The immense critical and popular success of the 2018 film, *Black Panther*, affirms the political and emotional import of the fantastic as a mode for African-American cultural production. From antebellum imaginings to the Afrofuturism of today, many black writers refuse imposed realities in favor of fantasy. But what precisely is the “fantastic” and how does its definition shift when preceded by the adjective “black”? In *The Fantastic in Literature*, Eric S. Rabkin defines the fantastic as “a quality of astonishment when the ground rules of a narrative world are suddenly made to turn about 180°”. However, the conditions of black life in the US already defy the “ground rules” of the nation’s most cherished narrative: that all persons are free to pursue happiness and are guaranteed civil rights. As Richard Iton illuminates in *In Search of the Black Fantastic* (2008), for many black American writers, the fantastic functions as a tool for survival, resistance, escape, and imagining freer futures. This course provides a survey of black fantastic literary and cultural production from the 1850s to the present. We will trace how African-American authors have used fantastic forms not only to tell some version of “truth” that isn’t available in “realistic” narratives, but to critique traditional and violent understandings of race, the human, and African-American literary and cultural history.

**Learning Objectives:**

- Hone close reading, analysis, and academic writing skills
- Gain a basic understanding of the major authors and movements in the black fantastic literary tradition
- Situate an understanding of this tradition within the broader definitions of the fantastic as genre and mode
- Develop an understanding of African-American history and culture in relationship to racialization, law, civil rights, and citizenship

**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:**

- Pauline E. Hopkins, *Of One Blood, Or, The Hidden Self* (1902-3)
- George R. Schuyler, *Black No More* (1931)

*Additional required readings available on course Latte site. 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:**
• Paper 1: 4-5 pages
• Paper 2: 5-7 pages
• Final Exam
• 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.
• Presentation: By the end of the term, students will present on a work or art (e.g., film, tv, music, visual art, graphic novel, performance, etc.) that we have not discussed in class and consider a thematic and formal element that reflects a key issue or theme of the Black Fantastic we’ve discussed throughout the semester. The presentation must have both an oral component and either a visual or a written component. You may work with other students on the same source material, but each student must bring their own interpretation and angel to the conversation and should have an original contribution to the visual/written portion. You will be provided a rubric prior to the assignment due date.

**Grading:**
• Attendance, Participation, Quizzes: 10%
• Presentation: 10%
• Blogposts: 15%
• Paper 1: 20%
• Paper 2: 25%
• Final Exam: 20%

**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.
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.

Course Schedule:

Jan 14: Tuesday
- Introduction

Jan 16: Thursday
- William J. Wilson, “Afric-American Picture Gallery” (1852)
- Charles Chesnutt, “Po’ Sandy” (1899)

Jan 21: Tuesday
- Pauline E. Hopkins, Of One Blood, Or, The Hidden Self (1902-3)

Jan 23: Thursday
- Pauline E. Hopkins, Of One Blood, Or, The Hidden Self (1902-3)

Jan 28: Tuesday
- Pauline E. Hopkins, Of One Blood, Or, The Hidden Self (1902-3)

Jan 30: Thursday
- Pauline E. Hopkins, Of One Blood, Or, The Hidden Self (1902-3)

Feb 4: Tuesday
- W.E.B. Du Bois, “The Comet” (1920)
- Marita Bonner, The Purple Flower (1928)
- Sterling A. Brown, “Slim in Atlanta” (1931)

Feb 6: Thursday
- George R. Schuyler, Black No More (1931)

Feb 11: Tuesday
- George R. Schuyler, Black No More (1931)
Feb 13: Thursday
- George R. Schuyler, *Black No More* (1931)
- Samuel Delany, “Aye, and Gomorah” (1967)

Feb 18: Tuesday

Feb 20: Thursday

Feb 25: Tuesday

Feb 27: Thursday

March 3: Tuesday

March 5: Thursday

March 10: Tuesday

March 12: Thursday

March 17: Tuesday

March 19: Thursday
- **Paper 1 Due**

March 24: Tuesday

March 26: Thursday

March 31: Tuesday

April 2: Thursday

April 7: Brandeis Thursday
  April 9: Passover and Spring Break

  April 14: Passover and Spring Break
  April 16: Passover and Spring Break

April 21: Tuesday

April 23: Thursday
• *Black Panther* (film; 2018)

April 28: Tuesday (Last Day of Class)
• **Paper 2 Due**

**Final Exam: DATE TBD**