

**ENGL 3347 - 002**

**“The Life and Times of S. Carter”**

**Spring 2017**

**Class Meetings:** MWF, 206 Preston Hall (PH), 1:00 – 1:50 PM

Instructor: Dr. Kenton Rambsy **Office Number:** 413 Carlisle

Email: [kenton.rambsy@uta.edu](mailto:kenton.rambsy@uta.edu)

**Office Hours:**

Mon & Wed 10:00 - 10:50 AM/12:00 – 12:50 PM

And, by appointment

**Course Description:** “The Life and Times of S. Carter” places Jay Z’s*The Black Album* (2003) in a broad African American literary continuum of autobiographical and semi-autobiographical works. In this course, we will use text-mining software to quantify linguistic and thematic trends between Jay Z’s albums and classic literary texts by writers such as Frederick Douglass, Richard Wright, Malcolm X, and Ralph Ellison. We will compile quantitative and qualitative datasets on Jay Z in order to produce thematic data visualizations, literary timelines, and a list of key terms, pinpointing intellectual and cultural components of rap music.

**The main objectives will involve developing:**

* Explain the meanings of American literary texts.
* Define and apply critical and literary terms.
* Explain and analyze how context shapes the composition, reception and interpretation of texts.

**Required Readings:**

* [*The Black Album*](https://genius.com/albums/Jay-z/The-black-album) on RapGenius
* [*The Autobiography of an Ex- Colored Man*](http://etc.usf.edu/lit2go/64/the-autobiography-of-an-ex-colored-man/) (1912) by James Weldon Johnson
* [*Native Son*](http://www.bassettusd.org/cms/lib8/CA01900987/Centricity/Domain/665/Native%20Son%20Novel.pdf) (1940) by Richard Wright
* [*Invisible Man*](http://bpi.enschool.org/ourpages/auto/2010/5/11/36901472/Ralph%20Ellison%20-%20Invisible%20Man%20v3_0.pdf) (1952) by Ralph Ellison
* [*The Autobiography of Malcolm X*](http://al-rasid.com/shared_uploads/The.Autobiography.of.MalcolmX.pdf) (1965) by Malcolm X (Alex Haley)
* [*Dreams from my Father*](http://watanabeyukari.weblogs.jp/yousho/files/16262641-Dreams-From-My-Father-by-Barack-Obama-Excerpt.pdf) (1995) by Barack Obama

**Voyant Tool Links**

* [All Jay Z Solo Albums](http://voyant-tools.org/?corpus=419df8424a59f63f846c763e31b8ce07)
* [The Black Album](http://voyant-tools.org/?corpus=17f047ed42119d99a02cd144b552beb4)
* [Jay Z Excel Master Workbook](https://www.dropbox.com/s/qucik4c0at2769u/JayZMasterWorkbook.xlsx?dl=0)
* [All texts](http://voyant-tools.org/?corpus=cead67b4c12a4aeb8297430457ec1a3d) [The Autobiography of an Ex- Colored Man](http://voyant-tools.org/?corpus=576a669d4b72409ca240ae11941719df)
* [Native Son](http://voyant-tools.org/?corpus=18d8a1bbfc16086ce746c07ad84c485c)
* [Invisible Man](http://voyant-tools.org/?corpus=2bcbc6213a7abd1abdd04cdd4afc59c0)
* [The Autobiography of Malcolm X](http://voyant-tools.org/?corpus=370e8c15d383b57e622503a344c59d9f)
* [Dreams from my Father](http://voyant-tools.org/?corpus=6b022b5bb620b3bf9962dbb66ad882f3)

**Grading Criteria**

**25% — Daily Grade**

**25% — Writing Assignment (Due Dates: Feb. 10, Feb. 24, Mar. 10, Apr. 7)**

**20% — Literary Analysis Project (Due Dates: Mar. 20 – 31)**

**20% — Quizzes**

**10% — Final (Due Date: May 3)**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Total 100%**

**Grade Descriptions**

**\* 25% — Daily Grade**

* Because this is a discussion course that covers topics in African American literary history and digital humanities, class attendance is mandatory to fully master concepts.

**\* 25% — Writing Assignments *(Due* Feb. 10, Feb. 24, Mar. 10, Apr. 7***)*

* For each assignment, you will compose one paragraph that responds to a specific prompt:
  + Feb. 10- Write a biographical sketch of Jay Z giving readers insight into his life. This brief biographical sketch should frame Jay Z as a literary figure
  + Feb. 24- Perform a close read of a single song from Jay Z’s *The Black Album* by highlighting poetic devices he incorporates and providing an overview of his rap style
  + Mar. 10- Create a data visualization using the metadata we have been working with regarding Jay Z’s lyrics to highlight individual or multiple features of his music. The visualization should have a three-sentence description to accompany it. The visualization, however, should be able to communicate a single idea to the reader.
  + Apr. 7- Write a one paragraph album review of Jay Z’s *The Black Album* as if you’re providing a summary of an autobiography.

**\*20% — Quizzes**

* Every week, there will be at least two quizzes given at the beginning of each class. The 10 – 20 question quizzes will cover basic information from the day’s reading such as author biographical information and story content. If you are absent or tardy, you will not be able to make up the quiz.

**\*15% — Literary Analysis Project (Due Dates: Mar. 20 – 31)**

* For this project, each group will perform a close read of a designated text and compare it to *The Black Album:*

1. Group Overview paragraph of text
2. Group paragraph highlighting similarities and differences between designated text and Jay Z’s *The Black Album*.
3. Individual group member paragraph comparing a specific scene from designated text to a verse from Jay Z’s song.
4. Class presentation where each group provides an overview of their assigned text, connect any Jay Z song to the text, connect Black Album to text

**\*10% — Final (Due Date: May 3)**

* For the final project, you will complete an individual portion of a group project. See the next page for descriptions for each group.

**Final Projects – Group Breakdowns**

**#1 Authors-**

This group will be responsible for creating the text for the final project.

* Introduction – no more than 250 words (Overview of class project)
* Description of *The Black Album*—one – two sentence description of each individual song Biography of Jay Z – no more than 500 words (Brief Biography of Jay Z’s life in the context of the class discussion)
* Close read of 5 Jay Z Songs – Perform a close read of 5 songs from Jay Z’s *The Black Album* by highlighting poetic devices he incorporates and providing an overview of his rap style
* Connect Jay Z to texts in class – Choose 3 texts we read in class and describe the similarities and differences between the text and Jay Z’s The Black Album (500 words for each entry)

**#2 Digital Timeline –**

This group will be responsible for creating a timeline that has 200 points related to Jay Z’s life, music, and other information. This will serve as a supplement to studying the rapper and his contributions to artistic culture. Every date on the timeline will be annotated and provide a link to an additional resource about the date.

**#3 Data Interpretation & Visualization –**

This group will be responsible for constructing 10 datasets related to Jay Z

* 2 visualizations that analyze ALL of Jay Z’s music/albums
* 2 visualization focusing on Jay Z’s samples
* 2 visualizations that focus on Jay Z’s producers
* 2 visualizations that focus on the Black Album
* 2 visualizations that highlight the significance of 2 songs on *The Black Album*

**#4 Video Production-**

The video production team will create a series of videos that provide an overview of the class. This group will be responsible for writing the overall script, conducting interviews with class members, and recording the necessary footage.

* Overview of the class – 3 minute video describing what are the day-to-day activities in #theJayZclass
* Jay Z as a literary artist – 3 minute video discussing Jay Z as a literary figure
* *The Black Album* as an autobiography – 3 minute video describing autobiographical aspects of the album
* Jay Z’s relation to other writers – 3 minute video connecting Jay Z to other literary figures
* Top Songs – 3 minute video that provide a close read of at least 4 of Jay Z’s songs

**#5 Website Production –**

This group will construct and upload all content for the final project using the Wix website platform. This group will be responsible for the layout such as gathering the necessary images as well as uploading texts & data visualizations to the site. Group members will be responsible for offering technological tips for the overall project.

**Reading Schedule**

**Week 1: Introduction to #theJayZclass**

W: Jan – 18 (First Day of Classes)

F: Jan- 20- [Jay Z Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jay_Z)

**Week 2: Introduction to Digital Humanities**

M: Jan. 23 - Text- Mining Software

[Using Voyant Tools for Basic Text Analysis](https://publish.illinois.edu/commonsknowledge/2014/10/10/using-voyant-tools-for-basic-text-analysis/)

[Voyant Tools Help – Tools](http://voyant-tools.org/docs/#!/guide/tools)

W: Jan. 25 – Data Management-

[How to Use Excel: 14 Simple Excel Shortcuts, Tips & Tricks](https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/how-to-use-excel-tips#sm.00009gyv7pa1veb5qpc2ia22dycjd)

F: Jan. 27- TBA

**Week 3: Poetic Devices**

M: Jan. 30 – A Dream/

How to Perform a Close Read Handout

W: Feb. 1 - American Dreaming/

Poetic Devices handout

F: Feb. 3 - Girls, Girls, Girls/Friend or Foe/

Rap Terms handout

**Week 4: The Black Album Week 1**

M: Feb. 6 - Interlude/ December 4th/ (Video- Overview of Jay Z)

W: Feb. 8 - What More Can I Say/ Encore/

F: Feb. 10 - Digital Humanities Project

**(Writing Assignment #1 Due—Biography of Jay Z)**

**Week 5: The Black Album Week 2**

M: Feb. 13 - Change Clothes/ Dirt off Your Shoulder

W: Feb 15 - Threat/ Moment of Clarity

F: Feb. 17 - 99 Problems

**Week 6: The Black Album Week 3**

M: Feb. 20 - (No Class)

W: Feb. 22 - Public Service Announcement/

F: Feb. 24 - Digital Humanities Project

**(Writing Assignment #2 Due—Data Visualization for Jay Z’s Black Album)**

**Week 7: The Black Album Week 4**

M: Feb. 27 - Justify My Thug/ Lucifer

W: Mar. 1 - Allue/My 1st Song/Video

F: Mar. 3 - Digital Humanities Project

**Week 8**

M: Mar. 6 - Black Album Recap

W: Mar. 8 - Digital Humanities Project

F: Mar. 10 - (No Class)

**(Writing Assignment #3 Due—Close Read of One song from the Black Album)**

**Week 9: Spring Break**

M: Mar. 13 – Spring Break

W: Mar. 15 – Spring Break

F: Mar. 17 – Spring Break

**Week 10: Literary Analysis Projects Pt. 1**

M: Mar. 20 Book Review – Song

W: Mar. 22 Book Review – Song

F: Mar. 24 Book Review - Song

**Week 11: Literary Analysis Projects Pt. 2**

M: Mar. 27 Book Review - Song

W: Mar. 29 Book Review - Song

F: Mar. 31 Book Review –Song

**Week 12**

M: Apr. 3- Final Project

W: Apr. 5 – No Class

F: Apr. 7 – No Class

(Writing Assignment #4 Due- Characterize Jay Z’s rap Style)

**Week 13: Jay Z, Sampling, & Beyonce**

M: Apr. 10 TBA

W: Apr. 12 TBA

F: Apr. 14 Digital Humanities

**Week 14: Kanye West & Jay Z**

M: Apr. 17- TBA

W: Apr. 19- TBA

F: Apr. 21 Digital Humanities

**Week 15: Timbaland & Jay Z**

M: Apr. 24 – TBA

W: Apr. 26 – TBA

F: Apr. 28 – Digital Humanities

**Week 16: Final Week of Class**

M: May 1 Final Projects

W: May 3 Final Projects

F: May 5 (Last Day of Classes)

**Classroom Policies**

**Civility Statement:** I enjoy student ideas and welcome them! Comments, questions, and opinions about the topics covered in class are encouraged, but please be mindful to express yourself using respectful and appropriate language. We would like to maintain a constructive learning environment. Therefore, no one is permitted to make offensive, intimidating, or malicious comments or behave in a disruptive manner. Additionally, the use of cell phones and other electronic communication devices will not be tolerated. Thank you in advance for adhering to the policy.

**Attendance Policy:** Because this course is a discussion course and the work we do in the class is designed to help you understand the reading and improve your writing, you must attend class.

To be excused, you must present sufficient documentation. Approved forms of documentation include medical excuses, police records, and documentation of funeral attendance. Of course, you are excused from class for religious holidays. If you are a member of a group that travels on behalf of the University (intramural teams are non-applicable), you must provide a letter from your coach or director along with a schedule of the classes you will miss due to travel.

**Late Work:** In the event that you are absent, you are STILL RESPONSIBLE for turning in all work by the dates listed on the syllabus. Unless we have made other plans together, in advance of the absence or missed assignment, I will not accept late work, so I encourage you to make arrangements with a classmate to submit any assignments if you will be absent.

**University Policies**

**Academic Integrity:** Students enrolled all UT Arlington courses are expected to adhere to the UT Arlington Honor Code:

*I pledge, on my honor, to uphold UT Arlington’s tradition of academic integrity, a tradition that values hard work and honest effort in the pursuit of academic excellence.*

*I promise that I will submit only work that I personally create or contribute to group collaborations, and I will appropriately reference any work from other sources. I will follow the highest standards of integrity and uphold the spirit of the Honor Code.*

**Electronic Communication:** UT Arlington has adopted MavMail as its official means to communicate with students about important deadlines and events, as well as to transact university-related business regarding financial aid, tuition, grades, graduation, etc. All students are assigned a MavMail account and are responsible for checking the inbox regularly. There is no additional charge to students for using this account, which remains active even after graduation. Information about activating and using MavMail is available at <http://www.uta.edu/oit/cs/email/mavmail.php>.

**Drop Policy:** Students may drop or swap (adding and dropping a class concurrently) classes through self-service in MyMav from the beginning of the registration period through the late registration period. After the late registration period, students must see their academic advisor to drop a class or withdraw. Undeclared students must see an advisor in the University Advising Center. Drops can continue through a point two-thirds of the way through the term or session. It is the student's responsibility to officially withdraw if they do not plan to attend after registering. **Students will not be automatically dropped for non-attendance**. Repayment of certain types of financial aid administered through the University may be required as the result of dropping classes or withdrawing. For more information, contact the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships (<http://wweb.uta.edu/aao/fao/>).

**Disability Accommodations: UT** Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of all federal equal opportunity legislation, including *The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), The Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (ADAAA),* and *Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.* All instructors at UT Arlington are required by law to provide “reasonable accommodations” to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of disability. Students are responsible for providing the instructor with official notification in the form of a letter certified by the **Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD).** Students experiencing a range of conditions (Physical, Learning, Chronic Health, Mental Health, and Sensory) that may cause diminished academic performance or other barriers to learning may seek services and/or accommodations by contacting:

**The Office for Students with Disabilities, (OSD)** [www.uta.edu/disability](http://www.uta.edu/disability) or calling 817-272-3364.

**Counseling and Psychological Services, (CAPS)** [www.uta.edu/caps/](http://www.uta.edu/caps/) or calling 817-272-3671.

Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored. Information regarding diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining disability-based academic accommodations can be found at [www.uta.edu/disability](http://www.uta.edu/disability) or by calling the Office for Students with Disabilities at (817) 272-3364.

**Title IX:** *The University of Texas at Arlington does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, genetic information, and/or veteran status in its educational programs or activities it operates. For more information, visit*[*uta.edu/eos*](http://www.uta.edu/hr/eos/index.php)*. For information regarding Title IX, visit* [www.uta.edu/titleIX](http://www.uta.edu/titleIX).

**Emergency Exit Procedures:** Should we experience an emergency event that requires us to vacate the building, students should exit the room and move toward the nearest exit. When exiting the building during an emergency, one should never take an elevator but should use the stairwells. Faculty members and instructional staff will assist students in selecting the safest route for evacuation and will make arrangements to assist individuals with disabilities.

**Student Feedback Survey:** At the end of each term, students enrolled in classes categorized as “lecture,” “seminar,” or “laboratory” shall be directed to complete an online Student Feedback Survey (SFS). Instructions on how to access the SFS for this course will be sent directly to each student through MavMail approximately 10 days before the end of the term. Each student’s feedback enters the SFS database anonymously and is aggregated with that of other students enrolled in the course. UT Arlington’s effort to solicit, gather, tabulate, and publish student feedback is required by state law; students are strongly urged to participate. For more information, visit <http://www.uta.edu/sfs>.

**Final Review Week:** A period of five class days prior to the first day of final examinations in the long sessions shall be designated as Final Review Week. The purpose of this week is to allow students sufficient time to prepare for final examinations. During this week, there shall be no scheduled activities such as required field trips or performances; and no instructor shall assign any themes, research problems or exercises of similar scope that have a completion date during or following this week *unless specified in the class syllabus*. During Final Review Week, an instructor shall not give any examinations constituting 10% or more of the final grade, except makeup tests and laboratory examinations. In addition, no instructor shall give any portion of the final examination during Final Review Week. During this week, classes are held as scheduled. In addition, instructors are not required to limit content to topics that have been previously covered; they may introduce new concepts as appropriate.

**The English Writing Center (411LIBR)**: Hours are 9 am to 8 pm Mondays-Thursdays, 9 am to 3 pm Fridays and Noon to 5 pm Saturdays and Sundays. Walk In ***Quick Hits*** sessions during all open hours Mon-Thurs. Register and make appointments online at [http://uta.mywconline.com](http://uta.mywconline.com/). Classroom Visits, Workshops, and advanced services for graduate students and faculty are also available. Please see [www.uta.edu/owl](http://www.uta.edu/owl) for detailed information