

**Department of English, Foreign Languages, Journalism  
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences**

**English ENG210-01**

**Course Syllabus – Spring 2010**

**Instructor: Bill Church**

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**Office Hours:** 12:30 – 2:00 MW; 11:30 - 12:30 TR; other times by appointment.

**Class Meeting Time and Room:** 10:00 – 10:50 MWF, Spratt Hall 203.

**Required texts and materials:** *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*, Ernest J. Gaines; *The Vintage Book of African American Poetry*, Michael Harper; *The Bluest Eye*, Toni Morrison; *Dutchman* and *The Slave*, Baraka; *Blues for Mister Charlie*, Baldwin; *The Rose that Grew from Concrete*, Tupac Shakur. All are available in our campus book store.

**Students with Disabilities:** Anyone who has a disability that prevents the fullest expression of her or his potential to succeed in this course must notify me in writing as soon as possible so we may discuss course requirements, options, and accommodations.

**Course Description & Goals:** The current MWSU Catalog identifies ENG210 as follows: “A General Studies course emphasizing ways of reading and writing about poetry, fiction, and drama. Various thematic approaches may be offered. May not be repeated for credit” (228). For our section, we will learn not only about various literary genres, terms, and themes, but also about the how those literary forms were adopted and altered by enslaved people of African origin and their descendents. The story of African American literature requires an analysis of both key words “African” and “American” as an oral, polytheistic people whose humanity was negated by the “peculiar institution of slavery” battled for legitimacy as literate and, for our particular interest, *literary* people.

**Caveat:** To create in their art a world that represented their true experience, Black writers, particularly from the Civil Rights Movement forward, often employ racially and sexually charged language. One need only think of rap lyrics as an example. While the presence of such language rightly should disturb us, we must read it with the understanding that disturbing people was precisely what the writers meant to do. Paramount to the success of our course is that we approach and analyze offensive language, stereotypes, and ideologies in their historical and artistic context. When we discuss offensive material and demeaning words we must respect the authors’ artistic purpose and the sensibilities of our fellow learners.

**Prerequisite:** None. This is, however, an introductory university literature course in which students will need command of reading and writing skills that yield clear, competent, correct academic writing about the literary works.

**Academic Honesty:** I trust that you will not cheat deliberately. Occasionally, however, students are not familiar and practiced with required methods of crediting sources. If I notice any oversights, I will ask you to correct the mistakes and submit a corrected version quickly. That said, I am required to post the following official statement of this university:

**MWSU Academic Honesty Policy and Due Process:** Academic honesty is required in all academic endeavors. Violations of academic honesty include any instance of plagiarism, cheating, seeking credit for another's work, falsifying documents or academic records, or any other fraudulent activity. Violations of academic honesty may result in a failing grade on the assignment, failure in the course, or expulsion from the University. When a student's grade has been affected, violations of academic honesty will be reported to the Provost or designated representative on the Academic Honesty Violation Report forms.

Please see the current MWSU *Student Handbook*, available online, for specific activities identified as violations of this policy and the student due process procedure.

**Grading:** Because everything begins with careful reading, nearly every class will begin with what I prefer to call a Retention-Enhancement Questionnaire. You may know the term by its vulgar cousin, "quiz." These REQs will become significant portion of your grade, and you must be present at the beginning of class to participate. Because writing about any written text fosters deeper learning, you will write a one-page paper per week on a topic I assign. We will have a midterm, a final exam, and one major paper of five to seven pages. Clearly, I expect all students to be present and prepared every day. Those who are will be amply rewarded.

Daily Retention-Enhancement Questionnaires:	25%
One-page Daily Response Papers:	15%
Midterm:	10%
Major Research Paper:	35%
Final Exam:	<u>15%</u>
Total:	100%

Grades based on semester point totals will be assigned as follows:

0-60% = F; 61-70% = D; 71-80% = C; 81-90% = B; 91-100% =A.

**Attendance:** We have two policies at work in tandem, both of which can result in automatic failure. The first is the MWSU campus policy stated as follows: "In order to improve student learning as well as to achieve compliance with federal financial aid policies, Western has a mandatory attendance policy for all 100 and 200 level courses. You will be given an excused absence when acting as an official representative of the university, provided you give prior written verification from the faculty/staff supervisor of the event. All other absences will be deemed unexcused. The maximum number of unexcused absences allowed for this class before the midterm report, March 24, is five. Thus, when you have six unexcused absences you will be reported to the Registrar's Office, who will automatically withdraw you from this class. The Financial Aid Office will reduce financial aid as appropriate. The second attendance policy is my own. Class

participation is an important component of our course. Anyone who accrues four or more unexcused absences forfeits the ability to earn higher than a C for the course. Any student who has seven unexcused absences, *regardless when the seventh absence occurs*, will receive an FA, failed for nonattendance, which may carry negative Financial Aid consequences. **Note:** I take roll at the beginning of class, often based on the quiz. Anyone not present then will be marked absent. We need to be responsible course citizens.

**Excused Absences:** Common sense and human decency will prevail. I will grant special consideration to students who can document extenuating circumstances. Because I allow three absences without penalty beyond missed points, however, I do not consider a routine illness, car problem, or job conflict as extenuating. Likewise, work schedules and appointments with other faculty do not qualify. If, however, you can *document* a health condition of your own or of a family member who requires your care, that may qualify. A court appearance may qualify, as may a hearing with the MWSU traffic panel. Excused absences, other than when representing our university, will be rare.

**Late and Make-up Work:** Except in the case of extenuating circumstances, I will not accept late or make-up work.

**Classroom behavior:** In order to concentrate on learning, we must establish and maintain an upbeat environment free of distractions. Anything that interferes with your own or your classmates' learning is unacceptable. Sleeping, conducting private conversations, eating, drinking, misusing university property, and using vulgar or deliberately offensive language are some of the more common acts that can damage our learning environment. Likewise, *all telephones are to be silent and placed out of sight* during class time. No headphones may be worn, no music played, no text messages sent, no homework done for other classes. Furthermore, I do not allow use of laptop computers or tape recorders except by students who have a documented disability on file with our Disability Services Coordinator. Violations will result in your dismissal from class for that day, and I will record each dismissal as an absence. Sorry to seem so harsh, but in the age of so-called multi-tasking it grows ever more essential to specify acceptable behavior that allows us all to concentrate on course material. Let's establish a cordial and respectful atmosphere in which we can have fun while learning together.

**Final Exam:** Monday, May 10, 8:30 – 10:20.

### **Tentative Course Outline: May Adjust With Notice**

- Jan. 20: Icebreaker, syllabus distribution, intro to course.
- Jan. 22: Have read Harper's introduction to *Vintage Book of African American Poetry*.
- Jan. 25 Have read pps. 3-12 in *Vintage Book of African American Poetry*.
- Jan. 27: Have read pps.13-20 in *Vintage Book of African American Poetry*.
- Jan. 29: Have read pps. 21-28 in *Vintage Book of African American Poetry*. One-page paper due.

Feb. 1: Have read pps. 45-56 in *Vintage Book of African American Poetry*.

Feb. 3: Have read pps. 57-71 in *Vintage Book of African American Poetry*.

Feb. 5: Have read pps. 72-87 in *Vintage Book of African American Poetry*. One-page paper due.

Feb. 8: Have read pps. 92-98 in *Vintage Book of African American Poetry*.

Feb. 10: Have read pps. 3-21 to “Massacre” in *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*.

Feb. 12: Have read pps. 21-48 in *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*. One-page paper due.

Feb. 15: Presidents’ Day – no classes.

Feb. 17: Have read pps. 49-74 in *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*.

Feb. 19: Have read pps. 75-103 to “Professor Douglass” in *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*. One-page paper due.

Feb. 22: Have read pps. 103-131 in *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*.

Feb. 24: Have read pps. 135-160 to “Miss Lilly” in *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*.

Feb. 26: Have read pps. 160-183 in *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*. One-page paper due,

Mar. 1: Have read pps. 184-207 in *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*.

Mar. 3: Have read pps. 211-235 to the page break in *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*.

Mar. 5: Finish *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*. One-page paper due.

Mar. 8: Have read Act One in *Blues for Mister Charlie*.

Mar. 10: Have read Act Two in *Blues for Mister Charlie*.

Mar. 12: Have read Act Three in *Blues for Mister Charlie*. One-page paper due.

Mar. 15: Spring Break – no classes.

Mar. 17: Spring Break – no classes.

Mar. 19: Spring Break – no classes

Mar.22: Midterm Exam. Will provide Ellison handout to read for next class.

Mar.24: Have read Ellison handout.

Mar.26: Have read pps. 1-37 in *The Bluest Eye*. One-page paper due.

Mar 29: Have read pps. 38-80 in *The Bluest Eye*.

Mar.31: Have read pps. 81-109 in *The Bluest Eye*.

Apr. 2: Have read pps. 110-131 in *The Bluest Eye*. One-page paper due.

Apr. 5: Have read 132-163 in *The Bluest Eye*.

Apr. 7: Have finished *The Bluest Eye*.

Apr. 9: Practice preparing the prospectus. Attendance crucial. One-page paper due.

Apr. 12: Prospectus due at beginning of class. Have read *Dutchman*.

Apr. 14: Have read *The Slave*.

Apr.16: Have read pps. 229-242 in *Vintage Book of African American Poetry*.

Apr.19: Have read pps. 244-250 in *Vintage Book of African American Poetry*. Major paper due.

Apr.21: Have read pps. 320-332 in *Vintage Book of African American Poetry*.

Apr.23: Have read pps. 345-353 in *Vintage Book of African American Poetry*. One-page paper due.

Apr.26: Have read pps. (tba) from Shakur.

Apr 28: Have read pps. (tba) from Shakur.

Apr. 30: Have read pps. (tba) from Shakur. Begin reviewing for exam. No paper due.

May 3: Last day of regular class. Prep for Final Exam.

**Final Exam:** Monday, May 10, 8:30 – 10:20 a.m., regular room.