of reading materials through participation in class discussions, the reading of critical essays and the writing of a class paper and an extended scholarly essay; # have the ability to both develop and modify one's thinking by participating in class discussions and writing an essay that requires one to respond to literary critics ideas; # have the capacity for independent and targeted research as a result of preparing a class presentation and writing a scholarly essay; # have the capacity for creative thinking through participation in discussions and the writing of essays that apply critical and theoretical ideas to the reading and interpretation of texts; # have the capacity for making ethical judgements and informed political choices as a result of engaging with and discussing texts by people from different social and cultural backgrounds to oneself; # have the capacity for critical self awareness through participation in discussions and the reading of critical texts that acknowledge where one's ideas and assumptions come from as well as what kinds of social privileges one enjoys; # have the capacity for lucid and logical argument as a result of careful essay planning and writing; # have competency in the use of library and other information sources such as on line websites and search engines through the researching and writing of essays that require the use of these resources; and # have the ability to organise oneself and manage one's time efficiently and effectively through the successful completion of a class paper and a written essay by the due date.
Related Majors/Minors/Specialisations:	English English English