

**ENGL 4205 : Literary Protest**  
**CRN 20366, ENGL-4205, sec. 20**  
**Spring 2019**

Professor: Dr. Tina Powell  
Course Number: ENGL-4205, sec. 20  
Meeting Times: TR 4:30-5:20  
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Office Hours: T 1-2, 3:30-4:30  
R 12-2  
W by appointment

**Course Description:**

So much of American literature is, in some way, a form of protest. The voicing of dissent is distinct feature of the American canon, whether that dissent is Jack London's "Pit", Charlotte Perkins Gilman's wallpaper, or Langston Hughes' Blues infused poetry. This class will explore the boundaries (or lack of boundaries) between artistic expression and dissent in African American literature. We will engage in questions of form and function, as well as explore how literary art has crossed into political movement. In analyzing literature from the Abolition movement, the Harlem Renaissance, and the Civil Rights movement, this class will look for rhetorical and discursive themes and threads and compare and contrast overtly political texts with ones deemed as more artistic.

Some questions we hope to tackle in our discussion will focus on the role of art in political movements, the influence of political realities on artistic expression, and the ways that past political movements inform current political expressions. This course will cover a wide range of texts – historical pamphlets, poetry, novels, music, nonfiction, graphic novels, posters, and drama – and apply performance theory to read protest movements as texts within a historical and rhetorical tradition. Students will engage in traditional literary analysis, as well as interdisciplinary learning and reading.

**Required Texts:**

Perkins. *Poetry from the Masters: The Black Arts Movement*, 978-1933491134  
Toomer. *Cane*, 978-0871402103  
Brown. *The Narrative of William W. Brown, A Fugitive Slave*, 978-1611040630  
Larsen. *Passing*, 978-0142437278  
Kendrick Lamar. *DAMN*. Available for download on iTunes or any other digital service.

**Supplemental Materials:**

Handouts on performance and race theory

**Available online:**

Selections from the Poetry Foundation  
YouTube video from Jayne Cortez  
Essay from Richard Wright

Common on Def Poetry Jam  
Speeches from Sojourner Truth

**Film screenings:**

*Get Out*

*Black Klansman*

*Black Panther*

*Mississippi Burning*

*Freedom on my Mind* <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/freedomonmymind>

**Course Requirements:**

**Performance theory reading:** Because our texts are multimodal and often related to activism, you will write a short performance theory analysis on a protest of your choice. You will need to use some of the theoretical background from the class and include images/video clips to help illustrate your analytical points. 4-5 pages.

**Discussion:** For each text we cover, there is extensive background and theoretical work to ground our discussion. You are responsible for keeping on top of the reading (and listening) and discuss your impressions in class.

**Final Project:** You have the option of writing a seminar paper with scholarly research on a text(s) from the class. Or, since the course is focused on many genres of artistic and political expression, you can do a more creative project that engages in analysis and research. If you want to do more of a creative project, please come see me to discuss.

**Evaluation:**

Final Project	45%
Performance Reading	25%
Discussion	30%

**Late Papers:** I do not accept late papers. If your paper is not handed in by the end of this class on the due date, it will automatically receive an F. If you have to be absent, you may e-mail the paper to me in MS Word form ONLY. You are responsible for the document getting to me, and I will not accept computer problems, internet problems, or mistyping of my e-mail address as an excuse. If the document is not in my inbox by the end of this class time, it will receive an F. If for some reason I do accept a late paper, you will lose on full letter grade (A to B) for each class day it is late. You must turn in a hard copy of every essay. I will not accept ANY essay that is turned in electronically ONLY.

**Attendance:** Attendance is mandatory. This is a discussion course; everyone's presence is always needed. Unexcused absences, lateness, and failure to prepare will adversely affect your grade. In other words, do not miss class unless you absolutely must. You can only have four absences (excused or unexcused) before your grade is severely reduced. If you miss more than an 20 minutes of one class, you will receive a half absence.

**Plagiarism:** Academic dishonesty or plagiarism is a serious offense. Any instance of academic dishonesty on your part will result in a zero on the paper and a report to your dean.

### **Weekly Schedule**

**3/7** Introduction; Abolition pamphlets/Sojourner Truth speech

### **Spring Break**

**3/12** Wells Brown

**3/19** The Harlem Renaissance

*Passing*

**3/23** Performance of “Deep River”, a spiritual at Moss Arts Center

**3/26** *Passing*

**4/2** selections from Langston Hughes and Richard Wright

Performances and responses

Pan-Africanism

*Black Panther*

**4/9** Toomer, Dunbar, and McKay

*Mississippi Burning*

**4/16** Civil Rights movement

Selections from *March*, Langston Hughes

*Freedom on my mind*

**4/23** The Black Arts/Artistic Expression and political activism

Selections from Perkins

Selections from Cortez

*Black Klansmen*

**4/30** Contemporary texts

Common

Kendrick Lamar