SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF AFRO-AMERICAN LITERATURE

DETERMINED to survey the complex variety of works that constitute American literature and to help students understand the complex fate of being American readers, one teacher decides to incorporate Afro-American literature into an American literature course. Her more ambitious colleague, with the blessings of the department chair, plans to offer an Afro-American literature course. Possessed of good intentions but no special training in ethnic literatures, both teachers must ask, “Where do I begin?”

One answer would take into account the circumstances: the audience for whom the course is to be designed, course objectives, the library holdings of Afro-American materials, and any funds that may be available for new resources. Such an answer may not be a proper one, for the question merits a pointed, informative response.

This bibliography is a brief response, intended for teachers and department chairpersons who want to know more about Afro-American literature and to use it in their curricula. They should first familiarize themselves with the literature, then discover something of the scholarship and criticism devoted to it, and lastly survey the special issues pertinent to teaching Afro-American literature. They should begin by reading anthologies, especially The Negro Caravan, a catholic representation of the literature up to 1940, and Black Writers of America, a balanced selection of work since 1945. Abraham Chapman’s companion volumes, Black Voices and New Black Voices, provide a good overview of the criticism. For those who would gladly learn and gladly teach, Theory and Practice in the Teaching of Literature (Turner and Stanford) and Afro-American Literature: The Reconstruction of Instruction (Fisher and Stepoto) are required reading. Such an introduction can lead to a profitable exploration of the other materials listed and to a new perspective on American literature.

I. Bibliographies


Fowler, Carolyn. Black Arts and Black Aesthetics. Atlanta: First World Foundation, 1981. An excellent bibliography of material on culture theory, dance, drama, music, negritude, plastic arts, poetry, and fiction, this work includes a fine introductory essay on black literary tradition and aesthetics.


Hatch, James V., and Omarii Abdullah. Black Playwrights, 1823-1977: An Annotated Bibliography of Plays. New York: Bowker, 1977. Identifies and describes more than 2,700 plays written by black Americans between 1823 and 1977; includes a bibliography of anthologies containing scripts, a list of books and sources on black drama and theater, a bibliography of dissertations, and a list of taped interviews with black theater figures.


The author is Associate Professor of English at Tougaloo College.
American Experience," annotated bibliographies for periodicals, history, biography and autobiography, literary history and criticism, folklore, and anthologies.

Peavy, Charles D. Afro-American Literature and Culture since World War II: A Guide to Information Sources. Detroit: Gale, 1981. Part I is a good guide to sources on such subjects as the black aesthetic, drama, folklore, religion, music, poetry, prison writing, and politics; part 2 contains brief bibliographies for 56 writers. Most of the entries are annotated.


Williams, Ora. American Black Women in the Arts and Social Sciences: A Bibliographical Survey. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, 1978. Although the book has few annotations, the emphasis given to literary works by women is valuable.

II. Anthologies

The anthologies listed here are the more useful ones for survey courses. In planning courses, however, teachers should give some attention to the two anthologies that mark watersheds in Afro-American literary history: Alain Locke, The New Negro (New York: Boni, 1925); and LeRoi Jones and Larry Neal, eds., Black Fire (New York: Morrow, 1968).


Brown, Sterling A., Arthur P. Davis, and Ulysses Lee, eds. The Negro Caravan. New York: Arno, 1969 (originally pub. Dryden, 1941). Now regarded as a classic of its kind, this anthology is still valuable as a text for specialized courses or as corollary reading for a survey course.


—. New Black Voices. New York: New American Library, 1972. Unlike the usual anthologies, these companion volumes include generous selections of literary criticism.


Criticism


Redmond, Eugene B. *Drumvoices: The Mission of Afro-American Poetry.* Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor-Doubleday, 1976. To date, the most ambitious attempt to provide a critical introduction to the historical development of black poetry.


IV. Periodicals

*Black American Literature Forum.* PH 237, Indiana State Univ., Terre Haute 47809. Devoted primarily to scholarly criticism and pedagogical articles, the magazine also publishes valuable interviews and bibliographies.

*Callaloo: A Black South Journal of Arts and Letters.* Dept. of English, Univ. of Kentucky, Lexington 40506. Includes critical articles and reviews, interviews with writers, and special bibliographies.

*College Language Association Journal.* Morehouse Coll., Atlanta, GA 30314. Includes scholarly essays on Afro-American literature.


*Journal of Black Studies.* Sage Publications, 275 South Beverly Drive, Beverly Hills, CA 90212. Interdisciplinary; includes occasional articles on Afro-American literature.


*MELUS (Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States).* Dept. of English, Univ. of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, OH 45221. Articles often illuminate the interrelations of Afro-American literature with other ethnic literatures.

*Obsidian: Black Literature in Review.* Dept. of English, Wayne State Univ., Detroit, MI 48202. Includes critical articles and bibliographies.

*Phylon.* Atlanta Univ., Atlanta, GA 30314. Interdisciplinary; includes articles on Afro-American literature.

*SAGALA: A Journal of Art and Ideas.* P.O. Box 723, Howard Univ., Washington, DC 20059. Interdisciplinary; includes critical articles on Afro-American literature.