Course Description:
In 1925 Alain Locke proclaimed the advent of the “New Negro,” thus arguing for a revised racial identity. The preceding years had already demonstrated that a cultural and artistic shift had taken place in black America, and the following decade showed an outpouring of innovative literature, art, and music. The renaissance was, as its artists recognized, a new age in African American literary history. In its cultural and artistic center, Harlem, jazz and blues filled night clubs, and in its parlors literary giants met to exchange writing, gossip, and political aspirations. Poets Countee Cullen, Claude McKay, and Sterling Brown challenged old definitions of blackness and black art; novelists, essayists, and playwrights Zora Neale Hurston, Nella Larsen, and Marita Bonner represented revised gender and racial identities; Langston Hughes, Langston Hughes, W.E.B. Du Bois, and James Weldon Johnson penned manifestos declaring the era’s artistic and political visions. At the same time, figures such as Marcus Garvey urged black Americans to leave the US and create free black nations in Africa. Through reading a rich collection of primary texts, critical responses, and attending to its musical and visual cultural, this course offers key insight into one of the most exciting movements in African American literature and culture.

Learning Objectives:

- To become familiar with the texts, contexts, and dominant cultural modes of the Harlem Renaissance
- To understand the cultural, political, and aesthetic shifts that led to the advent of the Harlem Renaissance and its end
- To confidently track the movement’s major figures (political and artistic)
- To position the Harlem Renaissance in the tradition of African American literature and American modernism
- To become familiar with canonical criticism and current critical trends on the Harlem Renaissance, a major period in African American literature and criticism
- To practice the skills of critical reading, research, argumentation, writing, close reading, and discussion

Format:
Class meetings will center on discussion and in-class reading activities. Lectures will be brief. Work outside of class will consume approximately 9 hours per week.

Required Texts:
- Nella Larsen, *Quicksand* (1928)
• Jean Toomer, *Cane* (1923)
• James Weldon Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912; 1928)

• **Recommended**

*additional required readings on Latte. Please bring printed copies to class meetings.*

*If you are having difficulty purchasing course materials, please make an appointment with your Student Financial Services or Academic Services advisor to discuss possible funding options and/or textbook alternatives.

**Assignments: Papers and Blogposts**

- Midterm Paper: 5-7 pages
- Final Paper: 8-10 pages
- Rough Draft/Paper Proposal Peer Exchange
- Graduate Students: 25-page seminar paper or two conference length papers (9-10 pages each, with the option to turn the first conference-length paper into a seminar-length project). Graduate students will also be write short response papers every two weeks on theoretical and critical texts. Due dates for response papers will be noted on syllabus.
- Blogposts: Each student will post three 250-300 word blogposts over the course of the semester. Blogposts are intended as a space to develop working ideas and to raise questions for class discussion. While these are not as formal as papers, they should be written with an analytical scope. For each post, select and type a passage (or passages) from the assigned reading, briefly analyze passage in relation to its thematic and formal elements, and conclude with a discussion question. Each student must also respond to at least six blogposts and read all blogs in preparation for class.

**Attendance and Participation Policy:** Attendance in this course is required. A student with more than three absences will have half a letter grade deducted from their final grade for each subsequent absence (including arriving to class more than 10 minutes late). This class relies on the collective exchange of ideas. Participation is also a vital component of the success of the course. Each student should thus come to class prepared to discuss the day’s reading assignments. If you have concerns about actively participating in discussion, I am happy to work with you on finding other ways to fulfil this course requirement.

**Grading:**

- Attendance, Participation, and Short Assignments: 25%
- Blogposts: 15%
- Midterm Essay: 25%
- Final Essay: 35%

**Disabilities:** Brandeis seeks to welcome and include all students. If you are a student who needs accommodations as outlined in an accommodations letter, please talk with me and present your letter of accommodation as soon as you can. I want to support you. In order to provide test accommodations, I need the letter more than 48 hours in advance. I want to provide your accommodations, but cannot do so retroactively. If you have questions about
documenting a disability or requesting accommodations, please contact Student Accessibility Support (SAS) at 781.736.3470 or access@brandeis.edu.

**Academic Integrity:** You are expected to be honest in all of your academic work. Please consult Brandeis University Rights and Responsibilities for all policies and procedures related to academic integrity. Students may be required to submit work to TurnItIn.com software to verify originality. Allegations of alleged academic dishonesty will be forwarded to the Director of Academic Integrity. Sanctions for academic dishonesty can include failing grades and/or suspension from the university. Citation and research assistance can be found at LTS - Library guides.

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### Part I — Redefining Identity: Enter the New Negro

**Jan 14: Tuesday**
- Introduction

**Jan 16: Thursday**
- David Lettering Lewis, Introduction, *The Portable Harlem Renaissance Reader*
- Alain Locke, “The New Negro” [Lewis]

**Jan 21: Tuesday**

**Jan 23: Thursday**
- Countee Cullen Poems: “For a Lady I Know,” “Incident,” “Harlem Wine,” “Yet Do I Marvel,” “Heritage,” “From a Dark Tower,” “To a Brown Boy,” “Tableau,” “Saturday’s Child,” “Two Poets,” “To France” [Lewis]

**Jan 28: Tuesday**
- Steven C. Tracy, “To the Tune of Those Weary Blues”*
- *Looking for Langston* (film; 1989)

**Jan 30: Thursday**
- Marita Bonner, “Being Young-A Woman-And Colored” *
- Zora Neale Hurston, “How It Feels to be Colored Me” *
- Elise Johnson McDougald, “The Task of Negro Womanhood” [Lewis]

**Feb 4: Tuesday**
- Gwendolyn Bennett - all poems [Lewis]
- Anne Spencer - all poems [Lewis]
- Helene Johnson - all poems [Lewis]
- Kevin Young, “Chorus Two: It Don’t Mean a Thing”*
Feb 6: Thursday
- Mary White Ovington, “On Marcus Garvey” [Lewis]
- W.A. Domingo, “Gift of the Black Tropics” [Lewis]

Feb 11: Tuesday
- Richard Bruce Nugent, “Smoke, Lilies and Jade” [Lewis]
- Wallace Thurman, “Cordelia the Crude” [Lewis]
- Stephen P. Knadler, “Sweetback Style: Wallace Thurman and a Queer Harlem Renaissance”*
- A.B. Christa Schwarz, “Gay Voices of the Harlem Renaissance”*

Part II — Harlem: The Culture Capital

Feb 13: Thursday
- James Weldon Johnson, “Harlem: The Culture Capital” [Lewis]
- Langston Hughes, “From the Big Sea” [Lewis]

Feb 18: Tuesday

Part III — Representing the Folk

Feb 20: Thursday
- James Weldon Johnson, Preface to the Revised Edition of The Book of Negro Poetry

Feb 25: Tuesday
- Jean Toomer, Cane, Part I

Feb 27: Thursday
- Jean Toomer, Cane, Part II

March 3: Tuesday
- Jean Toomer, Cane, Part III
- Afterword by Rudolph Byrd and Henry Louis Gates
- Barbara Foley, “Jean Toomer’s Sparta”*

March 5: Thursday
- Zora Neale Hurston, “Sweat,”* “Characteristics of Negro Expression”*
- Paper 1 Draft/Proposal Peer Review

March 10: Tuesday
- Zora Neale Hurston, “Color Struck” [Lewis]
- Soyica Colbert Diggs, “Reenacting the Harlem Renaissance: Zora Neale Hurston’s Color Struck”*
March 12: Thursday

- Sterling Brown: “Southern Road,” “Odyssey of Big Boy,” “Frankie and Johnny,” “Ma Rainey,” “Long Gone” [Lewis]
- **Paper 1 Due**

**Part IV — Harlem and the World**

March 17: Tuesday


March 19: Thursday

- From James Weldon Johnson, “Along this Way,” “from Black Manhattan,” “The Ragtime”
- Jacqueline Goldsby, “Lynching’s Mass Appeal and the Terrible Real,” in *A Spectacular Secret*

March 24: Tuesday

- Nella Larsen, *Quicksand*, Chapters 1-7

March 26: Thursday

- Nella Larsen, *Quicksand*, Chapters 8-16

March 31: Tuesday

- Nella Larsen, *Quicksand*, Chapters 17-end
- Sianne Ngai, “Irritation” from *Ugly Feelings*

April 2: Thursday

- J.A. Rogers, “Jazz at Home” [Lewis]
- Excerpts from Brent Hayes Edwards, *Epistrophes: Jazz and the Literary Imagination*
- *Harlem Renaissance* (film, 2004)

April 7: Brandeis Thursday

- Aaron Douglas, “Aaron Douglas Chats” [Lewis]
- Albert Barnes, “Negro Art and America” [Lewis]
- Alain Locke, “The Negro Takes His Place in American Art” [Lewis]
- Romare Bearden, “The Negro Artist and Modern Art” [Lewis]

April 9: Passover and Spring Break

April 14: Passover and Spring Break

April 16: Passover and Spring Break

April 21: Tuesday

- W.E.B. Du Bois, “Criteria of Negro Art” [Lewis]
- Langston Hughes, “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain” [Lewis]
- George Schuyler, “The Negro-Art Hokum” [Lewis]
- **Final Paper Draft/Proposal Peer Review**

April 23: Thursday
• Houston Baker, *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance*, Chapter 1*
• Cheryl Wall, “Histories and Herecies: Gendering the Harlem Renaissance”*
• Nathan Huggins, “The New Negro” in *Harlem Renaissance*

April 28: Tuesday
• Course Synthesis

**Final Paper Due: TBD**