

Literature of Political Violence
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Political Science
Tuesday and Friday: 4.30 – 6.10
Office Hours: 2.30 – 4.00
Social Science 1034

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1. Course Description:

In this class, we will explore the relationship between literature and political violence, specifically the political violence of white supremacy as narrativized and theorized by (predominantly) Black authors and scholars. To do so, we will look in an historical way at the origins of political violence on the plantation, how this gave way to post-Reconstruction lynch law, the rise of Jim Crow police brutality, the formation of Black Power politics in response, and the persistence of the violence of the color line in American politics. We will look at the ways in which literary texts offer a unique insight into the crisis of racial subjugation, which will all the better facilitate theorizing both the specificity and complexity of what Saidiya Hartman terms the “afterlives of slavery” in contemporary society. Discussion will include consideration of topics such as white supremacy, police brutality, and state abandonment, as well as the capacity of literature and theory to not simply disclose the crisis of anti-Black violence, but fabulate lines of escape from it no less than forms of life capable of living in its wake.

2. Course Objectives:

Completion of this course will provide an introduction to historical and contemporary anti-Black violence through exemplary texts, both literary and theoretical. In so doing, it will equip students with a theoretical and conceptual basis for analyzing the role of literature in theorizing American white supremacy and resistance to it. It will do so by providing an historical survey of exemplary works of literature paired with theoretical texts to illuminate the issues, themes, and problematics articulated by the novelist. Completion will also grant a sustained reflection on the living legacy of anti-Black violence. Finally, skills such as critical reading, analytical writing, and collaborative discussion will be reinforced and expanded.

Literature of Political Violence: Slavery and its Afterlives
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3. Required Texts:

1. Jones, Jr. Robert. *The Prophets*
- ISBN-13: 9780593085684
2. Hartman, Saidiya. *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*
- ISBN: 9780195089844
3. Melville, Herman. *Billy Budd, Sailor*
- ISBN-10 : 0226321320
4. Wells, Ida B. *Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Anti-Lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892-1900* (Bedford Cultural Editions)
- ISBN: 1319049044
5. Wright, Richard. *The Man Who Lived Underground: A Novel*
- ISBN-10 : 1598536761
6. Du Bois, W. E. B. *Dusk of Dawn*.
- ISBN-10 : 0199386714
7. Morrison, Toni. *Song of Solomon*
- ISBN-10 : 140003342X
8. Jackson, George. *Blood in My Eye*
- ISBN-10 : 0933121237
9. Thomas, Angie. *The Hate U Give*
- ISBN-10 : 0062498533
10. Sharpe, Christina. *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*
- ISBN-10 : 0822362945

4. Grading:

Attendance & Class Participation: 25%.

First Paper: 20% (see below for details)

Student Presentation: 25% (see below for details).

Final Paper: 30% (see below for details).

5. Attendance and Class Participation:

This class will be a discussion-driven exploration of our topics of study. Your attendance and participation is essential to the success of this experiment in learning.

Attendance means being present, having read the assigned course materials that you also have with you to reference in class.

For those attending via Zoom, it means being present with your camera on, in a quiet, well-lit room, ready to verbally communicate. If, for some reason, you are unable to be present with your camera on, ready to verbally communicate, you must contact me in advance of class to explain why. If you are not able to be present with your camera on, ready to verbally communicate, this class may not be right for you.

Participation means verbal contributions to class discussion that refers us to a passage in the text, a concept or idea that is under discussion, and/or a question regarding the aforementioned. Zoom chat is not a place to conduct class discussion. You are expected to participate every class.

Absences

Now I know 18 - 22 year olds are not the most health conscious cohort - at least I wasn't at your age. However, now is the time to err on the side of caution. So, if you have a cough, runny nose, tickle in your throat, "allergies," or just feel "off," then **STAY HOME**. You will **NOT** be penalized for prioritizing the health and wellness of your peers.

I will already be hosting class in a hybrid manner for those who enrolled when class was slated to be taught remotely and the Zoom link will be easily accessible on the course Moodle page. Simply attend remotely via Zoom if you feel you may even have the hint of something resembling illness. (Of course, being *sickening* is more than welcome, and you sld feel free to flaunt that in class to the nines.)

6. Student Presentation:

One in-class presentation will be delivered over the course of the semester. The purpose of the in-class presentation is to allow students to lead the classroom discussion by framing the material under consideration. Like the first written assignment, successful presentations will reconstruct and critically evaluate an essential aspect of the reading by making it accessible to the class for further discussion. Each presentation should be about 5 – 7 minutes in duration (approximately 2.5 – 3.5 pages long, or 500 – 750 words). Presentations must be submitted for approval 48 hours in advance of the class. Thus, a presentation on Friday must be submitted by Tuesday (5pm) and a presentation on Tuesday must be submitted by Saturday (5pm) for approval and any required revisions.

7 (a). First Paper—Critical Reconstruction of an Argument:

The first written assignment will be 750 – 1000 words in length (approximately 3-4 double-spaced, 12 point, Times New Roman font, **margins justified** pages). Papers either over or under this range will not receive full consideration. The goal of this essay is to reconstruct an argument encountered in the readings on ideology and to conclude with a critical evaluation of the argument thus reconstructed. The format of this essay is 75% reconstruction, 25% critical evaluation. To explain the argument here means to reconstruct the argument by clearly stating in your own words its explicit and implicit premises and conclusions. To evaluate the argument means to assess the validity of its premises as well as whether the conclusions follow from its premises. Specific paper prompts will be released in advance.

7 (b). Final Paper—Critical Construction of an Original Argument:

The objective of the final paper assignment is to provide students with the opportunity to conduct original research about an event of political protest of their choosing using the resources provided by the course. The final written assignment will 1750 – 2250 words in length (approximately 7 –

9 double-spaced, 12 point, Times New Roman font, and **margins justified** pages. Papers either over or under this range will not receive full consideration. The goal of this essay is to critically construct an original argument informed by engagement with readings in the class. Specific paper prompts will be released in advance.

8. Intellectual Honesty/Plagiarism:

Simply: *do not* plagiarize. If there are any questions whatsoever about the proper way to cite a source, please consult me, or refer to Charles Lipson's *How to Do Honest Work in College* (2004). Plagiarism will lead to automatic failure of the course and will be referred to the College administration for additional sanction.

9. Unwavering Expectations for Respectful Discourse and Conduct:

Under no circumstances will disrespectful discourse or conduct be welcome in our classroom. We will treat one another with respect, patience, and understanding. Learning inherently involves the risk of allowing knowledge to change your life, and this requires courage. We will all exercise an unwavering commitment to encouraging one another in this process.

Mask Policy

Simply put, a surgical, KN-95, or N-95 masks must be ***properly*** worn at all times, fully covering nose and mouth, and double masking, per CDC guidance, is strongly encouraged. There will be no food or drinks allowed in class. While I will not police non-compliance, nor will I needlessly expose myself to undue risk: I will simply walk out and, if necessary, the course will move to Zoom. If you anticipate that honoring this policy will be a problem for you, then this is not the right class for you to take at this time.

Please consult this video for how to properly wear a mask:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qNzXb-GmptM>

and this video for how to create a better seal, esp. to prevent fogging for those who wear glasses:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s3Y26UGulrI>

10. Accessibility Statement:

The Office of Disability Resources collaborates directly with students who identify documented disabilities to create accommodation plans, including testing accommodations, in order for students to access course content and validly demonstrate learning.

For those students who may require accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Resources as soon as possible, 914-251-6035, ODR@purchase.edu (Student Services Building, #316A), www.purchase.edu/odr.

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11. Schedule:

Week One

Tuesday, 8/31: *The Prophets*, Robert Jones Jr.

Friday, 9/3: *The Prophets*, Robert Jones, Jr.

Week Two

Tuesday, 9/7: *Scenes of Subjection*, Saidiya Hartman, “Introduction,” pp. 3 – 16.

Friday, 9/10: *Scenes of Subjection*, Saidiya Hartman, “Ch. 1 - Innocent Amusements: The Stage of Sufferance,” pp. 17 – 48.

Week Three

Tuesday, 9/14: *Scenes of Subjection*, Saidiya Hartman, “Ch. 2 – Redressing the Pained Body: Toward a Theory of Practice,” pp. 49 – 78.

Friday, 9/17: *Scenes of Subjection*, Saidiya Hartman, “Ch. 3 – Seduction and the Ruses of Power,” pp. 79 – 113.

Week Four

Tuesday, 9/21: *Billy Budd, Sailor: an Inside Narrative*, Herman Melville.

Friday, 9/24: *Billy Budd, Sailor: an Inside Narrative*, Herman Melville

Week Five

Tuesday, 9/28: *Southern Horrors and Other Writings*, Ida B. Wells, *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All its Phases*, pp. 46 – 69.

Friday, 10/1: *Southern Horrors*, Ida B. Wells, *A Red Record*, Ch. 1 – 6.

Week Six

Tuesday, 10/5: *Southern Horrors and Other Writings*, Ida B. Wells, *A Red Record*, Ch. 7 – 9.

Friday, 10/8: *Southern Horrors and Other Writings*, Ida B. Wells, “Excerpt from *Crusade for Justice: the Autobiography of Ida B. Wells*,” pp. 152 – 175.

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Week Seven

Tuesday, 10/12: *The Man Who Lived Underground*, Richard Wright.

Friday, 10/15: *The Man Who Lived Underground*, Richard Wright.

Week Eight

Tuesday, 10/19: *Dusk of Dawn*, W. E. B. Du Bois, “Introduction – Ch. 2, pp . xxv – 25.

Friday, 10/22: *Dusk of Dawn*, W. E. B. Du Bois, Ch. 3 – 5, pp. 26 – 67.

Week Nine

Tuesday, 10/26: *Dusk of Dawn*, W. E. B. Du Bois, Ch. 6 – 7, pp. 68 – 110.

Friday, 10/29: *Dusk of Dawn*, W. E. B. Du Bois, Ch. 8 – 9, pp. 111 – 161.

Week Ten

Tuesday 11/2: No class, Election Day. VOTE!!!
Song of Solomon, Toni Morrison.

Friday, 11/5: *Song of Solomon*, Toni Morrison.

Week Eleven

Tuesday, 11/9: *Blood in My Eye*, George Jackson, pp. 1 – 66.

Friday, 11/12: *Blood in My Eye*, George Jackson, pp. 66 – 103.

Week Twelve

Tuesday, 11/16: *Blood in My Eye*, George Jackson, pp. 104 – 140.

Friday, 11/19: *Blood in My Eye*, George Jackson, pp. 141 – 197.

Week Thirteen

Tuesday, 11/23: *The Hate U Give*, Angie Thomas.

Thanksgiving: Remember and pay tribute to the Wappinger people who were dispossessed of their land, called Quarropas, upon which Purchase College was eventually built. Which Indigenous Peoples inhabited the lands where you live? How has settler colonialism shaped your community? Learn more about the Wappinger here:

<https://www.purchase.edu/live/news/4160-the-native-voice>

Friday, 11/26: *The Hate U Give*, Angie Thomas.

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Week Fourteen

Tuesday, 11/30: *In the Wake*, Christina Sharpe, “Ch. 1: The Wake,” pp. 1 – 24.

Friday, 12/3: *In the Wake*, Christina Sharpe, “Ch. 2: The Ship,” pp. 25 – 67.

Week Fifteen

Tuesday, 12/7: *In the Wake*, Christina Sharpe, “Ch. 3: The Hold,” pp. 68 – 101.

Friday, 12/10: *In the Wake*, Christina Sharpe, “Ch. 4: The Weather,” pp. 102 – 133.

Final Papers due Wednesday Dec. 15.