

The Pulitzer Prize Winners: In Homage to Gwendolyn Brooks and Ida B. Wells-Barnett
ENGL 7335/8335.001 African American Literature from 1989 to the Present

Mondays and Wednesdays, 1:00-2:30

Fall 2022

[Course Description and Overview]

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In 1950, poet Gwendolyn Brooks added to the list of African American herstorical/historical firsts when she became the first African American poet to be awarded the coveted Pulitzer Prize for the poetry collection *Annie Allen*. This award was not only a milestone for the Ms. Brooks, but also for the entire world of belles lettres because Brooks won the award for that elusive genre known as poetry (considered to be the highest form of literature). James Alan McPherson became the second African American writer who would garner this prize in 1978, this time in the area of fiction for the novel *Elbow Room*. These Pulitzer trailblazers serve as the inspiration for this course as we will study the continued recognition of African American creative mastery by the Pulitzer Foundation from 1989 to the Present. Beginning with August Wilson's *The Piano Lesson* and concluding with Ida B. Wells-Barnett's posthumous award in 2020, we will examine the Pulitzer Prize winning works in the genres of drama, poetry, fiction, and music and consider each text within its place within the African American literary canon and as a homage to the pioneering works of Brooks, McPherson and Wells-Barnett.

[Note: The instructor reserves the right to amend this overview/syllabus at any point during the semester. Changes will be noted on the course's Canvas site and sent to the class via email.]

Required Texts

The Pulitzer Prizes <https://www.pulitzer.org/>

Brown, Jerico. *The Tradition*.

Coleman, Ornette. *Sound Grammar*.

Kumunyakaa, Yusef. *Neon Vernacular: New and Selected Poems*

Marsalis, Wynton. *Blood on the Fields*.

Nottage, Lynn. *Ruined*.

---. *Sweat*.

Parks, Suzan-Lori. *Topdog/Underdog*.

Trethewey's, Natasha *Native Guard* (poetry)

Whitehead, Colton. *The Nickel Boys*.

----. *The Underground Railroad*.

Wilson, August. *The Piano Lesson*.

