**Course Descriptions for Reggie Scott Young**

**430-001 Southern Literature TR 12:30-1:45 pm Dr. Reggie Scott Young**

Topic: The Best Southern Novels of All Time

*In 2009 the Oxford American magazine conducted a poll of scholars and critics to determine the best Southern novels in American literary history and in one of its issues published the names of the top ten along with a list of the most underrated Southern novels.* The reading list for English 430 this semester will feature books from the *Oxford American* top ten along with a newly acclaimed work from the South, *A Land More Kind than Home* by a recent alum from the UL Lafayette graduate concentration in creative writing, Wiley Cash. There will other supplementary readings required for the course. The class will study the process of determining a ranking of this nature and reevaluate each of the works on our reading list based on various factors such as the kind of critical responses the works received from media reviewers and academic critics, their influence in the larger field of literary studies, and their specific value to the South. Furthermore, students will be asked to study the list of works that did not make the top ten and then theorize a revised ranking from their research. The final paper for the course will offer a critique of the *OA* rankings, a revised top ten (including works not previously listed), and a rationale. While studying the *OA*’s rankings of Southern narrative works (there are non-fiction works included in the list of underrated works), we will use it as an opportunity to critically discuss some of the crucial questions that anyone entering the field of Southern literary studies is challenged to address: just what is Southern literature, who, exactly, deserves to be included in the ranks of Southern writers, and who are the legitimate spokespersons for Southern literature and the arbitrators of its value? How do we access value to new works being produced in the 21st Century South? Other novels required for the course include Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom*, Robert Penn Warren’s *All the King’s Men*,Mark Twain’s *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Walker Percy’s *The Moviegoer*, Ralph Ellison’s *The Invisible Man*, Flannery O’Connor’s *Wise Blood*,and Zora Neal Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Students interested in viewing the official *OA* results and its related links should go to http://www.oxfordamerican.org/articles/2009/aug/27/best-southern-novels-all-time/. Those interested in taking a look at my ballot for the survey can find it at http://www.ucs.louisiana.edu/~rxy2777/. All books for the course are available on line and most are available in digital formats. Students are encouraged to begin reading for the course during the summer.