

Philadelphia in Literature and Film

ENGL 0040-910

Summer Session I 2024

Instructor: Thomas Collins (he/him)

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Classroom: Online

Class Meeting Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 5:15pm – 7:15pm

Online Office Hours: Wednesdays, 1:30pm – 2:30pm. If this time doesn't work for you, please email me to set up a Zoom meeting.

Course Description:

What defines the culture of Philadelphia? The nation's first capital, Philadelphia should be seen as a founding center not only of American democracy but also of American literature. Home to major early American writers, including Benjamin Franklin, Philadelphia was also home to many twentieth-century writers and artists who balanced popular appeal and political awareness. In this course, we will read literary texts and watch films as a way to consider change and continuity in Philadelphia's culture. How do the energies and ideals of Revolutionary-era politics influence the city's later writers and artists? Has the popularity of Philadelphia's culture had more to do with democratic participation or the mass appeal of cheesesteaks and the Rocky movie franchise? And to what extent, and for whom, has the City of Brotherly Love lived up to its name? We will read texts by and about Black Philadelphians and other people of color to explore how political ideals associated with the nation's founding were contested and expanded in the city throughout the twentieth century.

Required Texts

Please get a copy of the following texts as soon as possible, and let me know if you have any trouble locating any of them.

– *The Price of a Child* by Lorene Cary (Vintage Books, ISBN: 0679744673.)

– *Philadelphia Fire* by John Edgar Wideman (Scribner, ISBN: 1982148845)

– *Daphne's Dive* by Quiara Alegría Hudes (Theatre Communications Group Books, ISBN:1559365315)

Assignments

Discussion Board posts – due at noon before each class session

Informal writing in response to the session's assigned reading. You should highlight specific passages from the reading that you would like to discuss and pose questions we might address in class. These posts will be graded according to a ✓, ✓+, ✓- system. You do not need to produce polished writing for the discussion board – you will be graded based on your engagement with the text. Before each class session you should write 500 words, some of which can come in response to your classmates' posts.

Quizzes – due at 5pm before each class session, beginning on May 30th

Short quizzes in response to the assigned reading. Each quiz will consist of a handful of multiple-choice questions and one short-response question.

Close Reading Paper (2-3 pages) – due June 11th

In this paper, you will analyze in detail a short passage from one of the literary texts we have read so far in class.

Literary Map Assignment – due June 20th

As a class, we will produce a digital map of literary Philadelphia. Each person will plot one location on our map, and each location will be accompanied by a short description (one page) of when it is mentioned and its significance in one of our assigned texts.

Final Paper Proposal (1-2 pages) – due June 27th

In the proposal, you will outline your plan for your final paper. You could identify passages you will analyze and pose questions you will address. You should include material on which you would like feedback, as your proposal will be read by me and one of your classmates.

Proposal Peer Review – due July 2nd at 5pm

You will briefly respond to one of your classmates' proposals.

Final Paper (6-8 pages) – due July 5th at noon*

In the final paper, you will track how a certain issue or theme appears in three literary texts we've read in the course. The focus of these papers should be close reading – essentially, analyzing specific passages in detail. You may conduct outside research if you would like, but it is not a requirement for this assignment.

*July 5th at noon is a hard deadline for this assignment, as I will need to submit final course grades soon after this.

Grading Breakdown

- Discussion Board posts: 20%
- Quizzes: 20%
- Close Reading Paper (2-3 pages): 10%
- Literary Map Assignment: 10%
- Final Paper Proposal (1-2 pages): 5%
- Proposal Peer Review: 5%
- Final Paper (6-8 pages): 30%

Attendance

Attendance is essential for your success in this class. You are allowed two absences, although you should let me know in advance if you will not be able to attend class. Any absences after a second absence would lower your grade by one third of a letter grade (e.g., a student who would otherwise receive an A would receive an A- after a third absence and a B+ after a fourth absence, etc.).

If you have an extenuating circumstance such as an extended illness, death in the family, or other issue that is preventing you from attending class on a regular basis, please let me know as soon as possible so I can direct you to the appropriate campus resources for help and possible accommodations.

Camera Policy

You should plan to keep your camera on as much as possible during our class sessions, as this is a discussion-based course, and we will frequently engage each other in conversation. I

understand that you may occasionally need to turn your camera off, but you should let me know in advance if you will need to turn your camera off for an extended period of time (more than fifteen minutes or so). There will also be opportunities to contribute to in-class discussion via chat.

Late Work

Please let me know in advance about any work you will not be able to turn in on time. Assignments will be marked down 5% for each day that they are late. No late work will be accepted after July 5th.

Academic Integrity

Your written work must be your own. Using another person's language or ideas (including published written work and the work of peers) without attribution is plagiarism. If you commit plagiarism, you may fail the course and face disciplinary action from the University.

* All writing you submit on Canvas will be scanned by plagiarism detection software.

If you are unsure what constitutes plagiarism, please ask me, or consult the Code of Academic Integrity:

<https://catalog.upenn.edu/pennbook/code-of-academic-integrity/>

You may not use generative AI (such as tools like Chat-GPT) for your work in this class. Using such tools will be considered plagiarism and a violation of Penn's Code of Academic Integrity, and suspected use will be reported to the Center for Community Standards and Accountability. Please contact me if you have questions about this policy.

Canvas

Course announcements and assignment instructions will be posted on Canvas. Please make sure to set up immediate notification for all course announcements.

Accessibility

Your success in this class is important to me. If there are aspects of this course that prevent you from learning, please let me know as soon as possible, and we will work to accommodate your needs. If necessary, I encourage you to speak with Penn's Disability Services staff at the Weingarten Center to determine how the university can best support your learning.

<https://weingartencenter.universitylife.upenn.edu/disability-services/>

Syllabus Note

This syllabus is a living document that is open to revision, especially based on your interests and suggestions.

Reading and Assignment Schedule

May 28

Readings

- "Fever" and "Ascent by Balloon from the Yard of Walnut Street Jail" – John Edgar Wideman
- selections from *First City: Philadelphia and the Forging of Historical Memory* – Gary B. Nash
- selections from *Philadelphia Stories: America's Literature of Race and Freedom* – Samuel Otter

Assignments

- Discussion Board Post #1 due by noon

May 30

Readings

- The Declaration of Independence
- selections from *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* and "An Address on Slavery" – Benjamin Franklin
- "The Little Revenge from the Periphery" – Jamaica Kincaid
- selections from *Runaway America: Benjamin Franklin, Slavery, and the American Revolution* – David Waldstreicher

Assignments

- Discussion Board Post #2 due by noon
- Quiz #1 due by 5pm

June 4

Readings

- *The Price of a Child* – Lorene Cary
- selections from *Antislavery and Abolition in Philadelphia: Emancipation and the Long Struggle for Racial Justice in the City of Brotherly Love* – ed. by Richard Newman and James Mueller

– selections from *A Brighter Coming Day: A Frances Ellen Watkins Harper Reader* – ed. by Frances Smith Foster

Assignments

- Discussion Board Post #3 due by noon
- Quiz #2 due by 5pm

June 6

Readings

- *The Price of a Child* – Lorene Cary (continued)
- selections from *How the Irish Became White* – Noel Ignatiev
- “Speech in Pennsylvania Hall” – Angelina Grimké

Assignments

- Discussion Board Post #4 due by noon
- Quiz #3 due by 5pm

June 11

Readings

- *The Price of a Child* – Lorene Cary (continued)
- selections from *The Philadelphia Negro* – W.E.B. Du Bois

Assignments

- Discussion Board Post #5 due by noon
- Quiz #4 due by 5pm
- Close Reading Paper due by 11:59pm

June 13

Readings

- selections from *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval* and “Venus in Two Acts” – Saidiya Hartman
- “Emmy” – Jessie Redmon Fauset

Assignments

- Discussion Board Post #6 due by noon

- Quiz #5 due by 5pm

June 18

Readings

- *Rocky* – dir. by John G. Avildsen
- selections from *Blue-Collar Conservatism: Frank Rizzo's Philadelphia and Populist Politics* – Timothy J. Lombardo
- selections from *Contested Image: Defining Philadelphia for the Twenty-First Century* – Laura Holzmann

Assignments

- Discussion Board Post #7 due by noon
- Quiz #6 due by 5pm

June 20

Readings

- *Philadelphia Fire* – John Edgar Wideman
- “Elegy (for MOVE and Philadelphia)” – Sonia Sanchez
- *Let the Fire Burn* – dir. by Jason Osder

Assignments

- Discussion Board Post #8 due by noon
- Quiz #7 due by 5pm
- Literary Map Assignment due by 11:59pm

June 25

Readings

- *Philadelphia Fire* – John Edgar Wideman (continued)
- selections from *In the Shadow of the Ivory Tower: How Universities Are Plundering Our Cities* and “From The Black Bottom to University City: What Happens When Your Community Becomes a Campus?” (2023 lecture at the University of Pennsylvania. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NupqIgm5wQs>) – Davarian L. Baldwin
- “A Requiem for Delisha and Tree Africa” – Krystal Strong

- selections from *Spectral Evidence* – Gregory Pardlo

Assignments

- Discussion Board Post #9 due by noon
- Quiz #8 due by 5pm

June 27

Readings

- *The Watermelon Woman* – dir. by Cheryl Dunye

- selections from *lo terciario / the tertiary* – Roque Raquel Salas Rivera

- selections from *City of Sisterly and Brotherly Loves: Lesbian and Gay Philadelphia, 1945 - 1972* – Marc Stein

Assignments

- Discussion Board Post #10 due by noon
- Quiz #9 due by 5pm
- Final Paper Proposal due by 11:59pm

July 2

Readings

- *Daphne's Dive* – Quiara Alegría Hudes

- “The World Doesn’t Deserve Philadelphia” – Nikil Saval

- *Look Forward and Carry on the Past: Stories from Philadelphia’s Chinatown* (URL: <https://www.folkstreams.net/films/look-forward-and-carry-on-the-past>) – dir. by Debbie Wei, Barry Dornfeld, and Debora Kodish

Assignments

- Discussion Board Post #11 due by noon
- Quiz #10 due by 5pm
- Proposal Peer Review due by 5pm

July 5

- Final Paper due by **noon**