

Syllabus: English 52-03, African American Writers, Spring 2000
Macalester College, St. Paul, Minnesota

African-American Internationalist Writing

Instructor: David Chioni Moore, International Studies and English
Class: MWF 3:30 – 4:30, Carnegie
Office hours: Carnegie 303 – Thursdays 11-12, and 1-3, and highly flexible by appointment
Contacts: office: 651-696-6242 email: mooredc@macalester.edu

Description: Readings in African-American studies have typically concentrated on the African-American experience in either the U.S. South or in its urban centers. There also exists, however, a rich centuries-old tradition of engagement by African-Americans with the entire world. This engagement has drawn great energy from ancestral ties with West Africa and sibling ties with, for example, the Caribbean. But this engagement also extends well beyond: to Soviet Central Asia, Indonesia, Japan, and countless other places. This course, via a selected set of landmark 20th century texts, examines the complex dynamic of this engagement.

Course Recommended For: all students interested in both the African-American experience and inter- or trans-national questions. There are no specific prerequisites, but some prior work with one or both of these two spheres is strongly recommended.

Content: We'll tackle a wide diversity of texts, including five novels (ranging from science fiction to romance), two travelogues, an ethnography, a film, some poetry, and numerous classic essays, by major authors such as James Baldwin, Octavia Butler, the diplomat Ralph Bunche, the francophone Caribbean writer Maryse Condé, W.E.B. Du Bois, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, the philosopher Alain Locke, George Schuyler, Ishmael Reed, and Richard Wright. We'll move roughly chronologically, and will cover areas such as Soviet Central Asia, Ethiopia, Jamaica, France, Indonesia, India, Japan, colonial Massachusetts (from a Caribbean perspective), and indeed outer space. Key questions will include race, history, capitalism and colonialism, gender, international relations, "Third World" unity, and more.

Course Conduct: The class will be run as a seminar. Close reading and discussion of texts will be mixed with presentations by class members and the professor.

Evaluation:

Two medium-length (6-7 page) papers	2 x 20%
Active and insightful class participation, including one presentation	25%
A longer (12-page) final paper	35%

Notes: Timely class attendance is an integral part of the course and its grade. Let me know in advance of a conflict with any religious holidays, and/or any relevant disability issues. We'll arrange acceptable alternatives and/or accommodations, and your grades will be unaffected.

Paper format: word-processed, double-spaced, *numbered pages*, stapled, 1" margins all around, 12-point font. A title page with a good title, and then your name, course title, my name, and date. Generous acknowledgements and works cited at the end of the paper. I assume your font gives you about 300 or so words per page. Papers are due at the time noted under my office door on the due date, and drop 1/2 grade per day from that point. RTFM.

Schedule:

- 1 J31 M Introduction and housekeeping
W Setting the Stage:
W.E.B. Du Bois, "Worlds of Color: The Negro Mind Reaches Out," concl. of *The New Negro*, 1925
Jesse Fauset, "Dark Algiers the White," 1925
Alain Locke, "Cultural Relativism and Ideological Peace," 1944
F *no class Friday: MLA nominating committee meeting in New York*

- 2 F7 From Harlem to Samarkand:
Langston Hughes, *A Negro Looks at Soviet Central Asia*, Moscow 1934,
and two draft essays from the middle 1930s: "The End of Allah," and
"Tamerlane's Samarkand, Samarkand the New"

- 3 F14 An Image of Africa: George S. Schuyler, *Black Empire*, 1936-38

- 4 F21 Ethnography and the Caribbean:
Zora Neale Hurston, *Tell My Horse*, 1938

- 5 F28 Development of a Diplomat — four essays by Ralph Bunche:
"Marxism and the 'Negro Question'," 1929
"Africa and the Current World Conflict," 1940
"Gandhian Seminar," 1952
"Race and Alienation," 1969

- 6 M6 Hughes' 1950s Global Vision:
Langston Hughes, *I Wonder*, 1956, selected chapters

- 7 M13 Black Fiction Without Blacks?
James Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, 1956

- [M20 Spring Break — no classes]

- 8 M27 On Third-World Unity:
Richard Wright, *The Color Curtain*, 1956

- 9 A3 International Relations: four late essays:
W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Vast Miracle of China Today," 1959
Du Bois, "China and Africa," 1959
Du Bois, "India's Relation to Negroes and the Color Problem," 1965
Malcolm X, two last chapters from his *Autobiography*, 1965:
"Mecca," and "El Hajj Malik El Shabazz"

- 10 A10 Africa and "Blaxploitation"?
Film: John Guillermin, dir., *Shaft in Africa*, 1973
film shown Sunday evening, April 9th, 7:00 pm in Humanities 4th floor
no class Friday, April 14: African Literature Association conference in Kansas

- 11 A17 Extraterrestrial Visions:
Octavia Butler, *Patternmaster*, 1976
no class Friday, April 21, for Good Friday

- 12 A24 Challenges for the Nineties:
Ishmael Reed, *Japanese by Spring*, 1993
- 13 M1 America in Afro-Caribbean Perspective:
Maryse Condé, *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem*, 1986
- 14 M8 Concluding Thoughts:
last class Monday – conclusion and assessment,
and six poems by Langston Hughes: “The Negro Speaks of Rivers,” 1921;
“Johannesburg Mines,” 1925; “Merry Christmas,” 1930; “Letter to the
Academy,” 1934; “I Dream a World,” 1941; and “Undertow,” 1967.

Finals period, May 11-16 (Thurs-Tues).

Final papers due by 1 pm, Sunday May 14, under my office door.

Course Books (to be purchased at the Hungry Mind):

1. Schuyler, George S. (writing as Samuel I. Brooks). *Black Empire* [1936-38] (Comprising *The Black Internationale: Story of Black Genius Against the World*, and *Black Empire: An Imaginative Story of a Great New Civilization in Modern Africa*). Ed. Robert A. Hill and Kent Rasmussen. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991.
2. Hurston, Zora Neale. *Tell My Horse* [1938]. New York: Harper & Row, 1990.
3. Hughes, Langston. *I Wonder as I Wander: An Autobiographical Journey* [1956]. New York: Hill and Wang, 1993.
4. Baldwin, James. *Giovanni's Room*. New York: Dial, 1956. (A more modern edition will be found in the bookstore.)
5. Wright, Richard. *The Color Curtain: A Report on the Bandung Conference*. Cleveland and New York: World Publishing, 1956. (The 1994 University of Mississippi Press edition will be found in the bookstore.)
6. Butler, Octavia E. *Patternmaster* [1976]. New York: Warner Books, 1996.
7. Reed, Ishmael. *Japanese By Spring*. New York: Atheneum, 1993.
8. Condé, Maryse. *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem* [1986]. Trans. Richard Philcox. New York: Ballantine Books, 1994.

Plus the short book:

Langston Hughes, *A Negro Looks at Soviet Central Asia*. Moscow and Leningrad: Co-operative Publishing Society of Foreign Workers in the USSR, 1934. To be supplied in the coursepak.

Plus a film:

John Guillermin, dir., *Shaft in Africa*, 1973.

Plus coursepak essays written by:

W.E.B. Du Bois	essays, 1925-1959
Jesse Fauset	essay from 1925
Alain Locke	essay from 1944
Langston Hughes	essays and poetry, 1925-1967
Ralph Bunche	political essays 1929-1969
Malcolm X with Alex Haley	from the <i>Autobiography</i> , 1965

Contents: Course-Pak for
English 52.03: African American Internationalist Writing
David Chioni Moore, Macalester College, Spring 2000

1. W.E.B. Du Bois “Worlds of Color: The Negro Mind Reaches Out,” concl. of *The New Negro*, 1925

2. Jesse Fauset “Dark Algiers the White,” in two parts, 1925

3. Alain Locke “Cultural Relativism and Ideological Peace,” 1944

4. Langston Hughes *A Negro Looks at Soviet Central Asia*, 1934

5. Langston Hughes “The End of Allah,” draft essay, 1934

6. Langston Hughes “Tamerlane’s Samarkand, Samarkand the New,” draft essay, 1936

7. Ralph Bunche “Marxism and the ‘Negro Question’,” 1929
 “Africa and the Current World Conflict,” 1940
 “Gandhian Seminar,” 1952
 “Race and Alienation,” 1969

8. W.E.B. Du Bois “The Vast Miracle of China Today,” 1959
 “China and Africa,” 1959
 “India’s Relation to Negroes and the Color Problem,” 1965

9. Malcolm X The antepenultimate and penultimate chapters, “Mecca” and “El Hajj Malik El Shabazz,” from *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, with Alex Haley, 1965

10. Langston Hughes Six poems: “The Negro Speaks of Rivers,” 1921; “Johannesburg Mines,” 1925; “Merry Christmas,” 1930; “Letter to the Academy,” 1934; “I Dream a World,” 1941; and “Undertow,” 1967.

Sources for the Contents of the Course-Pak for

English 52.03: African American Internationalist Writing

David Chioni Moore, Macalester College, Spring 2000

1. W.E.B. Du Bois "Worlds of Color: The Negro Mind Reaches Out," concl. of *The New Negro*, ed. Alain Locke, 1925, pp. 385-414. (A famous anthology, reprinted with an introduction by Arnold Rampersad. New York: Macmillan, 1992.)
2. Jesse Fauset "Dark Algiers the White." *The Crisis*, April 1925, pp. 255-58, and May 1925, pp. 16-20.
3. Alain Locke "Cultural Relativism and Ideological Peace" [1944], chapter 3 from his posthumous collection of essays *The Philosophy of Alain Locke: Harlem Renaissance and Beyond*. Ed Leonard Harris. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989, pp. 67-78.
4. Langston Hughes *A Negro Looks at Soviet Central Asia*. Moscow and Leningrad: Co-operative Publishing Society of Foreign Workers in the USSR, 1934
5. Langston Hughes "The End of Allah," 1934, a draft essay, numerous versions of which are to be found in the Langston Hughes Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. This version edited by David Chioni Moore and Jennifer A. Bouta in 1999.
6. Langston Hughes "Tamerlane's Samarkand, Samarkand the New," 1936, source same as that for "The End of Allah," just above.
7. Ralph Bunche Four essays: "Marxism and the 'Negro Question'" (1929), "Africa and the Current World Conflict" (1940), "Gandhian Seminar" (1952), and "Race and Alienation" (1969), all from Ralph J. Bunche, *Selected Speeches & Writings*. Ed. and Intr. Charles P. Henry. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995, pp. 35-45, 143-148, 249-258, and 305-316.
8. W.E.B. Du Bois Three essays: "The Vast Miracle of China Today" (1959), "China and Africa" (1959), and "India's Relation to Negroes and the Color Problem" (1965), all from *A W.E.B. Du Bois Reader*. Intr. Arna Bontemps. Ed. Andrew Paschall. New York: Collier, 1971, pp. 273-278, 278-283, and 283-285.
9. Malcolm X "Mecca," and "El Hajj Malik El Shabazz," chapters 17 and 18 (of 19 total) of *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, with the assistance of Alex Haley, New York: Grove Press, 1965, pages 318-342, and 343-363.
10. Langston Hughes Six poems: "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," 1921; "Johannesburg Mines," 1925; "Merry Christmas," 1930; "Letter to the Academy," 1934; "I Dream a World," 1941; and "Undertow," 1967, from varying original sources, and all reprinted in *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes*, ed. Arnold Rampersad and David Roessel. New York: Vintage Books, 1995.

**African-American
Internationalist Writing**

English 52.03

Macalester College, Spring 2000

Prof. David Chioni Moore

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First Paper Assignment:
IS 50/English 50: African American Internationalist Writing
D. C. Moore, October 7, 1998

Length: Six to seven pages, slightly more if necessary. Note format requirements on syllabus.
Due: Friday, October 17, by 2:00 p.m. under my office door.

By the weekend before this paper is due, we will have read five items, by Du Bois, Locke, Hughes, Schuyler, and Hurston. All of the texts have highlighted, in varying terms, the international vision of African American writers. For our first paper, I'll give you a choice of several topics, all of which ask you to grapple comparatively with our general topic.

1. Color-terms in *I Wonder as I Wander*. Langston Hughes describes the various peoples in his travelogue with the widest array of color terms. Go back through his book, catalogue as many of these terms as possible, and write an essay which accounts for Hughes's naming practices. You may wish to categorize, classify, historicize, geographically distribute, aesthetically consider, politically assess, or otherwise theorize the diverse color-naming in the book.

2. Africa and African-Americans in Du Bois and Schuyler. In the writings by Du Bois and Schuyler, Africa (and its varieties of peoples) and African-Americans (in all their variety also) play different, at times contrasting, at times complementary roles. Recount the different portrayals of these two groups or zones by these two authors, and develop a rich account of the similarities and/or differences between the two portrayals.

3. Locke's cultural pluralism, and Hurston, Hughes, Du Bois or Schuyler. Unfortunately we spent virtually no time on Alain Locke's essay on cultural pluralism in our class discussions. In your paper, stage an encounter between Locke's piece and one of the other readings for the class. This may be an application of Locke to a literary text, or other engagement as you see fit.

4. The Caribbean of Hurston and Hughes. Zora Neale Hurston and Langston Hughes visited the Caribbean at about the same time, and wrote two vastly different accounts of it. Write a solid assessment of their varying approaches to the Caribbean, paying attention to both the external circumstances of, and specific literary differences in, their writings.

5. "Eyes." In *I Wonder as I Wander*, Hughes writes of looking "through Negro eyes," and indeed every text in this course so far has an "implied viewer" — that is, the point of view (often an explicit narrator; sometimes only an implied narrator) who does that viewing. Choosing three or four texts from our course, examine the implied viewership of the texts comparatively. Be sure to include in your analysis both general observations and *specific instances* of that viewership.

Finally, when writing, pay attention not only to the contents but to the *forms* of the texts you are analyzing. That is, not only the subject matter of, say, Hughes or Du Bois, but also specifically how their texts are put together, in terms of style, genre, voice, and so forth. "Work with," rather than simply "deposit on the page," the quotations you find most significant. Outline, draft, then revise, revise, revise. Glad for all questions in class, or by phone, email, etc.

Second Paper Assignment:
IS 50/English 50: African American Internationalist Writing
D. C. Moore, November 4, 1998

Length: Six to seven pages, *slightly* more if necessary. Note format requirements on syllabus.
Due: Monday, November 17, by 1:00 p.m. under my office door.

By the time this paper is due, we will have read texts by Du Bois, Locke, Hughes, Schuyler, Hurston, Baldwin, Wright, Guillermin (film), and Butler, all of which have highlighted an African American international vision. As with the first paper, you have the choice of several topics.

1. Border Crossings, 1956. We have three 1956 books in this course: Hughes, Baldwin, Wright. Write a comparative study, focusing on how the energies of that particular year are variously expressed in the three books. Of course their topics differ hugely, but what of their politics? mode of expression? relationship with African America or the world? and more? As always, pay attention not only to the content, but to the *form* of the texts: style, language, genre, point of view, and much more. Compare overall texts and specific passages or fragments.

2. Gender. All of our texts so far have, of course, treated gender, and in a wide range of ways. Examine the representation of gender in any three of the main texts (i.e. not Du Bois articles) from the course so far. How is it alike? different? What is represented, and, very importantly, *how*, in what fashion, with what words, styles, metaphors, points of view, and more? Note that “gender” includes, but is not limited, to women.

3. Those of you who did not tackle the “Eyes” subject in the first paper may do so here, making sure to include *at least* one text after Hurston. In *I Wonder as I Wander*, Hughes writes of looking “through Negro eyes,” and indeed every text in this course so far has an “implied viewer” — that is, the point of view (often an explicit narrator; sometimes only an implied narrator) who does that viewing. Choosing three or four texts from our course, examine the implied viewership of the texts comparatively. Be sure to include in your analysis both general observations and *specific instances*, read in detail, of that viewership.

4. Africa and African-Americans. For those who did not choose the previous version of this topic from paper one. Du Bois, Schuyler, Wright, and Guillermin all in ways deal with the relationship between Africa (and its varieties of peoples) and African-Americans (in all their variety also). They play different, at times contrasting, at times complementary roles. Recount the different portrayals of these two groups or zones by these two authors, and develop a rich account of the similarities and/or differences between the two portrayals.

Again, when writing, pay attention not only to the contents but to the *forms* of the texts you are analyzing. That is, not only the subject matter of, say, Hughes or Du Bois, but also specifically how their texts are put together, in terms of style, genre, voice, and so forth. In other words, analyze not only what is represented, but the representing itself. Closely and extensively “work with,” rather than simply “deposit on the page,” the quotations you find most significant. Outline, draft, then revise, revise, revise. Glad for all questions in class, or by phone, email, etc.

Final Paper Assignment:

IS 50/English 50: African American Internationalist Writing

D. C. Moore, December 4, 1998

Length: twelve pages, *slightly* more if necessary. Note format requirements on syllabus.
Due: Wednesday, December 17, by 3:00 p.m. under my office door.

In our African American Internationalist course, we have taken a look at an enormous range of seven decades of writing, by Du Bois, Locke, Hughes, Schuyler, Hurston, Baldwin, Wright, Guillermin (film), Bunche, Butler, Reed, Condé, and X, all of which have highlighted an African American international vision. We have covered genres as diverse as the critical essay, ethnography, science fiction, political report, travelogue/autobiography, satire, and historical fiction; dealt with geographies as diverse as France, Central Asia, Jamaica, and Indonesia; and grappled with themes ranging from Marxism to gay life, campus politics, U.S. colonial history, and the unknown future. To do justice to this rich diversity, as with the two previous papers, you have a choice of several topics.

1. Seeing oneself as through the eyes of another. One of the topics for our first paper assignment was to look at the “eyes” through which various of our texts were represented. Here, however, your task is to go one step further: to examine the ways in which the narrators of our various texts *see themselves being seen*, and how that relates to who they really are, who they think they are, how they think of themselves, and so on. Discuss a minimum of four course texts, treating at least three of them in some detail. As always, read for both content and form.

2. A history of African American internationalist writing. This is the task of literary history. No-one has ever written a history of African American internationalist writing, but here you have read texts by a dozen authors stretching over nearly a seventy-year period. Develop a narrative which describes the literary history of this writing: in other words, identify and account for the similarities and changes in themes, forms, moods, subject-matter, politics, and so forth over this time, discussing both the internal history of this writing (that is, the writing itself, and how it changes in its many aspects, content and form), and the external (i.e. real-world) context for those changes. You needn't, of course, cover every single aspect of the development. Rather, identify one or a few “keys” or themes to the historical development you see to focus on, and trace that over a minimum of minimum of five different authors. It may be worthwhile including one of the authors we have read in different times, such as Du Bois and Bunche.

3. White folks in African American internationalist writing. The relation of whites to blacks changed dramatically in the U.S. between the 1920s and the 1990s, though some features remained more or less constant. And, importantly, just as the notion of whiteness depends on a notion of blackness, so a notion of blackness depends on a notion of whiteness. Interestingly, some of the changes and samenesses in this U.S. “domestic” situation have been expressed, either directly or metaphorically/indirectly, in the internationalist imaginations of African American writers over that time. Sketch out a history of the changing (or constant) role of whites in African American internationalist writing during this time, dealing with at least five of the week-readings for our course, a minimum of three in depth.

4. The future of African American international writing: a prediction. In our course, we have seen how changes in society were symbolically articulated in the internationalist writing of the times. And now the first decade of the next century promises even more social changes in the racial/African American situation in the U.S.: more of an emphasis on the category “multiracial,” a greater influx of Latino and broadly Asian peoples complicating the U.S. binary situation, globalization, the Internet, increased economic differences, and more. Taking from these changes, and/or other important shifts you identify, develop an argument as to what the next decade of African American internationalist writing might look like: themes, settings, voices, styles, etc. This is, of course, speculation in its rawest form, but ground your predictions with specific references to historical linkages you see in the seven decades of African American internationalist writing which preceded it. The first section of your paper should in fact rapidly recount these linkages, to get you started.

5. Politics. The various authors and texts in our course have all had clear political dimensions. Through them, we can read both the political contexts of the eras in which they were writing, and their own political stances or positions within those eras. Furthermore, we can make some tentative generalizations about an *overall* politics of African American international writing. Mobilizing texts from at least five of the weeks from our course, sketch out a history or comparative analysis of these changing and/or constant politics. Posit, develop and sustain a claim or argument about that political configuration.

6. Make Me an Offer. That's right: make me an offer, detailed, specific, and with some focus (i.e., don't solve the world's problems), if a key theme has been sticking in your craw all semester and has not been encompassed in the preceding five options. Your offer — one full single-spaced page in writing, touching on general topic, likely books to be discussed, and a sense of how you want to proceed — *will have to be received by me at the latest by our class on Tuesday, December 9th*, if you want to choose this option.

As always, pay careful attention to both form (in all its many dimensions: voice, small items of style, genre, point of view, vocabulary, and more) and content (such as plot), and to things internal to the books and things more broadly social during their times. Work carefully with selected revealing quotes, bringing out their richness and depth. Write, revise, revise, revise, set your paper aside, look at it a day later, rearrange, rework, and finally polish. It's not a matter of "writing what you think," but of writing so as to find out what you think!

I have every confidence that I will read these papers and will have learned from you — gained new insights into our course, its texts and themes — through that reading.

Schedule of Class Presentations
English 52-03, African American International Writing
David Chioni Moore, Macalester College, Spring 2000

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| | M | J31 | first week: no presentations |
| 1. | M | F7 | Langston Hughes |
| 2. | M | F14 | George Schuyler |
| 3. | M | F21 | Zora Neale Hurston |
| 4. | M | F28 | Ralph Bunche (Mon. and Wed classes only) |
| 5. | F | M3 | J. Saunders Redding, <i>An American in India</i>, 1954 |
| 6. | F | M31 | Richard Wright, <i>Pagan Spain</i>, 1956 |
| 7. | F | M3 | Homer Smith, <i>Black Man in Red Russia</i>, 1964 |
| 8. | M | M13 | James Baldwin |
| 9. | M | M27 | Richard Wright |
| 10. | F | M3 | Richard Wright, <i>Black Power</i>, 1954 |
| 11. | M | A3 | W.E.B. Du Bois |
| 12. | W | A5 | Malcolm X |
| 13. | M | A10 | The “Blaxploitation” Film Genre (class M-W only this week) |
| 14. | M | A17 | Octavia Butler (class M-W only this week) |
| 15. | M | A24 | Ishmael Reed |
| 16. | F | A28 | George S. Schuyler, <i>Ethiopian Stories</i>, 1930s |
| 17. | M | M1 | Maryse Condé |
| 18. | F | M5 | David Dorr, <i>A Colored Man Around the World</i>, 1858 |
| 19. | F | M5 | Matthew Henson, <i>A Negro Explorer at the North Pole</i>, 1912 |
| 20. | F | M5 | Griffin and Fish, eds. <i>A Stranger in the Village</i>, 1998 |

