

English 3325: African American Literature through the Harlem Renaissance

Instructor: Dr. Brian Baaki

Course: English 3325 (Section M50)

Course Description

This course will familiarize students with a variety of African American literature from its beginnings in the colonial era through the Harlem Renaissance of the interwar period (World Wars I and II). We will strive to give equal attention to the most significant moments and movements in African American political and cultural history from this time: the antebellum period, Reconstruction and post-Reconstruction, and the Harlem Renaissance. Through this historical coverage, we will gain a sense of the rich variety of early African American literature, as we study texts in a variety of genres, including poetry, political tracts, slave narratives, autobiography, novels, short stories, memoir, essays, and literary criticism. As a class, we will use our collective study of this literature to devise a working definition of what constitutes an African American literature or literary tradition. We will consider what links the earliest African American writing not only to modernist writing of the twentieth century, but—moving beyond the limitations of our course's timeframe—to literature of our present day by black American authors. Students are required to complete weekly reading response assignments, write two critical essays, as well as two shorter papers summarizing and evaluating secondary sources.