

**WESTERN UNIVERSITY
ENGLISH 3666F- AMERICAN DRAMA
BEHIND THE MASK**

Tues. 11:30-12:30 p.m.; Thurs. 11:30-1:30 p.m.
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Blackface minstrelsy a form of burlesque theatre that emerged in the United States during the nineteenth century, featuring performers that blackened their faces haunts modern American culture, surfacing in drama and

REQUIRED TEXTS

Crosswinds: An Anthology of Black Dramatists in the Diaspora.

James Baldwin, *Blues for Mister Charlie.*

William Wells Brown,

GENERAL INFORMATION

Attendance:

To maintain a productive and positive environment, you are expected to attend every class and to arrive on time. You are allowed to miss up to two classes for any reason without penalty. After your second missed class, unexcused absences will reduce your final attendance and participation grade by 0.5% for every missed class. Attendance will constitute 5% and participation 5% of your final grade.

Reading:

A communal learning environment depends on your attentive reading and engaging discussions. As such, you are expected to complete readings on time, and to be prepared to discuss the texts in class.

Critical reading practice:

I look forward to hearing your thoughts and reflections on the assigned material. To foster critical reading habits you should: engage in a conversation with the text, ask questions, mark important passages, and write a summary of the content.

While reading, answer the following questions:

What kinds of arguments does the text put forth?

What evidence does the text provide for its positions?

Is the text persuasive in its claims?

Participation includes:

You are expected to actively participate in class discussions and activities. Merely attending class does not constitute participation. However, aside from contributions to class discussion, scheduled meetings outside of class on class material; formal and informal chats about the material; and placing images or questions on OWL will be taken into consideration in evaluating your participation grade.

Discriminatory, rude, and disrespectful behaviour will not be tolerated in the classroom and will jeopardize your participation and attendance grade.

Electronic devices:

Laptops and other electronic devices are not permitted in class. I will grant special allowance for laptops if necessary (they can only be used for note-taking), but please talk to me first.

Email:

If you have any questions or concerns about the course, feel free to email me. You can expect to receive a reply to your email within 24-48 hours.

Late assignments:

Assignments are due on the dates indicated on the syllabus. Late assignments will be deducted by 2% per day, weekends included, to a maximum of 14 days (28%). Assignments not handed in during class should be submitted through the essay drop-box

General Office. Essays may not be emailed as attachments. You are required to submit your assignments both electronically through SAKAI to Turnit.com and as paper copies in class.

Grading:

While grades are non-feedback after the assignments have been handed back.

Your work will be graded for its originality and clarity of argument, rhetorical persuasiveness, ability to provide sufficient evidence for claims, syntax, grammar, and adherence to MLA format. More information on the department of English's grading criteria can be found at <http://www.uwo.ca/english/PDFs/UndergradGradingCriteria.pdf>

Formatting:

You are required to follow MLA guidelines for all assignments. Essays must be typed, double spaced, with 1-inch margins. On your first page should appear your name, the course code, the , date submitted, and word count.

DEPARTMENTAL POLICIES & RESOURCES**Mental Health**

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western: <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help

Plagiarism:

I trust that your essays will be written in your own words and using your own ideas. Plagiarism is a serious academic offence as it involves fraud and misrepresentation. You are assumed to be s policy on plagiarism:

<http://www.uwo.ca/english/undergraduate/info%20for%20students.html#plagerism>

Academic Accommodation

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth (either alone or in combination) 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department.

Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. The Student Medical Certificate (SMC) can be found at

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf

The full policy is set out here:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf

Writing Support Centre

The Writing Support Centre offers writing support for students, including meetings with a writing counsellor:

<http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/writing/>

ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS

I will provide more detailed descriptions of the assignments in class.

REFLECTION PAPER or ORAL PRESENTATION (5% of final grade):

In this short reflection (500 words or 2 pages long) or oral presentation (5 mins long) you are asked to reflect on Vincente *The Band Wagon* (1953). By drawing on key scenes, you

progress, continuities and discontinuities between the past and present, the gaze, and music/acoustics. Your reflection can be guided by the following question: How does Fred Astaire conceive of America? Please inform me by the end of the second week if you choose the oral presentation option.

CREATIVE ASSIGNMENT (20% of final grade):

This assignment will put into question the divide between criticism and literary writing. It will consist of two parts. The first part can take the shape of a creative writing piece, a performance, or a work of art. The second part is a 500 word or 2 page analysis of your piece. Your project will be guided by one of the following topics:

Consider the ways racial masquerade is sustained by amnesia or whether black spectres haunt the American stage.

Consider ways American drama deserts, undermines, or reclaims the American dream.

Consider ways consciousness is shaped by desire and/or memory.

You may also choose your own topic.

Part 1:

Creative piece (Approximately 2-4 pages): You may choose to write an original play; illustrate an act from one of the plays on our syllabus; paint a scene from one of the plays; write a poem, short story, or autobiography; create a diorama, and so on.

Performance (Approximately 15 minutes long): You may choose to act a scene (either individually or in a group) from any of the plays on our syllabus, or offer a creative interpretation of a scene (imagine it scene in a post-apocalyptic world, as a musical, a dance, and so on).

Should you choose the option to perform, you must inform me of your decision by week four of the term.

Part 2:

A critical analysis (500-750 words or 2-3 pages) that offers justifications for your creative piece or performance. Your analysis should include an analysis of your composition (i.e. explaining your choice of format, technique, genre, and so on), along with an explication of the thesis behind the piece.

PROSPECTUS & ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY (10% of final grade):

In preparation for your final research paper you will compile a prospectus (a preliminary statement for your paper) and an annotated bibliography. Your prospectus should be approximately 300 words and your annotated bibliography approximately 400 words.

Your prospectus will contain the following:

1. A guiding question about any play(s) from our syllabus.
2. A preliminary thesis statement. Your thesis is a debatable claim, one that is not self-evident, about the play(s) you wish to analyze.
3. A brief outline of the evidence that will support your argument.

Annotated Bibliography:

Using correct MLA bibliographical citations of the sources, follow each source with a one-