

ENGLISH 324 / AFAM 324: Black Power and the Modern Narrative of Slavery

Winter Session 2025

M-F, 10:00-2:00

Online**Topic: ENGL324Z/AFAM324Z/AMST334Z****Time: This is a recurring meeting Meet anytime****Join Zoom Meeting****<https://wesleyan.zoom.us/j/97932932043?pwd=dUZSR0ZqeTJ0STZteE1CemVRcHBHdz09>****Meeting ID: 979 3293 2043****Passcode: 382697**Instructor: Dr. A. RushdyOffice: CAAS 236Office Hours: By appointmentPhone: 685-3577E-Mail: arushdy@wesleyan.eduCourse Description:

The historical moment immediately after the civil rights and Black Power movements saw an explosion of African American writing about slavery. In the past half-century, Black writers wrote award-winning novels that gave unprecedented attention to the intricacies of the life of people who are enslaved, and to slavery as a system that they suggested could help us better understand late-twentieth century American culture. We will read some of the most important works written by contemporary African American writers in order to see how and why they transformed the first autobiographical form for Black writers – the slave narrative – into a fictional form that has served them as they dissect their own cultural moment.

Required Texts:Bradley, David. *The Chaneyville Incident*. Harper & Row, 1990.Butler, Octavia. *Kindred*. Beacon, 2003.Johnson, Charles. *Middle Passage*. Scribner's, 1998.-----, *Oxherding Tale*. Scribner's, 2005.Jones, Gayl. *Corregidora*. Beacon, 2019.Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*. Knopf, 2006.Reed, Ishmael. *Flight to Canada*. Scribner, 1998.Williams, Sherley Anne. *Dessa Rose*. Harper Perennial, 2018.

Students with Disabilities:

It is the policy of Wesleyan University to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. Students, however, are responsible for registering with Disabilities Services, in addition to making requests known to me in a timely manner. If you require accommodations in this class, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible (during the 2nd week of the semester), so that appropriate arrangements can be made. The procedures for registering with Disabilities Services can be found at: <http://www.wesleyan.edu/deans/disability-students.html>.

Preparatory PeriodRequired:

Students will read Frederick Douglass' *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845) in any edition they choose. An online version can be found at the following link:

<https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/douglass/douglass.html>

Students will also read the following six essays. All of them can be found on the course Moodle.

- * Handout on the Sociopolitical Contexts of Contemporary Narratives of Slavery
- * "Neo-Slave Narratives"
- * Rushdy, "Reading Black, White, and Gray in 1968: The Origins of the Contemporary Narrativity of Slavery"
- * Malcolm X, "Message to the Grassroots"
- * Frantz Fanon, Selection from *The Wretched of the Earth*
- * Chicago Office of SNNC, "We Must Fill Ourselves with Hate for all White Things"

Suggested:

Most of the novels we will read are short (between 180-250 pages). They can be read in a few hours on the day before we discuss them in class. Two of the novels will take more time, Toni Morrison's Beloved and David Bradley's The Chaneysville Incident. Students might be advised to read about half of each of these novels during the preparatory period and then finish them the day before we discuss them (if you are the sort of person who can do that; some readers cannot stop themselves from following the narrative arc to completion). For those who cannot read half a novel, I have structured the syllabus so that you have a separate weekend to read both Beloved and The Chaneysville Incident.

Written Assignments

You will be required to write three short papers for this course, each about 2 pages, and then a final essay of about 5-6 pages. The first paper is due on the first day the class meets, January 7, the second on January 13th, the third on January 20th, and the final paper a week after class ends, on January 27th. **All essay assignments are available on the Moodle. All essays should be sent to the instructor's email as an attachment in .doc or .pdf format.**

ENGLISH 324 / AFAM 324: Course Syllabus

<u>January 7:</u>	Tuesday	Form and Politics
<u>January 8:</u>	Wednesday	Ishmael Reed, <u>Flight to Canada</u>
<u>January 9:</u>	Thursday	Charles Johnson, <u>Oxherding Tale</u>
<u>January 10:</u>	Friday	Charles Johnson, <u>Middle Passage</u>
<u>January 13:</u>	Monday	Shirley Anne Williams, <u>Dessa Rose</u>
<u>January 14:</u>	Tuesday	Toni Morrison, <u>Beloved</u>
<u>January 15:</u>	Wednesday	Gayl Jones, <u>Corregidora</u>
<u>January 16:</u>	Thursday	Octavia Butler, <u>Kindred</u>
<u>January 17:</u>	Friday	Politics and Form Revisited
<u>January 20:</u>	Monday	David Bradley, <u>The Chaneyville Incident</u> / Conclusion