English 221
African-American Literature

CRN 19106, 4 credits, MWF 1000-1050
Meets Bac Core Requirements: Literature and the Arts

How has literature responded to and participated in struggles for racial justice throughout American history? How can texts help us to understand how categories of race, gender, sexuality, and class intersect and interact? What does it mean to belong to a particular racial group—or to more than one? These are some of the questions at the heart of this course, which offers an introduction to African American literature from its roots in the 17th century Atlantic Slave Trade to its exciting contemporary forms. Students will read influential works by writers including Frederick Douglass, W. E. B. Du Bois, Zora Neale Hurston, Langston Hughes, Lorraine Hansberry, Toni Morrison, and Colson Whitehead. The class will explore such topics as how various authors grapple with the legacy of slavery, how oral and musical traditions influenced novels and poetry, how texts formulate and contest ideas about racial (and multi-racial) identity, and how literature addresses the (very current) concept of a “post-racial” society.

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