

## EN 6616 3.0: BLACK SONG: INTRODUCTION TO AFRICAN AMERICAN POETRY

### Instructor Information:

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Course Day and Time: W 4-7

### General Description:

The current popularity of African American fiction notwithstanding, from its earliest publication, it is African American poetry that has most deeply engaged questions of identity, language, representation, struggle and revolutionary change. For example, it was the poetry of the Harlem Renaissance that most profoundly marked African American's engagement with American modernism, and the poetry of the Black Arts Movement of the Sixties that had the most transformative impact on how African Americans have come to articulate their experience. In profound conversation with various contemporaneous poetic forms, African American poets primarily sought ways of representing African American voice, both verbal and musical. This course will focus on the work of Langston Hughes, Gwendolyn Brooks, and Amiri Baraka, as central to the tradition, and including representative work by poets ranging from Phillis Wheatley in the 18th century to Robert Hayden, Gill Scott Heron, Audrey Lorde, and Natasha Tretheway, as well as a selection of more recent contemporary poets. Students will be expected to read widely and listen to a range of African American music, principally spirituals and gospel, certain periods of jazz and blues, and R&B.

### Requirements:

One 20-minute oral seminar presentation (followed by written version, maximum 8 pages), 20%; one final essay, 20 pages maximum, 50%; informed participation (mandatory) in seminar discussion (10%), including brief presentations or articles or poems 20%.

**Required Texts: (note, several of these texts are available electronically. Ebooks do not always reflect line delineation correctly, so if using ebooks, beware)**

### TBA but at least including:

*The Black Poets*, ed. Dudley Randall. Bantam 0553275631

*The Essential Gwendolyn Brooks*, Library of America 931082871

Amiri Baraka, *SOS Poems: 1961-2013* 0802124682

*The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes*. Vintage, 1995. ISBN 0679764089 (new and used through Amazon)

We will also be using several databases: African American Poetry, Twentieth Century African American Poetry, Black Women Writers, Black Thought and Culture. 20<sup>th</sup> Century African American Poetry does contain all of Hughes, and some of the other poetry. You may, however, find books easier to use, especially in class. **Other readings on Moodle.**