

ENG 335: British Literature after 1900 (Black British Literature)

Credits: 3

Pre-Requisites: Any English DL class; or instructor's permission

READINGS:

Mary Prince, *History of Mary Prince*

Bernardine Evaristo, *Blonde Roots*

Zadie Smith, *NW*

Caryl Phillips, *The Atlantic Sound*

Andrea Levy, *Small Island*

Linton Kwesi Johnson, *Selected Poems*

The class focuses on Black British Literature from 1900 to the present. It is intended as a survey that will introduce students to a powerful body of literature in addition to introducing them to a host of literary movements. To provide the historical context for more recent literature, the class will begin with excerpts from Olaudah Equiano's *Interesting Narrative* to uncover the roots of Black British literature in late 18th century. From there, the course will move to the *History of Mary Prince* to examine a popular slave narrative widely circulated 19th century Britain. These texts will be historicized within the broader social and cultural contexts that produced them. At this point, we will turn to writers of the Windrush generation and examine short stories and texts by Sam Selvon, George Lamming, and ER Braithwaite. At this juncture, the class will move toward more contemporary manifestations of Black British Literature, beginning with the reggae influenced dub poetry produced by Linton Kwesi Johnson. Caryl Phillips' *The Atlantic Sound* is a sprawling memoir recounting the author's voyage across what used to be the trans-Atlantic slave trade, while Andrea Levy's critically acclaimed *Small Island* trains its narrative focus on a Jamaican who fought with the British in World War II, and settles in London afterwards. The class will close with Zadie Smith's hysterical realist novel *NW*, representing the London's North West district.

The assignments for this class (see below) directly connect to Study Abroad Learning Objectives:

- 1.) Demonstrate awareness of your own cultural values and biases and how they impact your ability to work with others.

- 2.) Demonstrate knowledge of diversity with a focus on the population or topic of interest in your Study Abroad program.
- 3.) Communicate appropriately and effectively with diverse individuals and groups.
- 4.) Demonstrate an increased capacity to analyze issues with appreciation for disparate viewpoints.

Short Writing Reflections (30%)

These are designed to be reflective assignments that are 3 pages in length. Students will be asked to reflect on how London is represented in the novels for class. Students may wish to travel to North West London to observe the setting Zadie Smith drew inspiration from. Students will reflect on how their experience in London shapes their relationship and understanding of the novel, and, conversely, how the novel shapes their understanding of London. Students will complete two reflections throughout the course of the semester.

Museum of London Docklands (30%)

The class will go to the Museum of London Docklands, and students will have to write about their experience there. The histories captured in the museum are represented in the novels. For example, the London riots are detailed in Linton Johnson's poetry, while Caryl Phillips' *The Atlantic Sound* represents slavery, which is given space in the museum. This reflection should be 3 pages in length.

Final Essay (30%)

All students will have to complete a 6 to 7-page essay on one or two of the novels. The essay should address the primary themes stressed throughout the course of the semester while incorporating original analysis and research. All essays must incorporate at least 4 secondary scholarly sources. Students will write an abstract for their proposed research essay, and I will provide instructive feedback to help shape their essays.

Reading Quizzes (10%)

Reading Quizzes will be given weekly. They are designed to simply ensure that you are doing the reading.

Attendance

Attendance of course is very important. As such, attendance is mandatory, though students will be allowed two absences. After two absences, final grades will be reduced by 3 points for each absence. For example, 6 absences will result in a 12-point reduction from your final grade.

Grading

All assignments will be graded on the 100-point scale:

100 – 96 = A+

95 – 93 = A

92 – 90 = A-

89 – 87 = B+

86 – 84 = B

83 – 80 = B-
79 – 77 = C+
76 – 74 = C
73 – 70 = C-
69 – 67 = D+
66 – 64 = D
63 – 60 = D-
59 and below = F

Connection to London

The texts I will be teaching have a firm connection to London. The assignments I have constructed utilize the resources (museums, for example) London offers, and are essential to an enriched study abroad experience. The class will include field trips to the Black Cultural Archives, and the Museum of London Docklands.