

## Center for Lifetime Study

**Semester:** Fall 2021  
**Course:** African American Literature  
**Instructor:** Jacqueline Goffe-McNish  
**Time:** Wednesdays 2:45 to 4:00  
**Room:** Zoom  
**Phone #:** 431-8445  
**Email:** mcnish@sunydutchess.edu

**Book:** Their Eyes Were Watching God by Zora Neale Hurston

- Guidelines**
1. Please read the sections assigned before the class.
  2. Please focus your discussions on the text being discussed.



## **Schedule**

- September 15** Introduction of Class Members  
Introduction to African-American Literature  
Analysis of the Title  
The text as a Circle  
Overview of Text  
Read Chapter 1
- September 22** Cultural Analysis and Setting Analysis  
Feminist and Womanist Analysis  
Sisyphean Experience and Search for El Dorado  
Read Chapter 2 and 3
- September 29** Character Analysis  
African Diaspora  
Reverse Middle Passage  
Epiphany  
Read Chapters 4,5,6
- October 6** The Clash between the Circle and the Arrow  
Intersectionality  
Post Colonialism  
The Language of the People  
Read Chapters 7, 8, 9
- October 13** The African Diaspora, Middle passage Experience  
Masking, Veiling, and Double Consciousness  
Music as the voice of the people  
Symbolic Geography  
Read Chapters 10, 11, 12
- October 20** Anancism and Signifying  
The Role of Africa  
Historical Analysis  
Role of Religion  
Read Chapters 13, 14, 15



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### **Essay Topics**

1. Discuss the effectiveness of Hurston's presentation of Janae as the hero of this novel.
2. Discuss the use of folk lore in the novel Their Eyes Were Watching God.
3. Compare and contrast two major settings in this novel and discuss their role in the development of the character of Janae.
4. Janae tells Pheobe that she was happiest in the muck with Tea Cake. Discuss how this adventure in the 'wild' changes Janae.
5. Janae returns to the village clad in overalls at the end/beginning of this novel. In what way is a symbol of the changes that has occurred in her life?
6. As Janae journeys, she goes from the symbolic city to the wild to the rural. Describe her journey bearing these places in mind.
7. Describe the evidences in the text that point to Hurston study of anthropology.
8. Critics have suggested that Janae represents the typical picture of a 'tragic mulatto' as presented in African American Literature. Discuss.

### **Issues in the Text:**

1. Magical Realism
2. Presentation of Africa
3. Symbolic Geography
4. Presentation of Culture
5. Masking, Veiling, and Double Consciousness
6. Sisyphean Experience
7. Search for El Dorado

**8. Epiphany**

**9. Connection between Nature and Human Condition**

**10. Role of Women**

**11. Role of the Supernatural**

**12. Biblical Allusion**

**13. Presentation of Journeys**

**14. Submersion**

**15. Post-Colonization**

**16. Proverbs and Stories as Language**

**17. Role of Rum**

**18. Creolization**

**19. Sisyphean Experience**

**20. African Diaspora**

**21. Reverse Middle Passage**

**22. The Role of the Unconscious**

**23. Music as Voice**