Syllabus: International Studies, English, & American Studies 384  
Macalester College, Spring 2015  

Langston Hughes: Global Writer

Instructor: David Chioni Moore  
Class: T-Th 8:00 – 9:30 a.m., Carnegie 404  
Office hours: vary; posted weekly on a signup sheet outside my office door, Carnegie 410  
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, history, 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 more 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 ungraded, but an absolute requirement
b. your 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 (other than week #1) is the Tuesday of our T-Th class. Unless otherwise noted, complete all the reading for that week by your arrival to Tuesday’s class.

Schedule:
1  J22  Thrs: Introduction of course and participants; brief L.H. history
    → preliminary 2-pg paper due Friday, January 23rd, at 1:00 pm
2  J27  Tu: 21 pre-Hughes poems by Wheatley, Dunbar, McKay, Cullen, and others,
        and the first 15 Hughes poems on our 1920s poems roster
        Th: the balance of our roster of Hughes’ landmark 1920s poetry
3  F3   American analysis: *The Ways of White Folks* (short stories), 1934
        and “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain,” 1926
4  F10  The first autobiography: *The Big Sea*: the U.S., Africa, Europe, Mexico, 1940
5  F17  Radical Internationalism I: Poems from the 1930s
        → First paper (5-6 pp.) due Friday February 20, 1:00 pm under my office door
6  F24  Radical Internationalism II: *A Negro Looks at Soviet Central Asia*, 1934
        no class Thursday 2/26; DCM speaking on Hughes at Sewanee
7  M3   Political and social journalism from the 1940s to the 1960s:
        Hughes in the *Chicago Defender*, and other essays
8  M10  Poems from the 1940s, and selected Hughes essays including 1953 Senate testimony
        [spring break, week of March 14-22 – no class]
9  M24  Critical humor from the 40s to the 60s: *The Return of Simple*
        → Second paper due (5-6 pp.) due Friday March 27th, 1:00 pm under my office door
10 M31  Global autobiography, 1931 to 1938: *I Wonder as I Wander*, 1956
11 A7   Poems from the 1950s: *Montage of a Dream Deferred*
        → 300w final paper prospecti due Thursday noon; DCM responds that eve
12 A14  Letters with South African writers, 1953-1967
        → four-page unstapled outline/start of final papers Friday at noon
13 A21  Tues: final paper workshop in small groups
        Thurs: poems from the 1960s (and a few Baraka and Brooks comparisons)
14 A28  Concluding class Thursday, April 30th

Macalester classes end Monday May 4th. Finals period, Thurs-Mon May 7-11

Final papers due Friday May 8th, by 1:00 pm under my office door.
Course Books: seven to buy, and two provided in manuscript by the instructor


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.


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 *A Poem Entitled the Day and the War*
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