

**AML 3041 – American Mourning: Tropes of Mourning in American Literature (sec. 2442),
Fall 2017**

Instructor Name: Maurice A. Evers

Course meeting times & locations: MWF 3 – TUR 2333

Office Location and Hours: TUR 4341 M W 4 + by appointment

Course website: Canvas

Instructor Email: mauriceanthony1@ufl.edu

Course Description:

This course explores how mourning the perpetual presence of death and loss—resultant from, for example, wars, epidemics and (un)natural disasters—has transformed American literature since 1865. We will engage in close readings of our course texts, considering key social, political, cultural, racial, gendered and personal contexts to understand how and why writers use literature to respond to and communicate personal and national grief. We will also attend to the following questions: What does literary mourning look and feel like? What does it reveal to readers about loss, death, and by extension life, in an American context? How has literary mourning changed as modes of mourning respond to historical epochs or various phenomena? Furthermore, drawing on Judith Butler’s insights in *Precarious Life: The Power of Mourning* we will ask what makes for a grievable (American) life.

Required Texts:

Kate Chopin, *The Awakening*

F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*

James Baldwin, *Giovanni’s Room*

Adrienne Kennedy, *Funnyhouse of a Negro*

Joan Didion, *Play It as It Lays*

Claudia Rankine, *Don’t Let Me Be Lonely*

Danez Smith, *Don’t Call Us Dead*

Note: All secondary readings will be posted to our Canvas course page. When required texts are available online, I will also provide links to these texts on our Canvas site.

Assignments (see below for Grading Rubric):

Quizzes

150 points

Administered in class and will test your knowledge of the texts. 15 quizzes, 10 points each.

Group Presentations

200 points

Throughout the course, small groups of students will break down selected texts from our weekly assigned materials in presentations for the rest of the class. During the first week of the course, I will group students and together you will choose a text on which you would like to present. In preparing presentations, groups should research the context, author, and content of the text thoroughly as well as analyze its style and contribution to mourning customs in American literature. Groups should organize these findings in a presentation that is detailed and creative. Visual aids and questions to guide class discussion are required. Presentations will begin the second or third week of the course.

Short Paper, 2-3 pages**200 points**

In a 2-3 page paper, you will write an argument that addresses a central question or challenge by analyzing 1-2 texts we have discussed in class.

Proposal for Final Paper**75 points**

Prior to the final paper, you will write: 1) a proposal (1-2 paragraphs) that includes your topic and research question(s) and your thesis statement; 2) your annotated bibliography (3-4 sources). Writing a proposal requires that you begin researching for your paper so that you can assess available sources and define a topic and research question effectively.

Final Paper, 9-10 pages**275 points**

For the final assignment of the course, you will write a 6-8 page paper that analyzes or applies one or more the theories we discuss in the course. We will discuss how to choose a topic and to write a final paper in class. I will also provide resources throughout the semester to help with this process.

Class Participation**100 points**

I expect you to participate actively in our discussion and activities during each class period, which means you need to arrive prepared and on time. This class is discussion based, so please keep in mind that students come from diverse backgrounds. Be mindful of your own perspective as you listen and share in class and articulate your point of view respectfully. As you express your ideas, I also expect to engage and use the terminologies of theories we learn throughout the course.

Course Policies:

1. You must complete *all assignments* to receive credit for this course.
2. *Attendance:* Attendance is required. You are considered tardy if you are more than 10 minutes late to class, and 3 tardies count as one absence. *You are allowed three absences. For every absence exceeding this, your final grade will drop by one letter grade. If you miss six classes, you will automatically fail the course.* Limited exceptions for sickness, death, extreme illness among family members, and natural and physical catastrophes are permitted at my consent. Written proof is and consultation with me are required to excuse any absence.

The University of Florida exempts from this policy only those absences involving university-sponsored events, such as athletics and band, religious holidays, military duty, and court-mandated responsibilities (e.g., jury duty or subpoena). Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this class are consistent with university policies that can be found

at <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

Absences related to university-sponsored events must be discussed with the instructor *prior* to the date that will be missed. If you are absent due to a scheduled event, you are still responsible for turning assignments in on time.

3. *Paper Format & Submission:* All written assignments should be submitted electronically to Canvas as a Microsoft Word document. Other file types will not be accepted. Final drafts should be polished and presented in a professional manner. All drafts should conform to MLA style: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/13/>

4. *Late Papers/Assignments*: No late papers or assignments will be accepted. I may consider extenuating circumstances, but you must contact me at least 48 hours before the assignment is due and provide documentation.
5. *Paper Maintenance Responsibilities*. Keep duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course. Save all returned, graded work until the semester is over.
6. *Academic Honesty and Definition of Plagiarism*. Plagiarism will be reported and will result in an automatic zero for the assignment. Plagiarism violates the Student Honor Code and requires reporting to the Dean of Students. All students must abide by the Student Honor Code: <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>.
7. *Students with disabilities* requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, [dso.ufl.edu/drc/](https://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/)), which will provide appropriate documentation to give the instructor.
8. For information on UF Grading policies, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>
9. *Course Evaluations*. Toward the end of the semester, you will receive email messages asking you to go online and evaluate this course: <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/evals/Default.aspx>
10. Students who face difficulties completing the course or who are in need of counseling or urgent help may call the on-campus Counseling and Wellness Center (352) 392-1575, or contact them online: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>
11. *Classroom behavior and netiquette*: Disrespectful behavior is unprofessional; it will result in dismissal, and accordingly absence, from the class. Additionally, emails to me must follow professional protocols of subject, grammar, and tone—including proper salutations and signature. Remember that all emails sent through our UFL accounts are Public Records (Florida Statutes, Chapter 119).
12. *UF's policy on Harassment*: UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty: <http://hr.ufl.edu/manager-resources/recruitment-staffing/institutional-equity-diversity/resources/harassment/>

Tentative Schedule of Classes, Readings and Assignments

Note: All readings and assignments must be completed before class on the day they are listed

Week 1: January 8 – 12

Mon: Class Introduction: Syllabus Review; Hanif Willis-Abdurraqib “Ode to Prince” (In-class viewing/discussion)

Wed: Introduction: Theories of Mourning; David Kennedy, “The Work of Mourning”

Fri: Jahan Ramazani, “Nationalism, Transnationalism and Poetry of Mourning”

Week 2: January 15 – 19

Mon: No Class — M.L.K. Jr. Day

Wed: Ramazani, “Can Poetry Console a Grieving Public?”

Fri: Walt Whitman, “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d”

Week 3: January 22 — 26

Mon: Whitman wrap-up

Wed: Kate Chopin, *The Awakening*—*Chapters 1-13*

Fri: Chopin continued—Chapters 14-26

Week 4: January 29 — February 2

Mon: Chopin wrap-up—Chapters 27-39

Wed: T.S. Eliot, “The Hollow Men”

Fri: Eliot continued, “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”

Week 5: February 5 — 9

Mon: Eliot wrap-up

Wed: F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*—Chapter 1-3

Fri: Fitzgerald continued—Chapters 4-6

Week 6: February 12 — 16

Mon: Fitzgerald wrap-up—Chapters 7-9

Wed: Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman*—Act One

Fri: Miller continued—Act Two & Requiem

Week 7: February 19 — 23

Mon: Miller wrap-up

Wed: SHORT PAPER WORKSHOP

Fri: SHORT PAPER DUE

Week 8: February 26 — March 2

Mon: James Baldwin, *Giovanni’s Room*—Part One: Chapters 1-3

Wed: Baldwin continued—Part Two: Chapters 1-3

Fri: Baldwin wrap-up—Part Two: Chapters 4-5

Week 9: March 5 — 9 (Spring Break)

Mon: NO CLASS

Wed: NO CLASS

Fri: NO CLASS

Week 10: March 12 — 16

Mon: TIME’s 100 Photos Documentary Short *The Body of Emmett Till* (In-class viewing/discussion)

Wed: Gwendolyn Brooks, “A Bronzeville Mother Loiters in Mississippi. Meanwhile, a Mississippi Mother Burns Bacon” & “The Last Quatrain of Emmett Till”

Fri: Fred Moten, “Black Mo’nin”

Week 11: March 19 — 23

Mon: Adrienne Kennedy, *Funnyhouse of a Negro* & “On the Writing of *Funnyhouse of a Negro*”

Wed: Kennedy discussion continued

Fri: Kennedy wrap-up

Week 12: March 26 — 30

Mon: Joan Didion, *Play It as It Lays*—Maria + Chapters 1-28

Wed: Didion continued—Chapters 29-57

Fri: NO CLASS — ACLA; PROPOSAL FOR FINAL PAPER DUE

Week 13: April 2 — 6

Mon: Didion wrap-up—Chapters 58-84

Wed: Judith Butler, “Violence, Mourning, Politics”

Fri: Butler wrap-up

Week 14: April 9 — 13

Mon: Claudia Rankine, *Don’t Let Me Be Lonely*—pages 1-46

Wed: Rankine continued—pages 47-100

Fri: Rankine wrap-up—pages 101-131

Week 15: April 16 — 20

Mon: Danez Smith, *Don’t Call Us Dead*—pages 1-30

Wed: Smith continued—pages 31-54

Fri: Smith wrap-up—pages 55-85

Week 16: April 23 — 25

Mon: Media Watch assignment—Bring to class a link to/example of a recent news or pop culture item that plays out mourning

Wed: FINAL PAPER DUE

Grading/Assessment Rubric:

A	93-100%	B	83-86.9%	C	73-76.9%	D	63-66.9%
A-	90-92.9%	B-	80-82.9%	C-	70-72.9%	D-	60-62.9%
B+	87-89.9%	C+	77-79.9%	D+	67-69.9%	E	0-59.9%

A	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Follows ALL instructions specific to the assignment descriptionGenerates and elaborates on original ideas relevant to the course contentAssignment provides evidence to support claimsAssignment incorporates source material appropriately and effectivelyAssignment displays clear organizational forethoughtAssignment is free of rhetorically unaware grammatical, stylistic, and/or technical errors
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Follows most instructions specific to the assignment descriptionIncorporates and elaborates ideas relevant to the course contentAssignment provides evidence to support most of its claimsAssignment incorporates source material appropriatelyAssignment has an identifiable organizational structureAssignment contains rhetorically unaware grammatical, stylistic, and/or technical errors
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Follows some instructions specific to the assignment descriptionIncorporates ideas relevant to the course contentAssignment provides evidence to support some of its claimsAssignment incorporates source materialAssignment has an identifiable organizational structureAssignment contains rhetorically unaware grammatical, stylistic, and/or technical errors

D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Follows very few instructions specific to the assignment description ● Incorporates ideas irrelevant to the course content ● Assignment provides little to no evidence to support its claims ● Assignment incorporates no (or very little) source material ● Assignment has an unclear organizational structure ● Assignment contains distracting and rhetorically unaware grammatical, stylistic, and/or technical errors
E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Does not follow instructions specific to the assignment description ● Incorporates no ideas relevant to the course content ● Assignment has no identifiable organizational structure ● Assignment incorporates no source material ● Assignment provides no evidence to support its claims ● Assignment contains distracting and rhetorically unaware grammatical, stylistic, and/or technical errors

Progress Conferences:

I encourage students to see me during my office hours, especially when they have questions about an assignment, need help with a particular writing problem, want extra feedback on a draft, or have questions about my comments on their work.