

ENGL 7/8329: African American Literature: Beginnings to 1850

Dr. Shelby Crosby

Thursdays 5:30-8:30pm

Course Description: Beginning in 1619 when the first 20 Africans landed in Virginia the African has been a “problem” for the American Experiment. In this course, we will examine African American literature through a historical framework that reflects the complexity of the African slave trade, American slavery, and the development of a nation under such a cruel and inhumane system. Starting with colonial “America” and ending with the second African American novel, *The Garies and Their Friends*, we will interrogate how early America was shaped by the African presence on its shores. We will explore the slave narrative, radical political tracts, spiritual conversion narratives, poetry, and sermons as a way to understand early America and the emerging African “American.”

Tentative Texts:

Phillis Wheatley, Complete Writings—Ed. Vincent Carretta

David Walker’s Appeal—David Walker

Maria W. Stewart, America’s First Black Woman Political Writer—Ed. Marilyn Richardson

Clotel; or, The President’s Daughter—William Wells Brown—Ed. Robert S. Levine

Slavery and Politics in the Early Republic—Matthew Mason

Equiano, the African. Biography of a Self-Made Man—Vincent Carretta

Poetical Works of George M. Horton—George M. Horton

Making Freedom. The Extraordinary Life of Venture Smith

The Trials of Phillis Wheatley—Henry Louis Gates Jr.

The Garies and Their Friends—Frank J. Webb

Collected Works of Jupiter Hammon

The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, The African.

Written by Himself—Olaudah Equiano

A Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Venture Smith. A Native of Africa—Venture Smith

The Life and Religious Experience of Jarena Lee—Jarena Lee

Memoirs of the Life, Religious Experience, and Labors of Mrs. Zilpha Elaw, an American

Female of Color—Zilpha Elaw

Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave (1845)—Frederick Douglass

The Confessions of Nat Turner, The Leader of the Late Insurrection in Southampton, VA—Nat

Turner