General Education and I-Series Course Submission and Review

CMLT235 Black Diaspora Literature and Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Information</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Black Diaspora Literature and Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Number</td>
<td>CMLT235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>ARHU – Arts and Humanities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submitted By</td>
<td>Thomas Colborn Moser Jr</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CORE Information</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CORE Fundamental Studies</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CORE Distributive/Advanced Studies (HL) – Literature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CORE Diversity</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Education Information</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fundamental Studies</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distributive Studies</td>
<td>Humanities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td>Understanding Plural Societies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Course Questions
General Questions

Please give a brief description of the course:

The notion of an African diaspora holds that there is a relationship among black people across multiple geographic spaces: Africa, the Caribbean, the United States, Europe, Latin America, and Asia. This course will examine a selection of key works by writers of the African Diaspora from Africa, the Americas, including the Caribbean, and Europe who engage with the legacy of slavery in the formation of a transnational black culture. The texts on the syllabus will be examined in terms of their specific historical, cultural, and literary contexts and in relation to themes such as gender, sexuality, migration, slavery, freedom, and equality. Readings for the course include literary texts (fiction, poetry, drama), music and film, and scholarship from the fields of history and anthropology. While all readings will be provided in English, they will be drawn from the multiple languages of the black diaspora, including English, Spanish, French, and Portuguese, to convey a sense of the diversity of black experience in the world.

Please list any pre- or co-requisites for this course:

None

If there are pre- or co-requisites, please justify them with respect to their appropriateness for a General Education course:

N/A

Please list any restrictions (e.g. majors only) placed on this course:

None

What is the approximate course size (students/academic year)?

70

Please describe how student learning will be assessed (i.e. exams, homework, papers, group projects, etc.):

Assignments and Grading: Please note that further information on the cycle of assignments leading to the term paper is contained in the Term Paper Assignment document available on Elms. These include the Keyword list, the Statement of general subject area, the Term paper prospectus, and the Term paper. The final paper is 8–10 pages in length, plus a Works Cited section. Participation: Most of our class meetings will include small group or full class discussions. In order to participate effectively, students are expected to miss no more than one week of class, i.e. two class meetings; to offer comments and to pose questions frequently during discussions; to contribute actively to small group exercises; and to listen attentively to comments and presentations of their peers and the instructor. Absences due to illness will be excused, but appropriate written documentation must be provided at the next class at which the student is present. Please see “What should I do if I miss class because of an illness?” http://www.health.umd.edu/faq for more information. Participation grades will be adversely affected by: texting, Internet surfing, perusing unrelated written material during class, sleeping, whispering, etc. Individual notebook: In many classes, students will write short responses to questions on the readings. These responses will frequently be used to prompt class discussions. Students will keep these responses in spiral bound or loose–leaf notebooks. Each notebook should include a title page listing each assignment by date and page number in the notebook. The grade for the individual notebooks will be based 50% on effort and 50% on the quality and originality of the
responses. - Group notebook. Students will be assigned to small groups for the course. In many classes, time will be provided for small group discussions that are structured around specific questions on the readings. Groups will be asked to write down their answers to the questions, and to keep all their answers in a notebook. Each notebook should include a title page listing each assignment by date and page number in the notebook, along with the initials of all group members who contributed substantially to the assignment. The grade for the group notebooks will be based 50% on effort and 50% on the quality and originality of the responses. While all students in a group generally receive the same grade for the group notebook, adjustments may be made for individuals who are clearly contributing to the work to a lesser degree than other group members. - Class presentation. Each small group will present one of the assigned texts to the class. Students coordinate their presentations with each other and each presents some aspect of the text to the class. Students are encouraged to use images and slides. Students read from a two to three page paper that they have prepared to fulfill the major part of the assignment. 75% of the grade is for the short paper, and 25% for the overall quality of the student’s presentation on the text. - Reading quizzes. Students take weekly quizzes on the assigned readings. Students will receive one-half extra credit point simply for being present and having available their laptops or mobile devices with browsers. At least eleven quizzes will be given, but only the top ten scores will be used. - Midterm. Students will write short essays in response to one question that will be drawn from a list of two questions that will be posted on our Elms site five days before the date of the midterm exam, and to a second question that will not be provided in advance. - Final exam. Students will write short essays in response to two questions that will be drawn from a list of four questions that will be posted on our Elms site one week before the date of the final exam, and a third question that will not be provided in advance. Questions in the final exam cover only readings after the midterm. 5. Grading Grade distribution Assessment Points Participation 20 Individual notebook 10 Group notebook 10 Presentation text (2-3 page paper) 10 Reading quizzes (top 10 scores) 5 each, 50 total Midterm exam 20 Keyword list 5 Statement of general subject area 5 Term paper prospectus 10 Term paper 30 Final Exam 30 Total assessment points 200 Note: Decimals may be utilized. For example, a term paper prospectus may receive a grade of 8.5. Please also note that the Elms grade book will show a total higher than 200, as it will include at least one quiz score that is disregarded. Grading Scale 188-200 A 180-187 A- 173-179 B+ 167-172 B 160-166 B- 153-159 C+ 147-152 C 139-146 C- 133-138 D+ 119-132 D 0-118 F

Comments on the course that you feel may be useful for the review process. Also, if this is an existing course that you are planning on making changes to via VPAC (i.e. changing the title), please list those proposed changes here:

Although this course is being proposed as a new course it has, in fact, been in the catalogue for ten years, but has essentially never been taught, and does not appear in the General Education and I-Series Course Submission database. CMLT 235 is being offered in Fall 2011, and we plan to make it a regular part of the Comparative Literature offerings. At the moment it is being offered in a single, stand-alone section of 35 students; it may in the near future be run as a lecture course. We think this is an important course and has the potential to be of great interest to many undergraduates.

Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes are phrased as "At the completion of this course, students will be able to...". Answers are expected to demonstrate how the course will (1) give students the ability to meet the learning objective and (2) determine that students were successful in meeting the learning objective.

Learning outcomes in this color are REQUIRED
Humanities

Courses in the humanities disciplines study history and the genres of human creativity, and they include courses in the practice of architecture and the visual, literary and performing and creative arts. Under "Humanities," students will find courses in cultures and literatures in any language, creative writing, art, architecture, art history, classics, history, linguistics, philosophy, and the performing arts (dance, music, theatre) and their histories.

Must address at least 4 of the following Learning Outcomes

At the completion of this course, students will be able to...

...demonstrate familiarity and facility with fundamental terminology and concepts in a specific topical area in the humanities.

Each text of the course is discussed, examined, and critiqued in terms of its specific historical, cultural, and literary context, as well as in terms of the overarching framework of the course: the African diaspora. Diaspora constitutes the unifying theme of course readings, lectures, and assignments. Diaspora is considered: as a historic term that encompasses geographic dispersal and community formation, both forced and voluntary, as a conceptual term that articulates an intellectual and philosophical basis for peoples of African descent to explore enduring connections and common agendas across national boundaries; and as a cultural term that recognizes and celebrates the enormous contributions of writers, musicians, artists, and many others of African descent to our diverse contemporary culture. Since one of the goals of the course is to provide students with an understanding of the central issues in African diaspora literary and cultural studies, the course will move between close readings of the texts in relation to and in conversation with broader concerns with gender, sexuality, migration, slavery, freedom, and equality. Since gender, race, and nation in relation to diaspora are central issues in many of these texts, the study of world literature by African diasporic authors necessarily involves sustained attention to the production of these categories and the way that history is both revealed and contested in these literary texts. Students demonstrate a familiarity with these concepts by making in-class group presentations on relevant keywords that will provide the foundation for on-going research and writing assignments. This process will be initiated in a library research session led by Pat Herron, which will expose students to various approaches to the keywords in different national and linguistic contexts. Students will be assessed in their quizzes, exams, and papers on their ability to define and correctly deploy these keywords.

...demonstrate understanding of the methods used by scholars in a specific field in the humanities.

Teaching students how to understand and analyze representation in literary texts is among the primary goals of this course. Students generally think of a literary text as a transparent reflection of “reality,” which can be gleaned from reading the surface of the text. In the context of an African Diaspora literature class, it is particularly important to teach students that writers self-consciously embraced a variety of literary forms, narratives, autobiographies, poetry, and novels and that these texts are complex rhetorical productions with aesthetic as well as historical value. Students learn how to avoid generalizations about African diaspora literature as well as the assumption that terms and categories like, “woman,” “man,” “black,” “freedom,” “literature,” “history,” “politics,” and “the literary” have stable meanings across time and place. For this reason, students learn how to conduct close readings of the texts responsibly by taking into account the specifically literary and formal aspects of a text, as well as its cultural, historical, and aesthetic context. These skills are modeled for the students in lectures and reinforced in class discussion that requires students to draw from the texts as the basis for their comments. Students are assessed on their understanding as demonstrated in papers and the final exam essay.

...demonstrate critical thinking in the evaluation of sources and arguments in scholarly works, or in the evaluation of approaches and techniques in the visual, literary, or performing arts.

Application View
describe how language use is related to ways of thinking, cultural heritage, and cultural values.

conduct research on a topic in the humanities using a variety of sources and technologies.

The term paper will be the signature achievement in the course and will be accomplished in stages. Students will research and write about two texts, one from the syllabus and one of student’s choosing in the course of work on the term paper, the student will: • Engage in close study of the selected works. • Become acquainted with scholarship relating to the chosen works. • Bring a unique perspective to bear on the readings and develop an academic argument. • Attain a deeper knowledge of the historical context of the selected works. • Achieve an improved capacity for critical reading. • Present work to peers in a formal Powerpoint presentation. • Gain improved skills in academic paper writing, including choosing a topic, researching using library, archive, and database resources. Writing an opening paragraph, structuring the body of a paper, writing a conclusion, utilizing evidence, citing appropriately, etc.

demonstrate the ability to formulate a thesis related to a specific topic in the humanities and to support the thesis with evidence and argumentation.

The process of writing the term paper is divided into four assignments. The second and third assignments are crafted to guide the student in the formulation of a thesis and the development of an analytical argument supported by citations from primary and secondary sources: Assignment 2: Statement of general subject area and annotated bibliography, due October 25, 2011, 5 points. 1. Write a short paragraph that describes your general subject area. Later, as you learn more about your subject from your research, you will refine your general subject area into a specific topic. 2. Provide a bibliography, in MLA format, of at least three academic works that you plan to use in writing your paper. For each work, you will write one paragraph describing the subject matter of the work, and how you plan to use it in writing your term paper. The easiest way to generate an MLA-format citation is by finding the article or book in worldcat.org, clicking on cite/export below the large search box near the top of the page, and then clicking on MLA. You can cut and paste the citation into your annotated bibliography, and later in the Works Cited section of your term paper. An academic work is one that is written by a scholar, typically a faculty member at a university, and is written for a scholarly audience. Examples of scholarly sources include articles in peer-reviewed publications; books published by academic presses written for scholars; and chapters in books of critical work. Scholarly work does not include magazine or newspaper articles; introductory works for students or general audiences; literature surveys; encyclopedia articles; and websites, except those maintained by scholarly journals. You should use our course research portal, developed by librarian Pat Herron to find research sources. http://libguides.umd.edu/cmlt235fall2011 These two parts should be written into a single Word document (either .doc or .docx) and uploaded through the Elms assignment. Please use the file format: [your last name][tp1].[doc or docx], e.g. metztp1. Assignment 3: Term Paper Prospectus, due date November 10, 2011, 10 points. You should address the following topics, in order. Please number each part, as indicated below. 1. State the two works you are going to write about. 2. Provide your working title. 3. State the overall theme that you are examining in your paper with respect to each work. 4. Summarize the argument you will make about the relationship of the theme to each of your works. Set forth the primary similarities and differences that you have found in each work with respect to the theme you are examining in your paper. 5. Provide your final annotated bibliography of at least three academic sources. These parts should be written into a single Word document (either .doc or .docx) and uploaded through the Elms assignment. Please use the file format: [your last name][tp2].[doc or docx], e.g. metztp2.docx.

demonstrate understanding of the creative process and techniques used by practitioners in a specific field of the visual, literary, or performing arts.
Understanding Plural Societies

Life in a globally competitive society of the twenty-first century requires an ability to comprehend both theoretical and practical dimensions of human difference. From that perspective, Understanding Plural Societies is the centerpiece of the University’s Diversity requirement. Courses in this category speak to both the foundations—cultural, material, psychological, historical, social, and biological—of human difference and the operation or function of plural societies.

Must address at least 4 of the following Learning Outcomes

At the completion of this course, students will be able to...

...demonstrate understanding of the basis of human diversity: biological, cultural, historical, social, economic, or ideological.

As described in the Humanities section of this proposal, each text of the course is discussed, examined, and critiqued in terms of its specific historical, cultural, and literary context, as well as in terms of the overarching frameworks of the course: the African diaspora. Diaspora constitutes the unifying theme of course readings, lectures, and assignments. Diaspora is considered: as a historic term that encompasses geographic dispersal and community formation, both forced and voluntary; as a conceptual term that articulates an intellectual and philosophical basis for peoples of African descent to explore enduring connections and common agendas across national boundaries; and as a cultural term that recognizes and celebrates the enormous contributions of writers, musicians, artists, and many others of African descent to our diverse contemporary culture. Since one of the goals of the course is to provide students with an understanding of the central issues in African diaspora literary and cultural studies, the course will move between close readings of the texts in relation to and in conversation with broader concerns with gender, sexuality, migration, slavery, freedom, and equality. Since gender, race, and nation in relation to diaspora are central issues in many of these texts, the study of world literature by African diasporic authors necessarily involves sustained attention to the production of these categories and the way that history is both revealed and contested in these literary texts. Students demonstrate a familiarity with these concepts by making in-class group presentations on relevant keywords that will provide the foundation for on-going research and writing assignments. This process will be initiated in a library research session led by Pat Herron, which will expose students to various approaches to the keywords in different national and linguistic contexts. Students will be assessed in their quizzes, exams, and papers on their ability to define and correctly deploy these keywords.

...demonstrate understanding of fundamental concepts and methods that produce knowledge about plural societies.

...explicate the processes that create or fail to create just, productive, egalitarian, and collaborative societies.

Students in CMLT235, Literatures of the African Diaspora, learn about the ways in which writers of African descent have interpreted the experiences of forced migration, slavery, colonialism, and discrimination in a variety of literary forms, including narratives, autobiographies, poetry, and novels. Students examine in class discussion, examinations, and written assignments the rhetorical strategies that diasporic authors have employed in their struggles for freedom, recognition, civil rights, and equality. The class pays particular attention to the texts of diasporic women authors who describe and resist patriarchy and gender bias. As students take in the sweep of diasporic literary history-in-the-making, they gain important insights into vital and enriching cultural forms of our contemporary world.

...analyze forms and traditions of thought or expression in relation to cultural, historical, political, and social
contexts, as, for example, dance, foodways, literature, music, and philosophical and religious traditions.

CMLT 235 is organized around understanding literary texts in their historical, social and political as well as aesthetic contexts. Each text is taught and discussed as embedded in its historical period and aesthetic movement, as well as in explicit engagement with other forms of cultural expression. The keywords assignment offers an opportunity to make and be evaluated to understanding these connections. Assignment 1: Keyword List, due October 11, 5 points. The first stage of your term paper project will be to begin exploring potential subjects for your term paper. In order to do this, you will conduct keyword searches that allow you to test ideas you have about term paper subjects relating to your group’s assigned text. A critical early step will be ensuring that you will be able to find academic sources that will help you guide your inquiry. For example, if your group is assigned to Equiano’s Interesting Narrative, you might be intrigued by Equiano’s entrepreneurial activities, which most slaves did not have the opportunity to pursue. You would need to find out whether academic sources are available that discuss Equiano’s entrepreneurship. In order to do so, you would develop a list of keywords that you can use to begin your research. In the example of Equiano’s entrepreneurship, a keyword search might include: Equiano and commerce, or Equiano and money, or Equiano and “self-made man,” etc. Before this assignment is due, a McKeldin librarian, Pat Herron, will visit our classroom to describe keyword searches and to give examples of successful keywords. The assignment consists of identifying five to ten keywords that you will use to conduct searches when we visit the library for our research day on Thursday, October 13. The grade will be based on the quality of the keywords that you identify. You should submit your keywords by pasting them into the Comments box in the Elms Assignment.

...articulate how particular policies create or inhibit the formation and functioning of plural societies.

...use a comparative, intersectional, or relational framework to examine the experiences, cultures, or histories of two or more social groups or constituencies within a single society or across societies, and within a single historical timeframe or across historical time.

The texts in this class are drawn from the United States, the Caribbean, Latin America, and Africa. The texts themselves stage multicultural, multilingual, and transnational encounters that demand comparative and intersectional frameworks for analysis. Course readings and discussions are arranged to highlight the ways two or more groups can be “in conversation” with others within texts or across geographical and temporal boundaries. The course begins with a foundational modern text from Nigeria, Chinua Achebe’s Things Fall Apart, which evokes a traditional African tribal community at the moment of its encounter with European colonizers. Having thus established a crucial reference point in Africa, the course then follows a historical trajectory that encompasses literary representations of the Middle Passage, the slave trade, the fight for emancipation, the foundation of distinctive African American cultural formations, the search for authentic black identities, the continuing struggle against racism, discrimination, and oppression, and the recovery of vital memories of a common heritage, both in Africa and in the New World, that have been, in part, erased. Students take on these issues in assignments that ask them to compare writers from different groups on topics like gender and identity, displacement and migration, trauma and memory.

...use information technologies to access research and communicate effectively about plural societies.

Course Syllabus

View the course syllabus here.