

**STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK  
COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY  
CANTON, NEW YORK**



**MASTER SYLLABUS**

**ENGLISH 321 –GHOSTS AND THE UNDEAD:  
RACIAL HAUNTINGS IN AMERICAN LITERATURE**

**CIP Code: 230101**

Created By: Laini Kavaloski

**SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND LIBERAL ARTS  
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND HUMANITIES  
April 2020**

A. **TITLE: GHOSTS AND THE UNDEAD:**  
**RACIAL HAUNTINGS IN AMERICAN LITERATURE**

B. **COURSE NUMBER:** ENGL 321

C. **CREDIT HOURS:**

Credit Hours: 3

3 lecture hours per week

Course Length: 15 weeks

D. **WRITING INTENSIVE COURSE:** Yes

E. **GER CATEGORY:** 7

F. **SEMESTER(S) OFFERED:** Fall, Spring

G. **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course focuses on ghosts and the undead in contemporary American literary texts. The specters in these texts are not only individuals, but they are at once collective, historical, and socio-political representations of violence and racism in American culture. The haunting events we discuss in this course include slavery, the colonization of native people and lands, the Jim Crow south, and the memories of atrocities that travel with immigrants to North America. This course asks, how do the undead represent racial violence in these texts? Why are some places and landscapes more haunted than others? How might we escape the ghostly hauntings of the past? Students study major American writers and artists such as Ralph Ellison, Toni Morrison, Octavia Butler, Jesmyn Ward, Louise Erdrich, Christina Garcia, Edwidge Danticat, and filmmaker Jordan Peele.

H. **PRE-REQUISITES/CO-REQUISITES:** (List courses or indicate “none”)

a. Pre-requisite(s): ENGL 101 (Expository Writing) or ENGL 102 (Oral and Written Expression)

b. Co-requisite(s): None.

I. **STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

<b><u>Course Student Learning Outcome [SLO]</u></b>	<b><u>PSLO</u></b>	<b><u>GER</u></b>	<b><u>ISLO</u></b>
<b>a. Construct oral and written responses that integrate knowledge of contemporary American literature with knowledge of American cultural and social history</b>	1		1 [O,W]
<b>b. Define common elements of literary study and demonstrate ability to identify and analyze those elements within works studied</b>	2	7	2 [CA]
<b>c. Compare and contrast common themes of racism</b>	4		4 [ER]

<b>and historical violence within multicultural American texts.</b>			
<b>d. Evaluate historical and sociological aspects of race and racism as they are reflected in African American, Indigenous, and Latinx literatures.</b>	4		4 [IK]

KEY	<b><u>Institutional Student Learning Outcomes [ISLO 1 – 5]</u></b>
ISLO #	ISLO & Subsets
1	<b>Communication Skills</b> Oral [O], Written [W]
2	<b>Critical Thinking</b> <i>Critical Analysis [CA], Inquiry &amp; Analysis [IA], Problem Solving [PS]</i>
3	<b>Foundational Skills</b> <i>Information Management [IM], Quantitative Lit./Reasoning [QTR]</i>
4	<b>Social Responsibility</b> <i>Ethical Reasoning [ER], Global Learning [GL], Intercultural Knowledge [IK], Teamwork [T]</i>
5	<b>Industry, Professional, Discipline Specific Knowledge and Skills</b>

J. **APPLIED LEARNING COMPONENT:** Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No X \_\_\_\_\_

K. **TEXTS:**

(Representative Texts)

- Baldwin, James. "A Letter to My Nephew." *The Progressive Magazine*, 1962.
- Butler, Octavia. *Fledgling*. Seven Stories Press, 2005.
- Coates, Ta-Nehisi. *Between the World and Me*. NY: Spiegel and Grau, 2015.
- Danticat, Edwidge. *Claire of the Sea Light*. Vintage, 2013.
- Derrida, Jaques. "Spectres of Marx"
- Ellison, Ralph. *Invisible Man*. Vintage International, 1995.
- Erdrich, Louise. *Tracks*. Harper, 1988.
- Garcia, Christina. *Dreaming in Cuban*. Ballantine, 2003.
- Gomez, Jewelle. *The Gilda Chronicles*. Firebrand, 2005.
- Hayden, Robert. "Middle Passage." *Collected Poems*. Liveright Publishing, 1962.
- Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*. 1987. Vintage, 2004.
- Owens, Louis. *The Sharpest Sight*. University of Oklahoma Press, 1995.
- Peele, Jordan, director. *Get Out*. Universal Pictures Home Entertainment, 2017.
- Walters, Anna Lee. *Ghost Singer*. University of New Mexico Press, 1994.
- Ward, Jesmyn. *Sing, Unburied, Sing*. Scrivner, 2017.
- Wright, Richard. "Between the World and Me." *Partisan Review*. (July/August 1935), 18-19.

**L. REFERENCES:**

- Avery F. Gordon. *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, 1997.
- Boyd, Colleen E. and Coll Thrush. *Phantom Past, Indigenous Presence: Native Ghosts in North American Culture and History*. University of Nebraska Press, 2011.
- Brogan, Kathleen. *Cultural Hauntings: Ghosts and Ethnicity in Recent American Culture*. Univ of Virginia Press, 1998.
- del Pilar Blanco, Maria and Esther Peeren. *The Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory*. Bloomsbury, 2013.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Specters of Marx*. Routledge, 1994.
- Morrison, Toni. *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. Random House, 1993.
- Painter, Nell Irvin. *Creating Black Americans: African-American History and Its Meanings, 1619 to the Present*. Oxford UP, 2006.

**M. EQUIPMENT: Technology enhanced-classroom**

**N. GRADING METHOD: A-F**

**O. SUGGESTED MEASUREMENT CRITERIA/METHODS:**

- Quizzes
- Essays
- Oral presentations
- Participation
- Creative Projects (including digital projects)

**P. DETAILED COURSE OUTLINE:**

- I.** Introduction
- A. Defining Ghosts, Specters, and Haunting in Literature
  - B. Living with Ghosts: Derrida's *Specters of Marx*
  - C. Contemporary Legacies of Historical Racism in the U.S. and the Specter of Racism
    - i. Richard Wright's "Between the World and Me"
    - ii. James Baldwin's "A Letter to My Nephew"
    - iii. Ta Nahisi Coates' *Between the World and Me*
- II.** Ghosts of Slavery
- A. Hauntings in African-American literature
  - B. Voyage through Death in the Middle Passage
  - C. The Baby Ghost in Toni Morrison: The Legacy of Slavery and its memorialization in U.S. culture
    - i. Robert Hayden's "Middle Passage"
    - ii. Toni Morrison's *Beloved*
- III.** Vampires and Queer Identities
- A. A brief overview of the vampire genre
  - B. Female and lesbian vampires
    - i. Jewell Gomez's *The Gilda Chronicles*
    - ii. Octavia Butler's *Fledgling*

- IV. The Undead in Native American literature
  - A. A brief history of the US colonization of native lands
  - B. The Colonial Legacies of Residential Schools
  - C. Geographical Hauntings: land occupation and historical erasure
    - i. Louise Erdrich's *Tracks*
    - ii. Anna Lee Walter's *Ghost Singer*
    - iii. Louis Owens' *The Sharpest Sight*
  
- V. Institutional Hauntings in Contemporary U.S. Culture
  - A. The legacy of racial violence in the twenty-first century
  - B. Prisons and Racial Control
  - C. Specters of Racism in Contemporary Culture
    - i. Jordan Peele's *Get Out*
    - iii. Jesmyn Ward's *Sing, Unburied, Sing*

Q. **LABORATORY OUTLINE: none.**