

# Politics and Literature: Three Great Novels about Race

Pol 4234

T-Th: 300-420, Hines 241

Instructor: Alexander Orwin, [aorwin1@lsu.edu](mailto:aorwin1@lsu.edu)

Stubbs 202, socially-distanced office hours by appointment in front of Quad Plaza Fountain

## Content and Objectives

In this course, we read four of the greatest novels about race, reflecting a variety of perspectives across space, time, and culture. The novels are set in the Midwest, Deep South, and New York City, take place from 1830 to about 1950, and are written one adopted Yankee, one Southerner, and one African American. In all of them racial conflict is a major, though far from exclusive theme. The objective of the course is to reflect more deeply on the issues, racial and otherwise, facing our own society and instill a greater appreciation of ability of literature to grapple with them, with the hope that it will last long after graduation from LSU.

## Bibliography

**Please use the assigned editions, available for purchase at the LSU bookstore.** They are not expensive and will allow you to follow the references I make in class, while allowing me to check the references you make in your papers.

Ellison, Ralph. *The Invisible Man*. New York: Vintage International, 1980.

Faulkner, William. *Go Down Moses*. Vintage International, 2011.

Twain, Mark. *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Mineola, New York: Dover Thrift Editions, 1994.

## Syllabus

Jan 12: Introduction, Mark Twain, *Huckleberry Finn*, pp. 1-8

Jan. 14: HF, 8-39

Jan. 19: HF, 39-72

Jan. 21: HF, 72-111

Jan. 26: HF, 111-147

Jan. 28: HF, 147-185

Feb. 2: HF, 185-220

Feb. 4: William Falkner, *Go Down Moses*, "Was," pp. 5-30

Feb. 9: GDM, "The Fire and the Hearth," 33-58

Feb. 11: GDM, "The Fire and the Hearth," 58-93

**Feb. 16: Mardi Gras Winter Break**

Feb. 23: "The Fire and the Hearth," 93-126

Feb. 25: GDM, "The Pantaloon in Black," 129-53

Mar. 2: GDM, "The Old People," 155-78

Mar. 4: GDM, "The Bear," 181-214

Mar. 9: GDM, "The Bear," 214-240

Mar. 11: GDM, "The Bear," 241-274

Mar. 18: GDM, "The Bear," 274-215

Mar. 18: GDM, "Delta Autumn," 319-47

Mar. 23: GDM, "Go Down, Moses," 351-65, plus general discussion of the whole

Mar. 25: Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 1-70

Mar. 30: IM, 71-135

Apr. 1: IM, 136-195

Apr. 6: IM, 196-260

Apr. 8: IM, 261-317

Apr. 13: IM, 318-382

Apr. 15: IM, 383-344

Apr. 20: IM, 445-512

Apr. 22: IM, 513-81

## Grading

### 15%: Attendance

Attendance is essential to overall success in the course, so all enrolled students are expected to sign in every class. **Attendance will become mandatory after the final drop date has passed.** Only one unexcused absence is permitted for each student. Every additional absence will cost one attendance mark.

### 15%: Participation

Participation is mandatory, as a sign of alertness and preparedness in class. Half of the mark depends on your responses on the Forum, half on your performance in class.

### 30%: Mid-term paper

This 7-page paper on a topic of your choosing will be due March 11th. You are encouraged to discuss your paper with me beforehand. Please consult the Ten Tips, posted on Moodle, for further guidance about writing a good paper.

### 40%: Final paper

This 10-page paper on a topic of your choosing will be due on the date of the final exam for the course.

### *Grading scale:*

90-100: A 97-100: A+ 93-96: A 90-92: A-

80-89: B 87-90: B+ 83-86: B 80-82: B-

70-79: C 77-80: C+ 73-76: C 70-72: C-

60-69: D 67-70: D+ 63-66: D 60-62: D-

Under 60: F

## Attendance

For attendance, see the official policy at <https://sites01.lsu.edu/wp/policiesprocedures/policies-procedures/22/>. Attendance is mandatory for every class, with one unexcused absence allowed for each student. All absences falling under the guidelines of PS 22 are excused: others might be as well, depending on the discretion of the professor. If you have a valid excuse, please confirm it immediately after the missed session. Students who miss a class for whatever reason are encouraged to get the best notes they can, oral and written, from fellow students.

## Academic Integrity

All students are expected to read and be familiar with the LSU Code of Student Conduct and Commitment to Community, found online at [www.lsu.edu/saa](http://www.lsu.edu/saa). All violations of this code, including plagiarism, will be referred to the Student Office of Advocacy and Accountability.

## Disabilities

All disabilities will be accommodated with appropriate direction from the Office of Disabilities Service.

## Final Exam Accommodation

Requests for accommodations for students with 3 exams scheduled by the University within a 24-hour period during final exam week must be made to the Dean or Director of the College or School in which the student is registered prior to the final date for dropping courses

## Additional Class Rules

**Please wear masks and social distance responsibly, in class and outside of it, to avoid spreading Covid.** Those who refuse to comply might be asked to leave.

**Bring your books to class.** They will be the primary focus of the lectures, which might be difficult to follow without them.

Neuroscience, experience, and common sense all teach that the growing array of electronic devices can be distracting. **Please turn off all such devices in class.** Those who refuse to comply may be asked to leave. Exceptions will be granted only for medically-confirmed disabilities.

Please do not eat during class: drinking is normally permitted, but not in the era of Covid. Do not leave in the middle of class except for an emergency.

Dozing or talking to classmates about matters unrelated to the course is forbidden.

**Violation of class rules might cost you attendance and participation marks.**