

Are You Man Enough?: Black Masculinity in African American Literature

African American Literature since the Harlem Renaissance –English 3326-001

MW 12:40-2:05

Course Description: Using texts from various time periods, we will examine how African-American authors wrestle with the question of black manhood, particularly as it relates to its construction, by whites and African Americans, by individual and communities, and by the society and country at large. Beginning after the Harlem Renaissance, the plight and fury of black men came to represent authors' indictment of racism at large even as the uplift of black men was considered primary to the uplift of the race. Some authors produce works that come to embody traditional ideas and representations of blackness. Others are almost solely responding to racist stereotypes, while some seek to redefine our conceptions that are deeply impacted by feminism, class, and queer theory. We shall look at works authored by both black men and women, straight men and gay men that sometimes reinforce and at other times challenge perceptions of black manhood. As the concern, controversies, and conversations over black men have increased over the last few decades, we will view these works to see how the authors produce literature that reflects the evolving expectations, ideologies, and definitions of black masculinity in the 21st century.

Required Readings: Richard Wright's *Native Son*, The Autobiography of Malcolm X, Toni Morrison –*The Song of Solomon*, August Wilson –*Seven Guitars*, Ernest Gaines –*A Lesson Before Dying*, Kiese Laymon-*Heavy*