

University of Kansas
ENGLISH 334: Major Authors – Toni Morrison
FALL 2011
Edwards Campus, Room 224 RC
4:10 – 6:50 pm
Line # 26182

Instructor: Dr. Giselle Anatol
Email Address: ganatol@ku.edu
Office Hours:

Edwards Campus—

Mondays, 3:30 – 4 pm, Room 125-M RC
Wednesdays, 5:30 – 7 pm, Room 125-K RC
ALSO BY APPOINTMENT

Lawrence Campus—

Mondays, 1:30 – 2:30 pm, 3135 Wescoe
(785) 864-2530
AND BY APPOINTMENT

Home Phone: (816) 561-2294

Feel free to call, but only between 9 am and 7 pm, please.

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Winner of the 1993 Nobel Prize for Literature, Toni Morrison was the eighth woman and the first black woman ever to receive that award. In this course, we will explore a selection of the celebrated author's major works of fiction, as well as a lesser-known short story, a scholarly essay, and a few of her children's books. We will discuss the themes that resonate for the African-American community, and for the larger U.S. community as well, including the ways in which "race," ethnicity, class, and gender intersect. We will consider Morrison's representations of a "dominant" society that often demands assimilation while simultaneously rejecting assimilationists on the basis of racial and cultural difference. The relationship between Individual, Family, and Community and the relationship between written history, oral stories, and memory are major issues that also will be addressed.

II. GOALS and OBJECTIVES:

By the term's end, based on class discussions, lectures, papers, research, and exams, students should be able to:

- a) identify the major themes of Toni Morrison's fiction; describe the ideas shared in her various types of work; apply these principles to the larger body of African-American literature, women's writing, American literature
- b) see evidence of the further development of their critical thinking skills as they participate in class discussions and practice articulating their ideas clearly and concisely
- c) demonstrate improvement in their writing skills as they develop well-organized, grammatically-correct, analytical essays that illustrate comprehension of the major themes presented in class
- d) demonstrate the ability to give a succinct, interesting, well-ordered oral presentation
- e) engage analytically with literary criticism

III. REQUIRED TEXTS:

Novels:

The Bluest Eye

Sula

Song of Solomon

Tar Baby

A Mercy

Short Story:

"Recitatif" (Blackboard)

Children's Books (provided by Dr. Anatol):

The Big Box

The Book of Mean People

Essay:

"Unspeakable Things Unspoken" (Blackboard)

Recommended Text:

Faigley, *The Brief Penguin Handbook*, 4th ed.
(NY: Pearson Longman, 2012) [3rd ed. OK, too]

For Further Reading:

Birth of a Nation'hood (co-editor)

Race-ing Justice, En-Gendering Power (editor)

The Dancing Mind [non-fiction]

Playing in the Dark [non-fiction]

Beloved [novel]

Jazz [novel]

Paradise [novel]

Love [novel]

Who's Got Game? The Ant or the

Grasshopper? [picture book]

Who's Got Game? The Lion or the Mouse?

[picture book]

Who's Got Game? Poppy or the Snake?

[picture book]

Remember: Journey to School Integration

[picture book]

Peeny Butter Fudge [picture book]

Little Cloud and Lady Wind [picture book]

IV. CLASS PARTICIPATION & ATTENDANCE POLICY [= 20% of final grade]:

Our time together is limited and each class session will cover a great deal of material. It essential that you attend each class, and arrive prepared and on time.

--**Two lates** (OR early departures) count as one absence.

--**One unexcused absence** (a class missed without official documentation) holds no penalty; however, your class participation grade will suffer points with each ensuing unexcused absence. You will fail the class participation portion of the final grade after your third unexcused absence. You could potentially fail the course after your **fourth unexcused absence**.

If you are absent from class, it is your responsibility to (1) *first*, check with reliable classmates for missed assignments, class notes, and changes to the syllabus; and then (2) schedule an appointment with the professor, if needed, for further explanations or clarification of the materials. Professor Anatol will *not* provide summaries of missed discussions over email.

It is important to note here that perfect attendance does not automatically entitle you to an "A" in class participation. I require your full involvement in class discussion; this entails more than merely attending each session. Engaging thoughtfully with the materials and with each other will provide a more intellectually stimulating environment for all of us.

Note: If I find that a number of students are coming to class unprepared for discussion, I will give pop quizzes in addition to the scheduled assignments. Quiz scores will be averaged into your class participation grade.

V. WRITTEN REQUIREMENTS:

All assignments must be submitted in order to achieve a passing grade.

B) 1 standard literary analysis paper (5 – 7 pp, a minimum of 1200 words) [20%]

Paper **grades** will be based on numerous items: clarity and organization, stylistic maturity, creativity of ideas, strength of argument, and evidence of close reading. **(See PAPER BASICS on Blackboard)**

I expect polished work. For papers that obviously have not been proofread, and points will be deducted.

If you wish to rewrite your paper, I will accept **revisions** up to 1 week after I return the graded essay to you. In all cases, I expect a well-contemplated revision for an improved grade (changing a few words and switching the order of the paragraphs is NOT considered a thoughtful revision, and your grade will remain intact if only superficial alterations are made). I will average the grades of the first version and the revision for the final paper grade. **I cannot grade your revised essay unless it is accompanied by the first version.**

*KU Writer's Roosts, writing centers staffed by trained tutors who can help you at various stages of your writing, are available at the Edwards and Lawrence campuses. The service is **free** to students. See the website for hours and locations (you can also submit work for online consultation):*

www.writing.ku.edu

B) Several Short Essays (1-2 pages) [20%]

Several of these will be written in class but revised and typed on your own and submitted at the end of the semester as a part of the Final Project Portfolio.

C) Oral Presentation w/ Write-Up (2pp including Bibliographic Citation) [20%]

This assignment is designed to help you hone your oral articulation skills as well as to familiarize you with some Morrison scholarship and the process of reading criticism. Choose one of Morrison's novels for a research report. Respond to a critical article from a scholarly journal that deals primarily with this novel. Briefly summarize the critic's argument, and then analyze the effectiveness of this argument.

Avoid a simple summary where you merely recount the plot of Morrison's work and/or the article.

Be prepared to "teach" your findings to the class. Make your presentation interesting; it should not be a verbatim reading of your written response. You might provide photocopies of certain passages from the chosen novel or from your research; you might ask the class Thought Questions to stimulate discussion.

I will grade presentations on content (quality of information presented, definition and development of ideas, examples, etc.), delivery (organization of material, eye contact with audience, enthusiasm, communication skills), creativity, adherence to time allotted, and general effectiveness (command of subject and ability to convey this knowledge, etc.)

D) Final Project – Morrison in Second Life [20%]

—collaboration encouraged (pairs)—

Second Life is a virtual, three-dimensional world where participants can establish simulations of themselves, explore different communities and experiences, teach classes, give presentations, and create scenes that come "alive" with the options available.

For this project you (and, if you choose, your partner), will select one of Morrison's novels and "paint" a scene, constructing an in-depth set of plans for an interactive world for the book on Second Life. You might design a room, or a set of the houses, described in the text, convey important elements of the landscape, figure out ways to represent the particular historical moment, social conflicts, culture, and other themes of the novel.

VI. STUDENTS with SPECIAL NEEDS:

Students who have a disability that might prevent them from fully demonstrating their abilities should contact me privately as soon as possible to discuss the accommodations necessary to ensure full participation in the course. You should also contact the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities at <http://www.ku.edu/~ssdis/>. In addition, to comply with safety protocol at the Edwards Campus, please file a class schedule with the receptionist at the Front Desk.

VII. ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:

Plagiarism is the conscious appropriation of passages, either word-for-word *or* in idea, from the writing of another person, and the incorporation of those passages as one's own in written work submitted for credit. It includes taking materials from the Internet, the copying of lab reports and homework, and/or the unchanged use of the essential ideas or conclusions of such work.

It is always assumed that written work for credit is the student's own unless proper acknowledgment is given to the original author by use of quotation marks and/or footnotes or parenthetical citations and a bibliography or Works Cited page. ***If it is discovered that a student has plagiarized a class assignment, the student will receive a failing grade for that assignment and could potentially fail the course.***

VIII. SEMESTER SCHEDULE:

Monday, August 22:	Introductions Children's Books (to be read and analyzed in class): -- <i>The Big Box</i> -- <i>The Book of Mean People</i>
Monday, August 29:	"Recitatif" (accessed via Blackboard) Computer Lab – Introduction to Second Life
Monday, September 5:	NO CLASS – LABOR DAY
Monday, September 12:	"Unspeakable Things Unspoken" (via Blackboard) Computer Lab – Second Life – continued
Monday, September 19:	<i>The Bluest Eye</i>
Monday, September 26:	<i>The Bluest Eye</i> – continued + In-Class Writing on <i>The Bluest Eye</i> Computer Lab – Second Life – <i>The Bluest Eye</i>
Monday, October 3:	<i>Sula</i>
Monday, October 10:	NO CLASS – FALL BREAK
Monday, October 17:	<i>Sula</i> – continued + In-Class Writing on <i>Sula</i>
Monday, October 24:	<i>Song of Solomon</i>
Monday, October 31:	<i>Song of Solomon</i> – continued

Monday, November 7: *Tar Baby*

Monday, November 14: *Tar Baby* – continued

Monday, November 21: *A Mercy*

Monday, November 28: *A Mercy* – continued
+ In-Class Writing on *A Mercy*
+ Prospectus Due

Monday, December 5: Wrap Up

Monday, December 12: FINAL PROJECT DUE by 5 pm