

Fear of a Black Planet: African American Literature and the Future of the World
African American Literature 1989-Present – English 7/8335
5:30pm – 8:30pm Mondays
Patterson Hall Room 221

Course Description:

This class traces the explosion of African American literature as both a popular and critical presence from 1989 to the present. Building off the gains of the emergence of black female writers and of the Black Arts Movement, we look at works and authors that have been critical to the direction of African American literature or who embody the trends we see emerging in African American literature in the twenty-first century. This class will unfold through several units, as we move from classic “literary” fiction by Colson Whitehead to popular “street lit” to episodes of *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*. In each unit will explore critical and theoretical frameworks animating those works, whether they are the New Black Aesthetic, Afrofuturism, Black Southern Literary Tradition, and Black Popular/Hip-Hop Fiction. We will consider how the authors’ desire to push the boundaries of what we have traditionally known as African-American literature has impacted the definition and direction of the field itself. As the definition fluctuates we will consider the consequences of the images these texts produce, particularly as we witness to the realignment of white supremacy and the emergence of a postmodern culture that opens up multiple avenues through which they can explore the origins of racial hierarchy and the evolution of the country’s relationship embodied in historical, political, and social events – from the 1992 L.A. Riots to 9/11 to Katrina to President Obama’s election – that works of African American literature have often engaged and that have become a part answering the question: What does the world look like with African American literature at the center of the universe?

Required Texts:

Primary Texts

Beatty, Paul	<i>The White Boy Shuffle</i> (ISBN: 9780312280192)
Butler, Octavia	<i>Fledgling</i> (ISBN: 9780446696196)
Carter, Stephen L.	<i>New England White</i> (ISBN: 0375712917)
Coates, Ta-Nehisi	<i>Black Panther: A Nation Under Our Feet Books 1 and 2</i> (ISBN:
Harris, E. Lynn	<i>Invisible Life</i> (ISBN: 0385469683)
Jones, Tayari	<i>An American Marriage</i> (ISBN: 0446690899)
McKinney, L.L.	<i>A Blade So Black</i> (ISBN: 9781250153906)
Senna, Danzy	<i>Caucasia</i> (ISBN: 9781573227162)
Turner, Nikki	<i>A Hustler’s Wife</i> (ISBN: 9781483514765)
Ward, Jesmyn	<i>Sing, Unburied, Sing</i> (ISBN:9781501126075)
Whitehead, Colson	<i>The Underground Railroad</i> (ISBN: 9781617751318)

Secondary Text

Neal, Mark Anthony	<i>Soul Babies: Black Popular Culture and the Post-Soul Aesthetic</i> (ISBN: 0415926580)
--------------------	--