University Studies  
Cluster Proposal Cover Sheet  
2005-2006

Cluster: African Studies

Title of course: African American Literature

Course Number: BST 351

Proposing Faculty: Maude Hines

Cluster Coordinator: Kofi Agosah

Cluster Course to New Cluster

Other clusters this course is assigned to:

Non 'U' course proposed to Cluster: X

Removal

UNST Committee-- PASS: Yes [ ] No [ ]
If no, reason: __________________________________________

________________________________________

UCC Committee-- PASS: Yes [ ] No [ ]
If no, reason: __________________________________________

________________________________________
University Studies
Cluster Course Addition
Adding a previously unapproved course to a cluster
(Revised September 9, 2002)

(When addressing questions, please attach a separate sheet)

PROPOSING FACULTY (Name, signature, and department)
Maude Hines, English

1. THE COURSE

A. COURSE TITLE, NUMBER, AND CATALOG DESCRIPTION
ENG 351: “African American Literature I”; A study of African-American literature from its oral and folk beginnings through the Harlem Renaissance.

B. DEVELOPMENT
Is the course based upon an existing course, or is it a new course under development?
It's based on an existing course.

C. AVAILABILITY
With what regularity has the course been—or will the course be—offered?

The course has been taught two out of every three years (it is currently scheduled for Spring 04). With the cluster affiliation, it will be taught once per year.

D. PREREQUISITES
List any course prerequisites beyond the cluster Sophomore Inquiry course.
All prerequisites are being removed in this cycle.

2. COURSE OUTLINE.
Provide a detailed outline of the proposed course, also including its preliminary reading list, and the name(s) of instructor(s) committed to teaching the course.

Maude Hines is committed to teaching the course annually. The course reading list changes from class to class, but the outline below is typical:

This course is designed as an introductory survey of African American literature from the slave narrative through the Harlem Renaissance. It is impossible to get a full understanding of even the early works of this literature in a one-quarter class; rather than focus on breadth, therefore, we will focus on depth. We will be reading entire works rather than relying on anthologized abridgements. This semester, we will look at the relationships between geographic place and personal place in early African American literature.

Required Texts
DuBois, The Souls of Black Folk, Chapters I and XIV (handout)
Jacobs, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl
Harper, Iola Leroy
Chesnutt, “Mars Jeems’s Nightmare,” “The Passing of Grandison,” “Her Virginia Mammy” (available at reserve desk and through library’s electronic version)
Johnson, Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man
Dunbar, Sport of the Gods
Larsen, Passing
Hurston, Their Eyes Were Watching God
Toomer, Cane (Norton Critical Ed.)
Cullen, ed., Caroling Dusk (selections—available at reserve desk).

Course Requirements and Grading Policy
Active Learning: ~15% of final grade
This category has several components, including index cards (explained below), mailing list, syllabus quiz, turning papers in on time, and peer paper reviews. Each day (beginning 9/28) you should bring to class an index card with your name on it. At the beginning of class, I will ask a “question for the day,” the answer to which you will write on the card. The questions will be easy to answer, provided you have done the reading (no kidding—these are of the “who’s Bob?” variety). You will earn two points for turning in a card with your name on it, and two additional points for answering the question. If you arrive late, you may turn in a card at the end of class, but you will not be able to make up the question. You will receive two points for signing up for the class mailing list by October 5; this is where you should direct questions about missed assignments or discussions. You can earn up to 2 points for the syllabus quiz, and two points per assignment for turning in four copies of papers promptly (at the beginning of class on the day they are due). Finally, you can earn ten points for exceptionally thoughtful peer paper reviews. In order to get credit for your reviews, you should copy your reviews to me when you e-mail them to the authors (before the class meeting following the workshop). Possible points: 100

Presentation: ~10%
On October 10, I will pass around a sign-up sheet for partner presentations. You and a classmate (or classmates) will be responsible for either reporting on published critical responses to texts we’ve read for the class period, or for coming up with a set of observations about the text on your own. You will also be responsible for answering questions posed by the class, and for engaging the class in discussion. The style of your presentation is open: for example, you might choose to report together newscaster-style, to do a multi-media presentation, or to stage a debate (this last style is especially useful if you disagree). Please contact me in advance if you need audio-visual equipment. Grades are based on freshness, usefulness, apparent effort, and adherence to time limits (usually ten minutes).

Weekly Journal: ~25%
The journal requirement for this class is twofold: First, a very informal essay on the assigned reading or film is due in class every Tuesday. You don’t need to worry about grammar, spelling, or organization, just get your thoughts down on paper. On some days I will assign a topic, on others I may not. Your entry is due in either case. In addition, you will take home a classmate’s entry each Tuesday, to be returned on Thursday with a thoughtful response. If you are unsure whether you are satisfying this requirement, or want some quantitative idea of what constitutes a “thoughtful response,” feel free to e-mail me a sample entry or response and ask me about it. Completed journals (the combined entries) are due in class for a final grade by November 30. Grades are based on thoughtfulness/originality, apparent effort, thoroughness (following ideas through to the end, asking difficult questions of yourself), and completeness (you must have all required entries to meet the minimum standard—70+).

First Paper: ~15%
This comparative essay will ask you to look at two of the texts from the syllabus in relation to each other, with attention to issues of geographic and personal identity. I will give out a more detailed assignment on 10/17. Due 10/31.

Second Paper: ~20%
This essay will ask you to compare critical approaches to Jean Toomer’s Cane, and to come up with your own unique argument about a section of the text. I will give out a more detailed assignment on 11/7. Due 11/21.

Final Exam: ~15%
The final exam for this class will be held on Monday, December 4, from 10:15-12:05. In the first section of the exam, you will choose one of two themes, and trace them through several of the texts covered in the course (short answer). In
the second section, you will elaborate on your theme in an essay, looking closely at select individual texts. We will hold an exam review on November 30.

Essay Grading Scale
90+ These essays present original and engaging arguments that are supported by agile textual analysis. They are organized, fluent, error-free, and easy to follow.
80+ These essays present well-developed arguments with sparks of originality, supported by relevant textual analysis. They are organized, relatively error-free, and easy to follow.
70+ These essays follow all the requirements of the assignment and have a clear thesis, but are hampered by grammatical errors, lack of clarity, or overly obvious or cautious arguments.
Below 70 These essays do not meet the requirements of the assignment, are obviously not proof-read, are very difficult to follow, and/or are not turned in by the beginning of class on the due date.

3. GENERAL EDUCATION GOALS.

A. COURSE CONTENT & SUITABILITY FOR CLUSTER
Discuss the course content in relationship to the thematic focus of the cluster.

The course covers African-American literature in its historical and cultural contexts. The majority of the course content addresses the nineteenth-century United States. This early course, with its focus on "oral and folk" beginnings includes musical and narrative recordings, exposing students to important aspects of American culture with which many of them are unfamiliar. Attention to African American experiences in the polyphony of American voices is important for the thematic focus of the American Studies cluster.

B. UNST GOALS
Indicate what materials and assignments will address those University Studies goals appropriate to the course content and cluster theme (the goals are Inquiry and Critical Thinking, Communication, Diversity of Human Experience, and Ethical Issues & Social Responsibility).

Essay assignments address the goals of Inquiry and Critical Thinking, class discussions and more informal assignments address the goal of Communication. This series, by some definitions (and together with other courses), addresses the Diversity of Human Experience by presenting experiences (real and fictional) of people of African descent in the United States. Much of the literature focuses on Ethical Issues and Social Responsibility, issues that are emphasized in discussions.

C. CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT
Discuss the teaching strategies employed in the course and how they articulate with the student-centered, active-learning strategies characteristic of University Studies courses.

The course is largely driven by student discussion, often including small group discussion, the "fishbowl" strategy, and cooperative learning. In addition, students keep journals which make the rounds of the class, creating an informal counterdiscourse to the classroom instruction.
PROPOSING FACULTY:  Maude Hines

COURSE TITLE AND NUMBER:  ENG 381: African American Lit I
                          BST 351

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OBTAIN CHAIR AND CLUSTER COORDINATOR SIGNATURES
BEFORE SUBMITTING TO UNIVERSITY STUDIES OFFICE

DEPARTMENT CHAIR(S):  

[Signature]

DATE: 11/1/04

[Signature]

DATE: 11/1/04

CLUSTER COORDINATOR:  

[Signature]

DATE: 10/28/04

All changes to Clusters must be approved by PSU’s Senate Curriculum Committee.

THE ORIGINAL + 12 COPIES OF THE PROPOSAL
MUST BE RECEIVED AT UNIVERSITY STUDIES (CH 163)
BY NOVEMBER 1, 2004

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COURSE APPROVED FOR CLUSTER INCLUSION

CHAIR, CLUSTER COORDINATORS:  _______________________________.  DATE: ____________.

CHAIR, UNST COMMITTEE:  _______________________________.  DATE: ____________.