

# The Harlem Renaissance

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English 476(G), Section 001  
Senior Seminar  
Spring Semester 2019

Office: Simpkins 109  
Hours: TTh, 4:00-5:30 p.m.  
W, 4:30-5:30 p.m.

W, 5:30-8:00 p.m.  
Simpkins 14



Aaron Douglas, *The Negro Speaks of Rivers (for Langston Hughes)*, 1941

## Texts

*The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes*. ISBN: 0679764089

*Fire!!* Ed. Wallace Thurman. ISBN: 0912607009

Hurston, Zora Neale. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. ISBN: 0061120065

Hurston, Zora Neale and Langston Hughes. *Mule Bone*. ISBN: 0061651125

Larsen, Nella. *Quicksand and Passing*. ISBN: 0813511704

McKay, Claude. *Home to Harlem*. ISBN: 1555530249

*The New Negro: Voices of the Harlem Renaissance*. Ed. Alain Locke. ISBN: 0684838311

Toomer, Jean. *Cane*. ISBN: 0871402106

Thurman, Wallace. *Infants of the Spring*. ISBN: 1555531288

Van Vechten, Carl. *Nigger Heaven*. ISBN: 0252068602

*There will also be a lot of material to download from WesternOnline and on my website.*

## Overview

This seminar offers an in-depth investigation of the Harlem Renaissance, attending primarily to literary works, including poems, essays, short stories, novellas, and novels, but also considering visual art, film, and music. The seminar will focus on the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality, and how artistic production relates to these intersections. It also aims to help students develop and refine critical skills, to work closely with challenging secondary texts, and to generate sophisticated and well-researched arguments.

What is the Harlem Renaissance? This question was hotly contested by the writers and artists whom we see today as its most important participants. A consensus has never been reached, but this is only one of the signs that the Harlem Renaissance is still alive. What we can say is that more than an incredibly vibrant movement, the Harlem Renaissance is a major event in American cultural and social history. Like the Paris of the Surrealists, the Berlin of Dada, and the London of Bloomsbury, with Harlem, New York becomes an epicenter of modernity, an important site for the production of art seeking to break artistic norms and to place social convention under critique. During a brief period in the 20s and 30s, Harlem became the world capital of Black artistic life.

## Requirements

Prerequisites: ENG 280, ENG 299 with a grade of C or better, and senior standing, or consent of department chairperson. *Writing Instruction in the Discipline (WID) course.*

This seminar centers on the 12-page research essay, due at the end of the semester. The essay must cite at least five literary and/or cultural criticism sources (open webpages, news pieces, historical overviews, and Wikipedia don't qualify, though you are welcome to use them), in making an argument about one or more of the literary works under discussion. In order to prepare for this task, there will be an annotated bibliography, due three weeks before the research essay. This bibliography must include 15 critical sources. In addition, each student will give a five-minute presentation on her or his research. Students must write a research proposal and have it approved, before the bibliography and presentation can begin. There is also a five-page close reading midterm essay.

*This is a seminar, not a lecture.* Everyone is a contributing scholar. Students must be prepared to say something and/or to ask questions about the text at hand during every session. My role is not "teacher"; I am the facilitator. Take responsibility for your learning and that of your classmates, including me. Should it prove necessary in order to facilitate discussion, I will assign regular writing assignments.

See <http://www.wiu.edu/provost/students.php> for student rights and responsibilities.

## Grading

Participation	30%	(includes presentation & homework)
Midterm Essay	10%	(may be revised & resubmitted)
Annotated Bibliography	10%	(may be revised & resubmitted)
Research Essay	50%	

Unless excused, late work receives a one-letter grade reduction. I am, however, usually willing to grant an extension, so long as the student contacts me *at least 24 hours in advance*. Extensions on the final essay will only be given under exceptional circumstances. Plagiarism will result in an F for the course, and I will report the student for academic discipline. Missing classes will affect the participation grade. A student with four unexcused absences *automatically fails the course*.

Send all written work to me through email as Microsoft Word attachments. If I don't have assignments at the beginning of class, they will be counted late. Writing should be paginated and double-spaced, in a standard-sized font. Handwritten work gets zero credit, with no opportunity to redo it.

## Students with Disabilities

In accordance with University values and disability law, students with disabilities may request academic accommodations where there are aspects of a course that result in barriers to inclusion or accurate assessment of achievement. To file an official request for disability-related accommodations, please contact the Disability Resource Center at 309-298-2512, [disability@wiu.edu](mailto:disability@wiu.edu) or in 143 Memorial Hall. Please notify the instructor as soon as possible to ensure that this course is accessible to you in a timely manner.

## Schedule

Week 1: January 16  
Introduction

Week 2: January 23  
*Cane*

Week 3: January 30  
*Cane*  
*The New Negro*

Week 4: February 6

*The New Negro*

*Nigger Heaven*

Week 5: February 13

*Nigger Heaven*

Week 6: February 20

*FIRE!!*

*Home to Harlem*

Week 7: February 27

*Quicksand & Passing*

Week 8: March 6

**Midterm Essay due March 6**

*The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes*

## Spring Break

Week 9: March 20

*The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes*

Week 10: March 27

**Research Proposal due March 27**

*Mule Bone*

Week 11: April 3

*Infants of the Spring*

Week 12: April 10

*Infants of the Spring*

*Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Week 13: April 17

**Annotated Bibliography due April 17**

*Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Week 14: April 24

*Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Week 14: May 1

Movie: *Looking for Langston*

**Research Essay due on Monday, May 6 at 1:00 p.m., or Friday, May 3 at 10:00 a.m. for comments.**