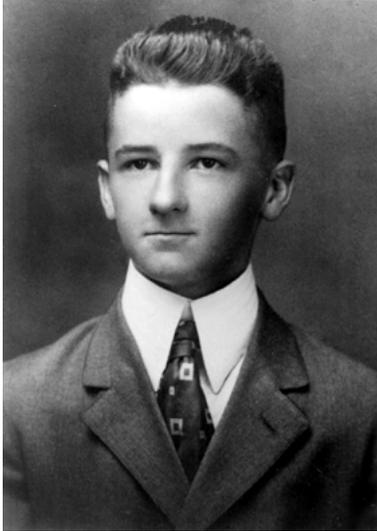


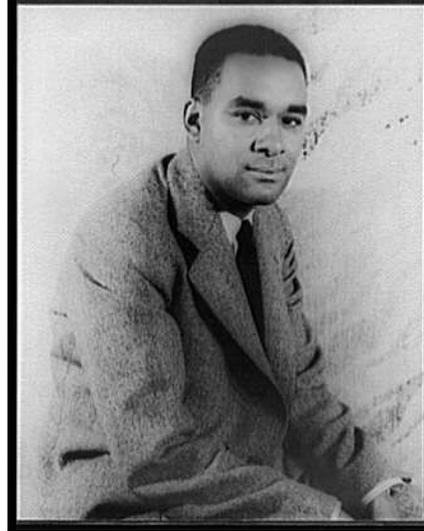
EN 4/6990 (Special Topics)/ Summer Session I/ M-F 10:00-11:50

“Black and White Strangers:” Race and Realism in 20th Century American Literature

Dr. Donald M. Shaffer Jr.



William Faulkner



Richard Wright

Course Description:

This course historicizes an important period in American literature—namely, the emergence of literary realism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. It does so by examining the ways in which “race,” as both a socio-political construct and a signifier of specific material practices, structured American literary texts, even or especially those that were not specifically *about* race. The readings for the course will consist of thematic and historical pairings of black and white authors whose works inform (and are informed by) a socio-historical narrative of race in America. In offering these pairings, I will make the claim that the American literary canon is rooted in a common discourse around racial differences. Thus, the course will expand how we think about concepts such as the literary canon, social heterogeneity, intersectionality and race as both construct and material practice. Students successfully completing this course will therefore better understand the multi-ethnic and multi-racial dynamics of American society and the ways in which this diversity inform both our literature and our collective identity.

Course Outline:

1. Course Introduction (The Narrative of Jim Crow)
2. American Realism (The American Dialectic)
3. William Dean Howells and “the Passing Figure”
4. Charles W. Chesnutt and Racial Constructivism
5. Paul Laurence Dunbar and Racial Masking
6. Literary Slumming (Black and White authors of the Harlem Renaissance)
7. An American [Negro] Author: (The Curious Case of Jean Toomer)
8. “N-word Heaven” or the Problem with Certain Titles (Carl Van Vechten)
9. Two Not So Angry Black Men (The Ellison and Howe debate)
10. Native Sons (Richard Wright and William Faulkner)
11. The White Negro (Baldwin and Mailer)
12. American Post Racialism or the End of African American Literature?