

Adapting a Literature module: group activity

Collection: Course design

Resource: Adapting a module

Approximate duration

One hour to 90 minutes

Learning outcomes

Upon completion of this activity lecturers will have

1. Acquired nuanced insight into the specific teaching skills demanded at once by the subject and by their student constituency.
2. Considered and chosen an extended repertoire of tools and media for engaging students and thereby have more options to choose from in their teaching.
3. Acquired a pragmatic, usable, understanding of the formative relations between assessment and curriculum
4. Developed their critical understanding of curricula.
5. Potentially acquired the confidence to propose and argue to colleagues for a new module or form of assessment, or of teaching.

Introduction

As this activity involves work on all the different aspects of course design, lecturers may find it useful to have already worked through activities in other areas of 'The Pool', in particular, Assessment, Small Group Teaching and Large Group Teaching.

The activity

1. Divide the class into three groups.
2. Distribute copies to each group of the description for the module 'Introduction to African American Literature' below. (there is a copy of this in the folder where you found this resource in HumBox)

Introduction to African American Literature - Module Description

This module will explore multiple forms of black literary production from the late 18th Century through to the late 20th Century. Course readings will emphasise some of the ways African American literature is constructed by and through concepts of class, gender, sexuality and migration. We will consider how African American literature contributes to processes of nation building and the development of national identity. What are some of the key elements of 'the' African American literary tradition? How is African American literature in conversation with other forms of material production such as visual art, music, and film? How have particular historical eras helped to shape black literary production in the U.S.? Which tools are needed in order to effectively and thoroughly interpret African American literature? These are some of the questions that will guide lecture and seminar sessions. Readings will include poetry, essays, autobiography, novels and the spoken word. One of the defining features of African American literature is its dual role of imaginative act and historical documentation for a group that has often been denied a public voice. This module aims to provide an introduction to the study of literature and culture as well as an introduction to African American literary forms and creative expression.

Learning Outcomes

On completion of the module students will be expected to have

1. Demonstrated and applied a basic knowledge of African American Literary forms and theories such as the slave narrative, the idea of double consciousness and the uses of vernacular language.
2. Distinguished between major periods of African American literary production, such as Reconstruction, the Harlem Renaissance and the Black Arts Movement and also understood these periods as part of wider historical contexts.
3. Demonstrated basic skills of literary analysis such as close



reading, understanding the stylistic structure of language and discerning authorial point-of-view.

4. Discussed the literary features of assigned readings, eschewing the reading of texts as transparent transcriptions of reality, and learned how to interpret them as mediated representations.

Format

Each week, a one-hour lecture followed by a one-hour seminar.

Assessment

- Class participation (10%)
- 1,500 word essay (40%)
- Final exam (50%)

Required texts

- Henry Louis Gates, jr. and Nellie McKay (eds.), *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*
- Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*
- Toni Morrison, *Song of Solomon*

Lecture and seminar schedule

11. Issues in the study of African American literature and culture
12. Poetic structures: Phillis Wheatley and Langston Hughes
13. The slave narrative: writing a people into a nation
14. Reconstruction and the project of uplift
15. The Harlem Renaissance and the uptown aesthetic
16. The vernacular tradition: writing the oral text
17. The great migration and the era of reluctant integration
18. Civil Rights and Black Power
19. The people who could fly: postmodernist tendencies
20. Revision lecture

3. Distribute a sheet containing one of the teaching contexts below to each group.
Each group should be given a different context to work with. (A Word Doc containing these contexts is available in the folder where you found this resource)



3 | This resource is part of a set of professional development resources for Higher Education English (including English Literature, English Language & Creative Writing) called 'The Pool'. The resources were developed by the English Subject Centre in 2011 as part of a JISC/HEA Open Educational Resources (OER) Project.

This work by English Subject Centre is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 UK: England & Wales License.

Teaching Context A

'Introduction to African American Literature' is to be taught as a compulsory introductory module in the first year of an English degree at a post-1992 university. There are a large number of students in the first year, many of them local, from a wide range of social and ethnic groups, and of very mixed ability. Other modules in the first year cover literary theory, play-writing and study skills. Staffing problems mean that this module will have to be taught exclusively in very large groups.

Teaching Context B

'Introduction to African American Literature' is to be taught as a third-year optional module on the English degree in a Russell Group university with a strong research reputation. Previous years have covered a wide range of literature from all periods, though not, up to now, African American literature. The module will be in competition with modules on a wide range of other topics, and you expect to recruit about 10 students.

Teaching Context C

'Introduction to African American Literature' is to be taught as a second-year compulsory module at a university in a large city with a strong cultural life. Most students following English modules are doing combined degrees involving Film Studies and/or Creative Writing. Slave narratives have already been studied over the course of a single week on a first-year 'Introduction to Narrative' course. There will be about 20 students in the module.

4. Ask each group to read the module description and context.
5. Ask each group to discuss among themselves possible ways in which the module might be altered to fit their given context.
6. In a plenary discussion, ask each group first to read out the description of the context they have worked with, and then to summarise the ways in which they feel the module could be altered.



7. If there is sufficient time, conclude the session with a more general discussion of different types of modules.

Relationship to the Professional Standards Framework

- **Core Knowledge 2:** Appropriate methods for teaching and learning in the subject area and at the level of the academic programme
- **Professional Values 3:** Commitment to the development of learning communities
- **Professional Values 4:** Commitment to encouraging participation in higher education, acknowledging diversity and promoting equality of opportunity

More information about the Professional Standards Framework can be obtained from the summary factsheet in the *Subject & Pedagogy* collection in HumBox.

<http://humbox.ac.uk/2731/>

Resources in the Course design Collection

- Course design: introduction to the collection
- Designing an English degree programme: resource overview
 - Designing in employability: individual activity
 - Designing in employability: group activity
 - Managing transition from A Level: individual activity
 - A delicate balance: group activity
 - A delicate balance: individual activity
- Designing an innovative English Literature module: resource overview
 - Location, location, location: individual activity
 - Location, location, location: group activity
 - Questions, questions
 - Integrating research into a module: individual activity
 - Integrating research into a module: group activity
- Filling the gaps: resource overview
 - Filling the gaps between sessions: individual activity
 - Filling the gaps between sessions: group activity



- Adapting a module: resource overview
 - Adapting a Literature module: individual activity
 - **Adapting a Literature module: group activity (*you are here)**
 - Pacing it out: individual activity
 - Curriculum framing
- Mapping and applying desirable student attributes: resource overview
 - Imaginary modules: individual activity
 - Imaginary modules: group activity
- Designing a creative-critical module: resource overview
 - Thinking about modules: individual activity
 - Thinking about modules: group activity

