Texas A&M University
Core Curriculum
Initial Request for a Course Addition to the Fall 2014 Core Curriculum

Foundational Component Area: Language, Philosophy and Culture

In the box below, describe how this course meets the Foundational Component Area description for Language, Philosophy and Culture. Courses in this category focus on how ideas, values, beliefs, and other aspects of culture express and affect human experience. Courses involve the exploration of ideas that foster aesthetic and intellectual creation in order to understand the human condition across cultures.

How does the proposed course specifically address the Foundational Component Area definition above?

This course (ENGL/AFST 204) introduces students to the large and diverse array of works that form the African American literary tradition. Organized chronologically (as is the textbook) the course begins with the literature of slavery and ends with a sampling of contemporary African American writers. Particular attention will be given to the historical context of the works and how the writers both shaped and the ways in which the works “speak to” other works by other African American and “white” writers. This course will ultimately reveal how wider social forces shape the philosophical outlooks and aesthetic sensibilities of African American writers from the late 18th century to the present, and ultimately, help students develop an appreciation for what the study of literature of ethnic groups that may be different from theirs can teach us about ourselves and our shared humanity. Material from this course will include written texts and such visual representations as photographs, illustrations, films, or theatrical performances.

Core Objectives

Describe how the proposed course develops the required core objectives below by indicating how each learning objective will be addressed, what specific strategies will be used for each objective and how student learning of each objective will be evaluated.

Critical Thinking (to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information):

Critical Thinking Skills (CTS): The course will enhance critical thinking skills through consistent reading and class discussion of key ideas in African American literature from the 18th century to the present. The evaluation of critical thinking skills will be based on exams and class participation and may include written work. Exams will be designed to allow students to demonstrate their ability to evaluate and synthesize key ideas from the assigned reading. Class room discussion will focus on helping students better understand the nuances and complexities of African American literature from the 18th century to the present.

Communication (to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication):

Communication Skills (CS): The course enhances communication skills through small and large group discussion of ideas, issues, questions, and themes central to course reading. The course will help students learn how to develop a greater understanding of African American literature from the 18th century to the present that may involve guided writing assignments in which they will receive feedback, exams in which students will be expected to effectively convey key ideas from the course succinctly and clearly, and class room discussion in which students will learn how to express questions and thoughts about the subtleties of each text under examination. Material from this course will include written texts and such visual representations as photographs, illustrations, films, or theatrical performances.
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Social Responsibility (to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities):

Social Responsibility (SR): The course enhances social responsibility by providing students with a cross cultural understanding of how history, region, and broader social forces have shaped the distinctive literary traditions from around the world. The evaluation of social responsibility will be based upon an end-of-the-semester short writing assignment in which students will be asked to reflect upon how their knowledge of literatures from previous historical periods and world cultures outside of their own has changed in light of the new information that they now possess. Students will be expected to demonstrate how key insights from the course have helped broaden their understanding of how history, culture, and philosophical outlooks have shaped the literary traditions of African American writers from the 18th century to the present.

Personal Responsibility (to include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making):

Personal Responsibility (PR): The course will enhance personal responsibility through engagement with moral and thorny ethical issues that arise in class readings. The course material throughout the semester will offer students an opportunity to reflect upon personal responsibility through such topics as slavery and the quest for freedom, equality, and human dignity, and the struggle for cultural survival and self-expression in the face of oppression. Students will explore these topics through group discussion, writing assignments, and exams.

Please be aware that instructors should be prepared to submit samples/examples of student work as part of the future course recertification process.