

Syllabus: International Studies, English, & American Studies 384
Macalester College, Spring 2019, version 3, 2/26/2019

Langston Hughes: Global Writer

Instructor: David Chioni Moore
Class: MWF 8:30 – 9:30 a.m., Carnegie 404
Office hours: MFW 9:45-10:30, 12:00-12:30, and by appointment; signup sheet on office door
Contact: mooredc@macalester.edu

Introduction: The great African American writer Langston Hughes (1902-1967) is widely remembered as the “poet laureate of the Harlem Renaissance.” Though richly true, this title masks Hughes’ wide-ranging and internationalist career. He published in every imaginable genre – novel, memoir, drama, children’s story, humor, song lyric, politics, and more – and collaborated with writers from Latin America, Soviet Central Asia, Africa and the francophone Caribbean. He was also the first black writer in English to make his living exclusively from writing. This course ranges widely and chronologically through Hughes’s career, attending to multiple dynamics. Assignments may include research on little-known or archival texts, making use of materials not available to the general public.

Recommended Preparation: Students should come to the course with good background in one or two of a.) literary studies (especially but not only poetry), b.) American race studies, and c.) international or global studies. Nobody is expected to have all three – but the class as a whole will embody all of these preparations.

Course Conduct: The class will be run as a joint exploration, rather than a dispensation of information. Classes will feature close reading and discussion of texts and research.

Assignments/Evaluation:

a. preliminary paper	required but ungraded
b. <i>your</i> poem in a style or spirit of Hughes (minimum grade B+)	3%
c. brief oral recitation of poetry by Hughes (minimum grade B)	3%
d. presentation of a book by Hughes not on the syllabus	7%
e. first paper (5-6 pages)	15%
f. second paper (5-6 pages)	15%
g. active and insightful class participation	24%
h. longer (12-15 page) final research paper	33%

Notes: Timely class attendance is integral to the course and its grade. Inform me in advance of conflict with any religious holidays or any relevant disabilities; we’ll arrange acceptable alternatives and/or accommodations, and your grades will be unaffected.

Paper format: See my full roster of paper format requirements and writing advice, found in a PDF on my homepage, linked off the I.S. faculty page. You must follow all format requirements. This includes, but is not limited to, double-spacing, numbered pages, 1” margins all around, 12-point font, un-numbered title page with a good title, and generous acknowledgements of all support and works used at the paper’s end. Physical papers are due under my office door by the day and time noted, and drop 1/2 grade per day from that point.

How to read the schedule:

The date listed for each week is the Monday of our MWF class. Unless otherwise noted, complete all the reading for that week by your arrival to Monday's class.

Schedule:

- 1 J25 Fri: Introduction of course and participants; brief L.H. history
(note: short preliminary ungraded paper due at the start of the next class)
- 2 J28 M: pre-Hughes poems by Wheatley, Dunbar, McKay, Cullen, and others
W, F: Hughes' landmark 1920s poetry (**but no Wed class: 26 below zero!**)
- 3 F4 American analysis: *The Ways of White Folks* (short stories), 1934,
plus "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain"
M, W: 1920s poetry. Fri: *Ways of White Folks*
- 4 F11 The first autobiography: *The Big Sea* (1940): the U.S., Africa, Europe, Mexico
M: continue with *The Ways of White Folks*
W, F: *The Big Sea*, and "Negro Artist / Racial Mountain" on Friday
- 5 F18 Radical Internationalism I: Poems from the 1930s
→First paper (5-6 pp) due **Monday Feb 25, 2:00 pm** under my office door
Mon: *Big Sea*. Wed, Fri: 1930s poems
- 6 F25 **M: continue with 1930s poems. W: no class, DCM out ill**
F: Radical Internationalism II: *A Negro Looks at Soviet Central Asia*, 1934
- 7 M4 **M: continue with *A Negro Looks at Soviet Central Asia***
W, F: Political and social journalism from the 1940s to the 1960s:
Hughes in the *Chicago Defender*, and other essays
(Friday's class will include a 30-minute writing workshop)
- 8 M11 **M: continue with the *Chicago Defender***
W, F: Critical humor from the 40s to the 60s: *The Return of Simple*

→Mac Spring Break, March 16-24
- 9 M25 M, W: Poems from the 1940s
F: no class; DCM out of town (shift from 3/11)
→Second paper due (5-6 pp.) due Thurs March 28, 1:00 pm under my office door
- 10 A1 Global autobiography, 1931 to 1938: *I Wonder as I Wander*, 1956
final paper assignment distributed Wednesday 4/3
- 11 A8 Poems from the 1950s: *Montage of a Dream Deferred*
- 12 A15 M: Hughes's 1953 Senate testimony
W, F: Letters with South African writers, 1953-1967
→ 300w final paper prospectus due Tues 4/16 by 2:00 pm; DCM responds that eve
- 13 A22 M: writing workshop
W, F: Poetry from the 1960s (and a few Baraka and Brooks comparisons)

14 A29 M, W: several essays and other Hughes writings, TBD
→ five copies of 4pg outline/start of final papers due in class 5/1
F: final paper workshop

14 M6 Concluding class Monday, May 6th

Macalester classes end Monday, May 6th. Finals period, Thurs-Mon May 9-13

Final papers due Saturday, May 11th, by 1:00 pm under my office door.

Course Books: seven to buy, and two provided in manuscript by the instructor

1. *African-American Poetry : An Anthology, 1773-1927*. Ed. Joan R. Sherman. Mineola, NY: Dover Thrift Editions, 1997.
2. *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes*, ed. Arnold Rampersad and David Roessel. New York: Vintage, 1995.
3. *The Ways of White Folks: Stories* [1934]. New York: Vintage, 1990.
4. *The Big Sea: An Autobiography* [1940]. New York: Hill and Wang, 1993.
5. *Langston Hughes and the Chicago Defender: Essays on Race, Politics, and Culture, 1942-62*. Ed. Christopher C. De Santis. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1995.
6. *The Return of Simple*. Ed. Akiba Sullivan Harper. New York: Hill and Wang, 1994.
7. *I Wonder as I Wander: An Autobiographical Journey* [1956]. New York: Hill and Wang, 1993.
8. *A Negro Looks at Soviet Central Asia* [1934]. Revised and expanded text edited by David Chioni Moore, with the assistance of Jennifer A. Bouta, manuscript, 2012.
9. *From Harlem to Johannesburg: Letters Between Langston Hughes and Pioneering South African Writers, 1953-1967*. Manuscript in progress by David Chioni Moore with the assistance of Harmony S. O'Rourke and Kristen A. Harkness, 2012.

Reading assignment in Hughes's precursors:

I have asked you to purchase the inexpensive *African-American Poetry: An Anthology, 1773-1927*, so we may sample Hughes's poetic precursors. Since the book is short (just 78 small-format pages) I encourage you to read it all. However, within that, closely read, at minimum, these 21 poems:

Wheatley	On Being Brought from Africa to America
Horton	Liberty and Slavery
Simpson	Away to Canada, To the White People of America
Harper	Bury Me in a Free Land, To the Union Savers of Cleveland, Learning to Read
Bell	from <i>A Poem Entitled the Day and the War</i>
McClellan	The Feet of Judas
Cotter	Dr. Booker T. Washington to the National Negro Business League
Campbell	'Sciplinin' Sister Brown
Corrothers	Paul Laurence Dunbar, An Indignation Dinner
Johnson	O Black and Unknown Bards
Dunbar	Sympathy, An Ante-Bellum Sermon, The Poet
McKay	The Harlem Dancer, If We Must Die
Toomer	Georgia Dusk
Cullen	From the Dark Tower