I, TOO, SING AMERICA

African American Literature
from Revolutionary Poetry to Contemporary Black Fiction

Lecturer: PD Dr. Stefan L. Brandt, Guest Professor

Room and time: Raum 6, Wednesdays 12-14

Course number and type: 123250 – Arbeitsgemeinschaft (interactive LV)

First session: October 12, 2011

Course description: The course will deal with representative texts by African American authors from the revolutionary years to postmodernity. What contributions have black voices made to the genealogy of U.S. literature and culture in general? Which strategies, patterns, and specific genre elements seem typical of this important discourse within American literature? We will trace the genealogy of African American literature back to revolutionary poetry in the mold of Phillis Wheatley’s verse and the first ‘slave narratives’ (Olaudah Equiano, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Jacobs). Special attention will be paid to the following phases: the genre of emancipatory black literature in the Reconstruction Era (Charles Chesnutt, Pauline Hopkins); the Harlem Renaissance (Alain Locke, Langston Hughes, Nella Larsen); and Expatriate Literature (Richard Wright, James Baldwin). The course will end with a look at a few classics of black postmodern literature (Alice Walker, Toni Morrison). While mainly discussing poetry, autobiographies, and fictional texts (in the form of short stories and novels), we will also take a glance at key works of black non-fiction (Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois) and drama (Amiri Baraka).

Credit requirements: I. Regular attendance & participation in discussions, at least nine entries in the discussion forum (1/3); II. Oral presentation as part of an expert group, with 2-page handout & fact file (1/3); III. Final paper of 8-10 pages.

Deadline for Final Papers: Friday, January 13, 2012. Note: There is no extension of this deadline! Please throw papers into the institute mailbox or send them in postal form. Do not send papers via email.

Syllabus

Oct. 12 Introduction – ‘I, Too, Sing America’: The Emergence of the African American Voice
Basic texts (recommended):

Oct. 19 The Revolutionary Years: Phillis Wheatley and Early Black Poetry
Main text (required):
Phillis Wheatley, “To His Excellency, George Washington” (1776).
Additional materials (optional):

Oct. 26 No class!
Relax and enjoy!

Nov. 2 No class!
Relax and enjoy!

Nov. 9 ‘The Pen in the Gashes’: Frederick Douglass and the Black Slave Narrative
Main text (required):
Frederick Douglass, excerpts from Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave (1845): “Preface”, ch. I – VI; XI & Appendix.
Additional materials (optional):
Frederick Douglass, “The Heroic Slave” (1853).

1 All main texts for this course are available at Moodle: https://moodle.univie.ac.at/
Nov. 16  Fugitive Slave Narratives: William W. Brown, Transculturation, and the Mixing of the ‘Races’
Main text (required):
William Wells Brown, excerpts from *Clotel, or, The President’s Daughter* (1853): “The Negro Sale” (ch. I); “The Negro Chase” (ch. III); “The Quadroon’s Home” (ch. IV); “To-Day a Mistress, To-Morrow a Slave” (ch. XV); “Escape of Clotel” (ch. XIX); “Death Is Freedom” (ch. XXV).
Additional materials (optional):

Nov. 23  The Black Declaration of Independence: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Problem of the Color-Line
Main text (required):
Additional materials (optional):

Nov. 30  The Jim Crow Years: James Weldon Johnson and the Outcry against Social Injustice
Main text (required):
Additional materials (optional):

Dec. 7  The ’New Negro’: Alain Locke and the Harlem Renaissance
Main text (required):
Additional materials (optional):

Dec. 14  Novels of Passing: Nella Larsen and the Challenges of Hybridity
Main text (required):
Nella Larsen, excerpts from *Quicksand* (1928): ch. I-IV, VII-XIII & XXI-XXV.
Additional materials (optional):

Jan. 11  The Civil Rights Era: James Baldwin Fighting Against Racial Violence
Main text (required):
James Baldwin, “Going to Meet the Man” (1965).
Additional materials (optional):

Jan. 18  The Age of Militant Activism: LeRoi Jones and the Battle of the Sexes
Main text (required):
Additional materials (optional):

Jan. 25  Black Contemporary Literature: Toni Morrison and the Reconstruction of History
Main text (required):
Additional materials (optional):