LIT 2930: African-American Literature
The Midterm Paper Assignment

REQUIREMENTS:

- Minimum 3 pages (plus Works Cited)
- MLA format and documentation
- Based on primary source(s) read during 1st 4-5 weeks of the course
- Utilizes at least 2 reputable secondary sources
- Websites may be used for definitions and reference information, but these will not count toward the 2 secondary sources and still must be reputable
- Must bring a full (or very nearly so) draft one week in advance of the due date for in-class workshop
  - Missing this workshop or failing to bring a typed, documented and formatted draft will deduct points from your overall grade for this assignment

ASSESSMENT:

The Rubric for the Midterm Paper is available on Jacklyn Pierce’s Faculty Website. In the LIT 2930 folder, it is entitled “Research Paper Rubric.”

TOPIC IDEAS:

Anything we read &/or discussed in the first few weeks of the course can make a good potential topic for this paper. However, here are some ideas to get your creative/academic juices flowing.

- Compare and contrast the themes and content of the Work Songs and Spirituals of the Slavery Era. How did these serve to uplift slaves? How did they serve as protest? Was this protest subtle or overt?
- Write an analytical discussion of one of the slave narratives from The Classic Slave Narratives. How does the author convey the humanity of African-Americans and the atrocities of slavery? Discuss the implicit argument that slavery should be abolished. Does the author rely on political/historical appeals? On religious/ethical/moral appeals?
- Discuss the influence of either Booker T. Washington or W.E.B. DuBois on civil rights from the Reconstruction forward.
- Discuss racial identity and the questions raised by James Weldon Johnson’s The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man. How have attitudes toward people of mixed racial heritage evolved since Johnson’s time?
- Compare and contrast the theme of Slavery vs. Freedom (or any theme you want) in several poetry selections from African-American Poetry: An Anthology, 1733-1927.
- Analyze the long-standing debate over vernacular vs. “educated” or standard language in poetic expression by African-American writers. Choose at least one poet who writes in the vernacular and one who uses Standard English as examples.