FIELD X: AFRICAN AMERICAN LITERATURE

STATEMENT OF EXPECTATIONS
AS PUBLISHED ON MAY 19, 2014

The field exam is designed to measure candidates' potential to produce advanced scholarship and to teach college-level courses on African American literature. Therefore, answers on the written exam should display extensive and specialized knowledge of the field of African American literature, including the canon of primary texts, significant secondary scholarship, and major historical developments.

Specifically, answers should demonstrate expertise in:

- Foundational African American literary genres and their conventions, histories, and cultural significance (e.g. poetry, drama, fiction, autobiography, slave narratives, oral tradition, etc.).

- The historical and literary subfields that comprise the larger field of African American studies as well as the significance of those subfields (e.g. antebellum literature, Reconstruction, the "Nadir," Naturalism, the Harlem Renaissance, Modernism, the Civil Rights era, the Black Arts Movement, women's writing, Postmodernism, etc.).

- Established and current literary criticism and scholarship on African American literature, including recent shifts that re-conceptualize aspects of the field (such as transnational and hemispheric studies).

Answers on the written exam should also:

- Advance and develop substantial interpretive arguments that are firmly rooted in sophisticated analysis of primary texts and engage dynamically with secondary critical sources.

- Demonstrate an authoritative, convincing, and original individual perspective on the material.

The examiners will ask questions that can—and should—be addressed with texts on the reading list. If relevant to a question, however, any texts in the field, whether studied independently or through course work, may be used by the candidate.

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READING LIST

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I. Primary Texts

A. African American Literature Before 1910
(Colonial, Antebellum, and Postbellum Literature)

Phyllis Wheatley. "On Being Brought from Africa to America" (1773)
Jupiter Hammon. "An Address to Miss Phillis Wheatly" (1778)
Olaudah Equiano. *Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa* (1789)
Nat Turner. "The Confessions of Nat Turner" (1831)
Frederick Douglass. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* (1845)
Sojourner Truth. "Speech at Akron Convention" (1851)
William Wells Brown. *Clotel, or, The President's Daughter* (1853)
Frances Ellen Watkins Harper. "The Slave Mother" (1854)
Martin R. Delany. *Blake, or, The Huts of America* (1857)
Frank J. Webb. *The Garies and Their Friends* (1857)
Harriet E. Wilson. *Our Nig* (1859)
Harriet Jacobs. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861)
Frances Ellen Watkins Harper. *Iola Leroy* (1892)
Charles Chesnutt. *The Conjure Woman and Other Tales* (1899)
Charles Chesnutt. *The Marrow of Tradition* (1901)
Booker T. Washington. *Up from Slavery* (1901)
Paul Laurence Dunbar. *The Sport of the Gods* (1902)
W. E. B. Du Bois. *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903)
Paul Laurence Dunbar. Selections from *Complete Poems* (1913) as follows:

- "We Wear the Mask"
- "When Malindy Sings"
- "The Haunted Oak"
- "The Colored Soldiers"
- "Sympathy"
- "Little Brown Baby"
- "Dinah Kneading Dough"
- "An Ante-Bellum Sermon"
- "Frederick Douglass"
- "When Dey 'Listed Colored Soldiers"

B. African American Literature 1910-1960
(The Harlem Renaissance and Modernism)

James Weldon Johnson. *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912)
Claude McKay. Selections from *Harlem Shadows* (1922) as follows:
"The Harlem Dancer"
"Harlem Shadows"
"If We Must Die"
"The Lynching"
"Africa"
"America"
Jean Toomer. *Cane* (1923)
Countee Cullen. *Color* (1925)
Alain Locke, ed. *The New Negro* (1925)
Langston Hughes. Selections from *Collected Poems* (1995) as follows:
"The Negro Speaks of Rivers"
"The Weary Blues"
"Dream Variation"
"I, Too"
"Let America Be America Again"
"Mulatto"
"Visitors to the Black Belt"
"Note on Commercial Theatre"
"Trumpet Player"
"Theme for English B"
"Dream Deferred" (also titled "Harlem" in "Lenox Avenue Mural")
"Christ in Alabama"
James Weldon Johnson. Selections from *Complete Poems* (2000) as follows:
"O Black and Unknown Bards"
"The White Witch"
God's Trombones: *Seven Negro Sermons in Verse* (1927)
Nella Larsen. *Quicksand* (1928)
Zora Neale Hurston. "How It Feels to Be Colored Me" (1929)
Nella Larsen. *Passing* (1929)
Claude McKay. *Banjo* (1929)
Wallace Thurman. *The Blacker the Berry* (1929)
Sterling A. Brown. Selections from *Collected Poems* (1989) as follows:
"Ma Rainey"
"Children of the Mississippi"

"Cabaret"
"Mister Samuel and Sam"
"Master and Man"
"Remembering Nat Turner"
"Bitter Fruit of the Tree"

George Schuyler. *Black No More* (1931)
Zora Neale Hurston. *Jonah's Gourd Vine* (1934)
Arna Bontemps. *Black Thunder* (1936)
Zora Neale Hurston. *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937)
Melvin Tolson. "Dark Symphony" (1939)
Richard Wright. *Native Son* (1940)
Richard Wright. *Black Boy* (1945)
Ann Petry. *The Street* (1946)
Dorothy West. *The Living Is Easy* (1948)
Ralph Ellison. *Invisible Man* (1952)
James Baldwin. *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953)
Gwendolyn Brooks. Selections from *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, 2nd ed (2003) as follows:
"The Mother"
"The Children of the Poor"
"We Real Cool"
"The *Chicago Defender* Sends a Man to Little Rock"
Lorraine Hansberry. *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959)
Paule Marshall. *Brown Girl, Brownstones* (1959)

C. African American Literature 1960-Present
(Black Arts Movement to Postmodernism and Beyond)

Amiri Baraka. "Preface to a Twenty-Volume Suicide Note" (1961)
Robert Hayden. "Middle Passage" (1962)
Martin Luther King Jr. "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" (1963)
Amiri Baraka. *Dutchman* (1964)
Malcolm X with Alex Haley. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (1965)
Samuel Delany. *Babel-17* (1966)
Nikki Giovanni. "Nikki-Rosa" (1968)
Ann Moody. *Coming of Age in Mississippi* (1968)
Toni Cade Bambara. "The Lesson" (1972)
Alice Walker. "Everyday Use" (1973)
Albert Murray. *Train Whistle Guitar* (1974)

Ntozake Shange. *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/When the Rainbow is Enuf* (1976)
Toni Morrison. *Song of Solomon* (1977)
Audre Lorde. "Power" (1978)
Octavia E. Butler. *Kindred* (1979)
Alice Walker. *The Color Purple* (1982)
Paule Marshall. *Praisesong for the Widow* (1983)
Michelle Cliff. *Abeng* (1984)
Jamaica Kincaid. *Annie John* (1985)
Toni Morrison. *Beloved* (1987)
August Wilson. *The Piano Lesson* (1987)
Gloria Naylor. *Mama Day* (1988)
Randall Kenan. "The Foundations of the Earth" (1992)
Ernest J. Gaines. *A Lesson Before Dying* (1993)
Edwidge Danticat. *The Farming of Bones* (1998)
ZZ Packer. "Drinking Coffee Elsewhere" (2000)
Percival Everett. *Erasure* (2001)
Jesmyn Ward. *Salvage the Bones* (2011)
Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. *Americanah* (2013)

II. Secondary Scholarship

African Americans in Art: Selections from the Art Institute of Chicago (1998)
William L. Andrews. *To Tell a Free Story: The First Century of Afro-American Autobiography, 1760-1865* (1986)
Houston A. Baker, Jr. *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* (1987)
Bernard W. Bell. *The Afro-American Novel and Its Tradition* (1987)
John Blassingame. *The Slave Community* (1972)
Hazel Carby. *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist* (1987)
Barbara Christian. *Black Women Novelists: The Development of a Tradition, 1892-1976* (1980)
Angela Davis. *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday* (1998)
Henry Louis Gates, Jr. *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism* (1988)
Maryemma Graham, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to the African American Novel* (2004)
Adam Gussow. *Seems Like Murder Here: Southern Violence and the Blues Tradition* (2002)
Joseph E. Holloway. *Africanisms in American Culture*. 2nd ed. (2005)
bell hooks. "Postmodern Blackness" (1990)

Nathan Huggins. *Harlem Renaissance* (1971)
Langston Hughes. "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" (1926)
George Hutchinson. *The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White* (1995)
George Hutchinson, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to the Harlem Renaissance* (2007)
Gene Andrew Jarrett. *Deans and Truants: Race and Realism in African American Literature* (2007)
Deborah E. McDowell. *"The Changing Same": Black Women's Literature, Criticism, and Theory* (1995)
James Smethurst. *The African American Roots of Modernism* (2011)
Robert Stepto. *From Behind the Veil: A Study of Afro-American Narrative* (1979)
Eric J. Sundquist. *To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature* (1993)
Kenneth Warren. *What Was African American Literature?* (2011)
Deborah Gray White. *Ar'n't I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (1985)