

ENGL 464 – Faulkner & Wideman Seminar  
Fall 2014, Hendrix College

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William Faulkner:

I discovered that my own little postage stamp of native soil was worth writing about and that I would never live long enough to exhaust it, and that by sublimating the actual into the apocryphal I would have complete liberty to use whatever talent I might have to its absolute top. (*Lion in the Garden*)

The past is never dead. It's not even past. (*Requiem for a Nun*)

John Edgar Wideman:

The notion of being grounded is a very important notion in all traditional cultures. I'm using the word grounded metaphorically: the forefathers entered this land and it was dangerous and nobody ever lived here before. But they spoke to the spirits of this land and those spirits gave them information and knowledge that they needed to start a village. The village could grow and would be sustained because the people kept alive that knowledge of the original contract, a knowledge of the rootedness. Everything flows from that ancestral bargain. And I believe that in order for my art, anybody's art, to flourish it has to be rooted, it has to be grounded, in that sense. So, yes, particularity, yes, the very unique and real ground that you fought for and bled in and created as a people. In my case that is Homewood. (1985 interview with Kay Bonetti)

Past lives live in us, through us. Each of us harbors the spirits of people who walked the earth before we did, and those spirits depend on us for continuing existence, just as we depend on their presence to live our lives to the fullest. (epigraph to *Sent for You Yesterday*)

## **Course Description**

The purposes of this course are to: (1) perform a close study of three William Faulkner Yoknapatawpha novels and John Edgar Wideman's Homewood trilogy; (2) foster your ability to work with literary criticism; (3) produce a significant essay on some aspect of either or both Faulkner and Wideman; (4) prepare you for the English major senior thesis; and (5) create an atmosphere that approximates a graduate school seminar.

This course is student-centered; I expect each of you to participate actively in class discussions. On a typical class discussion day, you will supply many of the prompts for collaborative consideration. You will also work in a team of 2-3 students choosing and leading discussion on two critical articles. In the final weeks, you will be responsible for providing feedback on peer drafts.

Note that there is one required extracurricular event: The "Faulkner Pilgrimage" trip to Oxford, Mississippi (generously funded by the Hendrix-Murphy Foundation).

This course demands a lot. Read and work ahead when you can.

## **Texts**

- ✎ Faulkner, *Sanctuary* (1931)
- ✎ Faulkner, *Light in August* (1932)
- ✎ Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936)
- ✎ Wideman, *Damballah* (1981)
- ✎ Wideman, *Hiding Place* (1981)
- ✎ Wideman, *Sent for You Yesterday* (1983)
- ✎ secondary works of your choosing

## **Requirements**

- ✎ *Class Participation:* The class participation grade includes **active** participation in class activities, assessed subjectively.
- ✎ *Discussion Prompts:* For each reading day, bring:
  - (1) two typed discussion questions/prompts. As the course progresses, I will expect questions about the text in hand and questions that seek connections, or challenge connections, to a text or texts we have previously studied. The questions should be specific and provocative, the kind that can sustain inquiry.
  - (2) an identified passage in which you find rich potential for close scrutiny. Type the passage on the page.In both cases, be prepared to follow-up on the question and passage such that, for 5-10 minutes, you are steering class discussion.
- ✎ *Article Discussion.* Your group will be responsible for leading class discussion one day. The discussion should involve two critical articles you assign to the class the prior class meeting (though you can certainly discuss beyond those articles). We will sign up for your article summary on the second or third class meeting.
- ✎ *Peer feedback:* You will be assigned two of your peers' drafts on which to provide about two-three pages of feedback on draft workshop day.
- ✎ *Critical Essay:* Your essay will fall between seventeen and twenty pages. This is your baby. Pursue the line of inquiry that most fascinates you; otherwise you can't hope to fascinate your reader. You will need to demonstrate awareness and consideration of other scholarship on your topic; to engage critical sources beyond simple supporting quotations; to provide some extra-textual context for your discussion; and to attend closely to the text(s). A full assignment description will be provided.

## **Grades**

Class Participation/Prompts:	20%
Group Discussion:	10%
Draft	10%
Draft Feedback:	10%
Critical Essay:	50%

## Other Policies

- ☒ Drinks are permitted. No food. No hats except for religious headgear. No tees without sides.
- ☒ *Electronic devices*: E-readers for course material are permitted, except for cell phones. You can bring e-readers and laptops/tablets to class. A few cautions: (1) Do not use e-readers for convenience at the expense of active reading. You are still expected to take notes, highlight passages, add comments, etc. (2) Laptops/tablets can be used in class **as e-readers**. **Do not abuse this privilege**. I want to see faces, not screen backs. You all owe yourselves time away from a screen. Plus nothing is better for active reading than underlining and annotating paper copies, and taking notes by hand.
- ☒ The syllabus is subject to revision as the course progresses.
- ☒ *Disabilities*: It is the policy of Hendrix College to accommodate students with disabilities, pursuant to federal and state law. Any student who needs accommodation in relation to a recognized disability should inform the instructor at the beginning of the course. In order to receive accommodations, students with disabilities are directed to contact Julie Brown in Academic Support Services at 505-2954 or brownj@hendrix.edu.
- ☒ *Email*: Email will be used to contact the entire class for communicating changes to the syllabus and other matters. Check your Hendrix account daily.
- ☒ *Academic Integrity*: Intellectual dishonesty will not be tolerated. See the academic integrity statement and policy in the student handbook. Frequently, errors in documentation and attribution are not deliberate attempts to pass another's ideas and words off as one's own, but rather misunderstandings of how to give that other person sufficient credit. Please consult with me on any potential confusion so we can avoid problems.
- ☒ *Late essays*: Late essays are not accepted. If you have extenuating circumstances, you must consult me at least one week prior to the paper's due date (except in the case of actual emergencies, of course). Otherwise, you will lose half a grade for every day it is late. The clock begins ticking when class starts the day the essay is due.
- ☒ *Essay Format*: All submitted essays must follow the MLA style:
  - ☒ MLA format: 12 point font with serifs. 1" margins all around. No cover sheet. No folders. Attach pages with a staple (unstapled papers will not be accepted). Page numbers must appear in the upper right corner of each page except the first (use "Insert Page Number"; do not do this manually on every page!). All papers must have a title and a "Works Cited" section. Note that MS Word often has 1.5" left margin, and often inserts an extra space between paragraphs. You will have to change these.
  - ☒ Exceptions to MLA format: Single-space the name/course/date/professor information on the first page. 1.5-space for block/indented quotations. If you have room, add your entire "Works Cited" section at the bottom of your last page.
  - ☒ MLA documentation: MLA calls for parenthetical documentation, not footnotes or endnotes. Consult any recent English handbook, the *MLA Handbook* in the library, or an online guide. *Rule of thumb*: Given the context of the surrounding passage and the bibliography listing, include the absolute minimum amount of information necessary within the parentheses.

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1	Tue, 26 Aug	Course Introduction
2	Thu, 28 Aug	Faulkner, <i>Sanctuary</i> chpts 1-14 (to p105)
3	Tue, 2 Sep	Faulkner, <i>Sanctuary</i> chpts 13-22 (to p206)
4	Thu, 4 Sep	Faulkner, <i>Sanctuary</i> chpts 23-31 (to p317)
5	Tue, 9 Sep	student-led article discussion
6	Thu, 11 Sep	Faulkner, <i>Light in August</i> chpts 1-5 (to p118)
7	Tue, 16 Sep	Faulkner, <i>Light in August</i> chpts 6-11 (to p255)
8	Thu, 18 Sep	Faulkner, <i>Light in August</i> chpts 12-16 (to p391)
	Fri 19 Sep 8:30 – Sat 20 Oct	Trip to Oxford, MS with Dr. Charles Chappell, Emeritus Professor of English (Hendrix-Murphy Foundation)
9	Tue, 23 Sep	Faulkner, <i>Light in August</i> chpts 17-21 (to p507)
10	Thu, 25 Sep	student-led article discussion
11	Tue, 30 Sep	Faulkner, <i>Absalom, Absalom!</i> chpts 1-3 (to p69)
12	Thu, 2 Oct	Faulkner, <i>Absalom, Absalom!</i> chpts 4-6 (to p175)
13	Tue, 7 Oct	Faulkner, <i>Absalom, Absalom!</i> chpts 7-9 (to p303)
14	Thu, 9 Oct	student-led article discussion
15	Tue, 14 Oct	Wideman, <i>Damballah</i> , through “Hazel” ( to p79)
	16 – 19 Oct	<i>fall break</i>
16	Tue, 21 Oct	Wideman, <i>Damballah</i> , through “Across the Wide Missouri” (to p141)
17	Thu, 23 Oct	Wideman, <i>Damballah</i> , through “The Beginning of Homewood” (to p205)
18	Tue, 28 Oct	Wideman, <i>Hiding Place</i> , Part I (to p88)
19	Thu, 30 Oct	Wideman, <i>Hiding Place</i> Part II (to p158)
20	Tue, 4 Nov	Wideman, <i>Sent for You Yesterday</i> , through “The Return of Albert Wilkes” (to p86)
21	Thu, 6 Nov	Wideman, <i>Sent for You Yesterday</i> , “The Courting of Lucy Tate” (to p155)
22	Tue, 11 Nov	Wideman, <i>Sent for You Yesterday</i> , “Brother” (to p208)
23	Thu, 13 Nov	student-led article discussion
24	Tue, 18 Nov	writing day
25	Thu, 20 Nov	writing day
26	Tue, 25 Nov	draft workshop
	26 – 30 Nov	<i>Thanksgiving break</i>
27	Tue, 2 Dec	draft workshop
28	Thu, 4 Dec	draft workshop
	Tue, 9 Dec	reading day
	Wed, 10 Dec, 10:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ essay due</li> <li>➤ course- and self-evaluation/reflection</li> </ul>