

**AML 4685/WST 3930/AFA 3930**  
**Women Writing about Race:**  
**“The Trouble Between Us”**

Dr. Debra Walker King  
Place: Turlington 2338  
Class Time: 9:35-10:25  
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Office hours: 10:30-11:30 am &  
by Appointment

**Description:** This course surveys women’s writing during the mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century to the present, focusing on gendered Black and White race relations as presented in their literature and in American culture critiques. Students will trace, analyze and discuss how Black and White women talk about each other, coop and reject each other, or, simply, ignore each other in literature as they and their characters negotiate gendered social, political, and personal challenges.

**Goals:** To discover how change and racial relations are developed both in our culture and in the way writers and their readers respond to those changes and situations. Students will discuss how Black and White women, as represented in literature, move through and solve challenging racial situations and bonding opportunities.

**Format:** The readings and teaching methods of this course are eclectic in pursuit of a variety of texts and experiences. The class sessions include lectures, discussions, and student reports. Our discussions will focus on novels, short stories, poetry, and essays. As investigators and scholars, our inquiries will play in the spaces between practice, method, and theory in order to address the commonalties, disruptions, gaps, absences, and silences that exist among the primary texts.

**Primary Texts:** (asterisked texts are available as eBooks)

- \*Golden, Marita and Susan Richards Shreve, Eds. *Skin Deep: Black and White Women Write about Race* (ISBN: 0-385-47409-1)
- \*Williams, Sherley Anne, *Dessa Rose* (ISBN: 0-68-05113-8)
- \*Walker, Alice. *Meridian* (ISBN: 0-15-602834-4)
- \*Stockett, Kathryn, *The Help* (ISBN: 978-0-399-15534-5)

Other readings are available on course reserve under course number AML 4685. How can you access course reserves? “Course reserves can be accessed through the library's course reserve management software, ARES. A student can locate the items that a professor has requested for course reserve by creating an account in ARES, and then doing a search by course name, course number or the instructor. Once a particular course has been located, students can add the listing to their account and either link to electronic items or obtain call numbers and library locations for physical items.” You may also assess ARES via Canvas. It is identified in the left side bar as "Course Reserves."

## Course Schedule

Week 1 -- 8/22-24

### Course Introduction: Purpose and Goals

1. Discussion of “Difficult Conversations” (found under “Files” in Canvas) and key terms (last page of syllabus).
2. Consider the following questions and be prepared to discuss them in class:
  - a. “What keeps Black and White women apart?”
  - b. What strengthens their relationships?”
  - c. What makes the path to friendship, mutual support and respect easier or more difficult today than in the past?
  - d. What do you see in the future of B/W women’s relationships--five years from now?

**\*Assignment:** Begin weekly submission of entrance pass assignments at the start of our next class meeting. In-class participation grades will be recorded.

**\*Alert:** Discussion days may include “Impromptu Discussion” sessions. Be prepared.

Week 2 – 8/27-31

### Required Readings:

Mon.: Wilson, Midge and Kathy Russell, “Introduction” and “History: The Divisions Begin,” *Divided Sisters: Bridging the Gap between Black Women and White Women*. New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday, 1996. (Course Reserve)

Wed.: Glymph, Thaviola “A Makeshift Kind of Life”: Free Women and Free Homes, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household*. NY: Cambridge University Press, 2008, 167-203. (Course Reserve)

Fri.: Conclude

**\*Entrance Pass Assignment Tip:** Many of the texts are paired by subject matter and theme. Consider how they engage the terms and themes contained in this syllabus as you write.

Week 3 – 9/3 NO CLASS—Holiday

Wed.: Stowe, Harriet Beecher. “The Mother’s Struggle” and “Eliza’s Escape,” *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, p. 67-97. (Course Reserve)

Fri.: Jacobs, Harriet. “The Trials of Girlhood” and “The Jealous Mistress,” *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* p. 25-33. (Course Reserve)

Week 4 – 9/10-14

### Required Readings:

Mon.: Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*. NY: Alfred A. Knoff, 1987, 74-85. Course Reserve (film clip)

Wed.: Morrison, *Beloved* continued

Fri.: *Group presentation assignments will be distributed followed by a Group Planning Session:* Plan how you are going to communicate. Select a group leader and a recorder. Discuss talents each team member might be able to bring to the presentations.

Week 5 – 9/17-21

Required Reading: All readings available in *Skin Deep: Black and White Women Write about Race*.

Mon.: Lisa Page, “High Yellow White Trash;” Marita Golden, “whitegirls.”

Wed.: Naomi Wolf, “The Racism of Well-meaning White People;” and Retha Powers, “Overhand and Underhand.”

Fri.: Joyce Carol Oates, “Negative;” and Toni Morrison “Recitatif.”

Week 6 – 9/24-28

Required Reading: All readings available in *Skin Deep: Black and White Women Write about Race*.

Mon.: Beverly Lowry, “What Tina Has to Do with It;” Patricia Browning Griffith, “Legacies and Ghosts;” Mary Morris, “Adjustments;” and Susan Richards Shreve, “Prudential Life Insurance.”

Wed.: Jewelle Gomez, “Across the Glittering Sea;” Ann Filemyr, “Loving Across the Boundary.”

Fri.: Alice Walker, “The Revenge of Hanna Kemhuff;” Susan Straight, “Tulsa, 1921;” Eudora Welty, “A Worn Path” and Gayle Pemberton, “Hello Stranger.”

Week 7 – 10/1-5

Required Reading:

Mon.: Catherine Clinton, “Contents Under Pressure,” in *Skin Deep: Black and White Women Write about Race*.

Wed.: hooks, bell. “Holding My Sister’s Hand,” *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. NY: Routledge, 1994. 93-110. (Course Reserve)

Fri.: Breines, Winifred. “‘What’s Love Got to Do with It?’ White Women, Black Women, and Feminism in the Movement Years.” *Signs* 27.4: 2002. 1095-1133.  
Morrison, Toni. “What Black Women Think about Women’s Lib,” (1971), *What Moves at the Margin*. Jackson, Mississippi: University of Mississippi Press, 2008. 18-30. (Course Reserve)

Week 8 – 10/8-12

Required Reading:

*Dessa Rose*: “Prologue,” and “The Darky”

Week 9 -- 10/15-19

Required Reading:

*Dessa Rose*: “The Wench”

Week 10— 10/22-26

Required Reading:

Concluding *Dessa Rose*: “The Negress” and “Epilogue”

Week 11 – 10/29-11/2

Required Group Preparation Sessions:

This week's class sessions are for the benefit of group panel preparations. Please come prepared to work with your group. Attendance is mandatory. Presentations begin next week.

Week 12 –11/5-9

**Mon.: Group I -Introduction to *Meridian*, Section: "Meridian"**

**Wed.: Group II -Introduction to *Meridian*, Section: "Truman Held"**

**Fri.: Meridian Discussion: "Ending"**

Week 13 –11/12-16

Required Reading:

Concluding *Meridian*

**\*Assignment:** Group members of *Meridian* **only:** 6-page response papers due

Week 14 –11/19-23

**Mon.: Group III-Introduction to Chapters 1-10 of *The Help***

**Wed.: Group IV-Introduction to Chapters 11-22 of *The Help***

**Fri.: Group V-Introduction to Chapters 23-34 of *The Help***

Week 15 –11/26-30

Required Reading:

Stockett, Kathryn. *The Help*

**\*Assignment:** Group members of *The Help* **only:** 6-page response papers due

Week 16 – 12/3-5

**Mon.: Reports and Impromptu Discussions**

**Wed.: Reports and Impromptu Discussions**

## **Grade Distribution**

### **200 total points available: Response Papers**

During the second half of the semester we will have panel presentations. You should focus your response paper efforts on your group presentation text and readings. Your response paper must be no more than six (6) pages long.

Demonstrate your knowledge, compare theories, and engage the text -- the more original your contemplations and assessments, the better your grade. Keep the course objectives in mind when writing (but you may also expand your comments beyond this boundary). Research the text or topic you are considering and share your thoughts. Research is a requirement of the response papers. Without presenting evidence of outside research and its consideration in the paper, you will earn no more than 187.5 points (or 75%). Submit your paper via Canvas (see upload site under "Assignments"). If you run into problems, see me.

### **50 points: Panel Sessions**

These forty-minute, panel sessions probe previously discussed questions and explore new ones. Be creative in your presentations. Do not line up and give reports. I repeat: DO NOT. Have fun with this

project! Present your analysis and interpretations through narration while acting out a scene or revising a scene; stage a debate or a trial; juxtapose the novel with artwork, music, or poems. Be sure to involve the class. Only your imagination limits the possibilities! One week is dedicated to panel planning so there should be no excuse for any member's lack of participation. From the final in-class planning period, the panel is expected to produce a one-paragraph abstract of the proposed presentation and submit it to me before the next class period. In addition, each panel member is asked to write a brief summary of the group's work, individual effort, and the panel's contribution to the class objectives. These two or three-page summaries are **due the day of the panel presentation** (Canvas submissions only, please). Individual grades are assigned for these papers and added to panel presentation grades. I record only the final score.

### **Other Expectations and Assignments—200 points**

Points breakdown is available in Canvas under "Assignments"

**Attendance:** Discussions cannot be replicated so if you miss a day of class, you will have missed the lesson for that day. Therefore, I take attendance very seriously and expect you to come to class every day on time. You are allowed **up to three** unexcused absences, your grade will automatically drop a half letter grade after the third unexcused absence. **If you reach nine (totaling three weeks of class) absences you will automatically fail the course and should withdraw from the class or you will receive an "E" for the semester.** No *Incomplete* grades are given for this course.

***Caveat: Excused absences are permitted if you provide a typewritten letter documenting an illness, a family crisis, or participation in a university sponsored event. All students should consult with me to make up material missed during an excused absence. For additional information, please see our University guidelines cited in the "Course Policies" section of this syllabus.***

***Entrance Passes:*** Purchase a pack of 3x5 index cards. These cards are your entrance passes and will be used to inform me of your attendance and reading progress (see additional instructions below). Take them seriously! Bring **one** with you every class session. Without an entrance pass you will be considered absent, so be sure to put your name on them. Tardy attendees' cards will be collected at the end of class. Tardiness will be recorded and considered during grading. Consistent tardiness will result in a final letter grade reduction.

**Preparation:** All readings, entrance passes and take-home assignments must be prepared and ready for each class session. Write a comment on your entrance pass cards demonstrating your preparation for the day's session. Poorly constructed, irrelevant or perfunctory comments will result in point reductions in this area of grading. I do not want you to tell me you liked a particular reading, for instance. Your response to assigned readings must be intelligent, thoughtful and scholarly. Identify why the material is valuable to our class discussion (or objectives) or how the material engages the genre being studied. **Your work on these cards will be graded during impromptu discussions**, so do your best work at all times. Even if I do not ask you to enter into a discussion, your entrance cards are required. Be prepared.

### **IMPROMPTU Discussions**

I will select several students (during class) to enter into discussions guided by issues raised in your entrance cards or issues assigned for entrance card responses. You must bring depth to the idea on the

floor for discussion as well as offer your own card remarks for consideration. Discussions will proceed as follows:

1<sup>st</sup> Speaker—offers entry card commentary on the assigned reading

2<sup>nd</sup> Speaker—responds with reflections on the opening statement

You may agree with the opening speaker or disagree, but you must discuss why.

1<sup>st</sup> Speaker—responds to the reflections of speaker #2 with depth of insight

2<sup>nd</sup> Speaker—adds additional information from his or her own entry card

1<sup>st</sup> Speaker—responds to the additional information

You may agree with the opening speaker or disagree, but you must discuss why.

2<sup>nd</sup> Speaker—responds to the reflections of speaker #2 with depth of insight

Speaker #2—concluding statements

Speaker #1—concluding statements

Speaker #3—Summary of the issues raised

Summary participants review what was argued or discussed and offer insights overlooked or not fully considered. The selected summary speaker must summarize and should introduce related information from additional texts read that week, from texts read in previous weeks, or from his/her own entry pass.

Open Class Discussion—volunteers from the class and professor offer insights

This pattern will repeat with new speakers. Be prepared for participation without prior notice.

**Participation:** Students should complete all readings and assignments prior to the class meeting and participate fully in class discussion. Assessment for participation is made in the areas of attendance, engagement, leadership, teamwork, and originality.

#### **Strong participation includes:**

1. only excused absences with no recorded tardiness
2. adherence to course policies, assignments and guidelines
3. response paper submissions providing evidence that readings are completed and ready for class discussions
4. outside research done and shared with class on multiple occasions
5. clear and respectful exchanges with other students and the professor
6. volunteering to enter or begin discussions (brief presentations included)
7. leadership within small group activities noted by reporting out for the group or taking a guiding role
8. an understanding of teamwork and ones responsibility to advancing positive class or group dynamics
9. originality in thought, discussion and response paper information and sharing
10. encouraging others' ability to enter or sustain participation in discussions
11. engaging questions from the professor or other students without hesitation or persuasion

#### **Rubric**

- ✚ “A” level participation is strong in all key areas and earns 100-90 points.
- ✚ “B” level participation, albeit promising, is notably weak in *two* key areas and earns from 89-80 points.
- ✚ “C” level participation is notably weak in *three* key areas and earns from 79-70 points.

- ✚ “D” level participation is significantly weak in *Three* or more of the key areas and earns from 69-60 points
- ✚ below 59 pts is failing level participation

**Exams, Quizzes and Other assignments:** There may be a few pop quizzes—no makeup quizzes. Your performance during class, progress evaluations (tests and quizzes) and in-class discussions will determine if a final exam is necessary. I will inform you of my decision.

**Extra Credit (5 bonus points):** *This is an optional assignment.* You may give a fifteen minute oral report to the class on an issue or author under discussion. These reports must be approved prior to presentation. Submit a short proposal describing what you plan to do. Do not wait until the end of the term as time availability may not allow for your presentation. The assignment will earn scores ranging from 1/2 to 5 points (added to your overall course score). Reports might cover an issues such as “Black and White Mothers on Welfare,” “Interracial Marriage,” “Race and *The View*,” “Sunshine Laws,” or “Black and White Women in Prison.” The choice as well as the presentation design is yours. Any powerpoint presentation, however, must follow the 1-1-5 rule. By that, I mean one image, used one time with no more than five words per slide.

### **GRADE DISTRIBUTION AND GRADING METHOD**

All papers and short essay quizzes are evaluated on content, originality, creativity, connections to course objectives, and form (grammar, spelling, bibliography, etc.). Grades will be calculated in terms of possible score percentages with no curve. You are guaranteed an A if you earn 450 points or more out of 500 possible points (90 %<sup>+</sup>).

435 to 449 (87% <sup>+</sup> )	B <sup>+</sup>	385 to 399 (77 % <sup>+</sup> )	C <sup>+</sup>	335 to 363 (67 % <sup>+</sup> )	D <sup>+</sup>
415 to 434 (83% <sup>+</sup> )	B	365 to 384 (73 % <sup>+</sup> )	C	315 to 334 (63 % <sup>+</sup> )	D
400 to 414 (80 % <sup>+</sup> )	B <sup>-</sup>	350 to 364 (70 % <sup>+</sup> )	C <sup>-</sup>	300 to 314 (60 % <sup>+</sup> )	D <sup>-</sup>

### **Grading Criteria**

**Assignments will be graded on how proficiently they meet expectations in the key areas of content, organization, and grammar/mechanics and prose style.**

**Strong content includes:**

- A clearly delineated and/ or interpreted topic
- A strong, clear, and logically developed thesis that is supported by fully developed ideas in the form of relevant textual evidence and research
- Ideas that show evidence of independent thinking
- Commentary that explains how the concrete details support the thesis. Commentary may include interpretation, analysis, argument, insight, and/or reflection.
- research supporting materials (note: Google searches are fine for starters, but please use academic journals and books for strong research effort)

**Strong organization includes:**

- The effective arrangement of points that reveals itself in very good incorporation of evidence (use of summary, paraphrase) and the sparing and judicious use of quotations
- Rounded and well-connected paragraphs
- The use of appropriate transitions

**Strong grammar, mechanics, and prose style is characterized by:**

- Mature sentence structure, syntax, and diction
- Strong audience awareness as evidenced in the use of appropriate style, register, tone, and vocabulary

- Little to no errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation as well as less than three fatal errors in the entire document
- The formatting of document in keeping with prescribed guidelines—including length of response submissions

### Rubric

The “A” (or A-) submission has strong content, strong organization, AND strong grammar/mechanics and prose style. To receive an “A” or “A-” work needs to offer support in the form of textual evidence and secondary research materials (using direct quotes and paraphrase), present original insight in argumentation, and be organized clearly and logically with sources documented using MLA style guidelines.

A “B” submission is notably weak in ONE of the above key areas.

A “C” submission, albeit promising, is notably weak in TWO or more of the above key areas.

A “D” submission is significantly weak in TWO or more of the above key areas.

Additional information concerning UF grading policies may be found on the undergraduate catalog web page <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

### Course Policies

- 1) *“Fatal Errors” Policy*: Students must meet high standards in writing. To this end, all written assignments must meet minimal presentation criteria to be acceptable. These standards address spelling, punctuation, format and basic grammar. The term *Fatal Errors* refers to formal writing errors of form. Specifically, they include the following and will be identified in evaluated written assignments by error number:

- ✚ 1. Each different word misspelled;
- ✚ 2. Each sentence fragment;
- ✚ 3. Each run-on sentence or comma splice;
- ✚ 4. Each mistake in capitalization (capitalize Black and White when referring to individuals, communities, or ideas);
- ✚ 5. Each serious error in punctuation that obscures meaning, including errors in the use or failure to use italics and quotation marks;
- ✚ 6. Each error in verb tense or subject/verb agreement;
- ✚ 7. Each instance of ending a sentence with a preposition;
- ✚ 8. Each improper citation, or lack of citation, where one is needed;
- ✚ 9. Each misuse of words (*who* for *that* or unwarranted use of clichés, for instance) and reference problems (note: pronouns refer to the last person mentioned);
- ✚ 10. Poor paragraphing or lack of paragraphing;
- ✚ 11. Lack of conformity with assignment format.

Papers with more than **three (3) fatal errors on any one page** or more than **seven (7) for the entire document** will be returned to the student for revision and will suffer a half letter grade deduction. Only one resubmission is allowed. Penalties for final course papers (where there is no time for a resubmission) will be based on the magnitude of errors and the relative importance of the assignment to the determination of the final course grade. This policy applies to all written assignments, except in class quizzes.

- 2) **Cell phones and computers**: Cell phones must be muted during the class session. If an emergency occurs and you have to respond to calls or texts, please leave the classroom. Computers (iPads or other electronics) are allowed for note taking, access to eBooks, at the request of the professor and



presentations only. Anyone using a computer for any other purpose will be asked to deliver the device to me for retrieval after class. You may record the class (presentations, for instance) with my permission only. Failure to acquire permission will result in participation point reductions.

- 3) **Papers:** All papers must be typed and double spaced using the 8 1/2 x 11 page layout with one-inch margins all around. Use Courier or New York Times font at 12-point size. Documentation and form should follow the MLA style manual. Number all pages after the first within the upper right margin.
- 4) **Grade Disputes:** Questions about assigned grades are acceptable during my office hours only. If my written responses do not address your concerns, I will explain why a grade was earned. With the exception of miscalculation, I will not consider grade changes. **Please do not ask; I consider it harassment.** You may consult the department of English's Associate Chair, for grade appeals, however. Please note: appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade.
- 5) **Midterm assessment Report:** Individual grades will be available after midterm in Canvas, indicating your current status in the class. These reports will offer information on all graded aspects of the course completed, including attendance, as recorded in the e-learning grade book. You should consider these performance-tracking grades carefully and govern yourself accordingly.
- 6) **Missed class sessions:** Make up work for approved absences must be addressed within one week of your return. See me for submission deadlines for missed work within this time frame.
- 7) **Response Paper Submission guidelines:** Like all written assignments, this paper **must be submitted electronically**. Microsoft Word compatible documents only please. Unreadable documents will be returned ungraded. Submit your project via Canvas by midnight the evening of the due date. Late submissions will suffer a half letter grade reduction.
- 8) *"Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found in the online catalog at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>."*

### University Policies

**DISABILITY SERVICES:** The Disability Resource Center in the Dean of Students Office provides students and faculty with information and support regarding accommodations for students with disabilities in the classroom. It is your responsibility to contact the school administration regarding any disability you may have, and to inform me so we can make any necessary arrangements. For more information, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>.

**ACADEMIC HONESTY:** Honor Code. "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity." This oath represents UF's commitment to academic honesty and integrity. "Cheating, plagiarism, bribery, misrepresentation, conspiracy and fabrication" are violations of the Honor Code. All students must abide by the student honor code. For more information about academic honesty, including definitions of plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/student---honor---code.aspx>

HARASSMENT: UF provides an educational and working environment for its students, faculty, and staff free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment. For more about UF policies regarding harassment, see: <http://www.hr.ufl.edu/eeo/sexharassment.htm>

COURSE EVALUATIONS: “Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>.”

### List of Key Terms

1. **Unctuousness:** "...a feistiness about life that nobody can wipe out, no matter how hard they try" Katie Cannon (*Katie's Canon*)—a construction of Black Womanist ethics.
2. **Escape:** not just physical escape, but other types of escape. What are we running from when we run from each other? How are we escaping and at what costs?
3. **Double consciousness:** being black and American
4. **Double Jeopardy:** race and gender oppression (Frances Beal)
5. **Triple Jeopardy:** race, gender and class oppression
6. **Codes of Silence**
7. **Emotional Distance:** Institutional or public behavior change without personal or private attitudinal change.
8. **Friendship**
9. **Outsider Within:** living and working with someone of the opposite race (usually White) but not being considered or respected as an equal partner within such relationships
10. **Surveillance:** A strategy of controlling blacks who enter "white spaces of the public and private spheres"—enforced by violence or the threat of violence and loss (economic, for instance). It "highlights individuality by making the individual hypervisible and on display" (Patricia Hill Collins).
11. **Truth**
12. **Stereotypes:** particularly how they are used
13. **Guilt**
14. **Racial identities**
15. **Racial instruction**
16. **Memory**
17. **Victim**
18. **Cultural Reference**
19. **Understanding**
20. **Cultural Lag:** "a situation in which the old norms no longer fit new social realities" (Cathleen Gray and Shirley Bryant)
21. **White nostalgia** (Winifred Breines)
22. **Life Script** (Dave Spenceley) "A personal life plan which an individual decides early in life and is based upon his or her interpretation of the external and internal events which affect them. The script is a decisional model - this is very important - if I chose my own script then at any time given the right circumstances I can choose to make a change in my script. (When this change takes place in therapy the client is said to have made a Redecision.) ... People follow their script because of the pay off, a familiar feeling, attempting to avoid the loss of love and in an attempt to gain love."