Syllabus: International Studies, English, & American Studies 384
Macalester College, Spring 2025, v1, Jan 21, 2025

Langston Hughes: Global Writer

Instructor: David Chioni Moore
Class: MWF 10:50-11:50 am, Carnegie 411
Office hours: usually MWF 12:30-1:15, Tues 1:30-2:30, and by appointment. Sign up here.
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 widely available.

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 one-page paper	required but ungraded
b.	*your* poem in a style or spirit of Hughes (minimum grade B+)	2.5%
c.	brief oral recitation of poetry by Hughes (minimum grade B)	2.5%
d.	short presentation of a book by Hughes not on the syllabus	5%
e.	first paper (5 pages): poetry and prose	14%
f.	second paper (5 pages): here and yonder	14%
g.	handwritten final exam (possibly in-class)	14%
h.	active and insightful class participation	23%
i.	longer (10-12 page) final research paper	25%

Notes: Faithful and timely class attendance is integral to the course and its grade. Inform me in advance of conflict with any religious holidays or relevant disabilities; we'll arrange acceptable alternatives and/or accommodations, and your grades will be unaffected. In class, phones and screens off, out of sight, and out of mind. I have a general trigger warning posted in the Moodle; since this course sometimes confronts difficult material and/or words, be sure to read it.

Paper format: See the full roster of paper format requirements and writing advice on the class Moodle. You are responsible for all format requirements. They include, but are not limited

to, double-spacing, numbered pages, 1" margins all around, 12-point font, un-numbered title page with a good title, generous acknowledgements of all helpers, works, and technologies including AI used at the paper's end. Papers are due emailed to me in PDF form 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 Monday of our MWF class. Unless otherwise noted, complete all the reading for that week by your arrival to Monday's class.

Schedule:

1 J24 Fri: Introduction of course and participants; brief L.H. history
(short preliminary ungraded paper due emailed Sunday eve)

2 J27 M: pre-Hughes poems by Wheatley, Dunbar, McKay, Cullen, and others
W, F: Hughes' landmark 1920s poetry

3 F3 American analysis: *The Ways of White Folks* (short stories), 1934,
plus Friday: "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain"

4 F10 The first autobiography: *The Big Sea* (1940): the U.S., Africa, Europe, Mexico

5 F17 Radical Internationalism I: Poems from the 1930s
→First paper (5 pp) due Thurs Feb 20th, 5pm via email
Friday 2/21 class likely virtual

6 F24 Radical Internationalism II: *A Negro Looks at Soviet Central Asia*, 1934
Friday 2/28 class virtual: State Dept. Bassett Lecture

7 M3 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 M10 Critical humor from the 40s to the 60s: *The Return of Simple*
Friday 3/14 class likely virtual, possibly from Beinecke Hughes archive

→Mac Spring Break, March 15-23, 2025

9 M24 Poems from the 1940s
Friday: selected essays

10 M31 Global autobiography, 1931 to 1938: *I Wonder as I Wander*, 1956
final paper assignment distributed Wednesday 4/2
→Second paper due (5 pp.) due Thurs April 3, 5:00 pm

11 A7 Poems from the 1950s: *Montage of a Dream Deferred*

12 A14 M: Hughes's 1953 Senate testimony
W, F: Letters with South African writers, 1953-1967
→ 300w final paper prospectus due Tues 4/15 by 2:00 pm; DCM responds that eve

13 A21 M: writing workshop
W, F: Poetry from the 1960s (and a few Baraka and Brooks comparisons)

14 A28 M: other Hughes writings, and ChatGPT on Langston Hughes!
W: in-class handwritten exam
→ 4pg outline/start of final papers due in class Wednesday 4/30
F: final paper workshop

14 M5 Concluding class Monday, May 5th, 2025

Mac classes end Monday, May 5th. Finals Thurs-Mon May 8-12. For our class, the final exam period is Thurs May 8, 10:30-12:30; we may or may not use it.

Final papers due Saturday, May 10th, by 2:00 pm via email.

Course Books: five to buy via MacBooks (#s 2, 3, 4, 6, and 7), and four provided by the instructor (#s 1, 5, 8, and 9).

Preference for Print: people who read in print rather than e-formats almost always grasp more fully and retain more durably. For this reason, I've specified the books to be available at the bookstore in print form. Those with a strong educational need for e-formats, though, can readily reach out to the bookstore for that; if that is your situation, chat with me first.

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.