

ECSU's new course in black writing teaches 'self-knowledge, awareness'

By Jody Riddick

For the first time in 17 years, a Black writers class in American Literature is being taught at ECSU. The class, *Black Writers in American Literature*, has been included in the University's catalog since 1976, but due to low student demand and the hectic teaching load of professors the class had not been taught since then, according to Dr. Glenda Griffen, instructor for the class.

Dr. Linda Callahan, Acting Chair of the Department of Language, Literature & Communication said she decided to offer the class this semester after an instructor in the department expressed the need for the course.

"A few students asked for the course as well," said Callahan. "I felt it should be offered since this is an African American school."

The class's objective "is to give the students an overview of past events in Black American Literature such as the writers, times, circumstances, people and build up to the present day," said Griffen, an associate professor in the Department of Language, Literature & Communication.

Dr. Griffen said the class is a very valuable and important class because it will help develop students' own self-knowledge and awareness.

"It seems that the students we're getting at this University come here with a lack of knowledge of literature written by blacks," she said. "Many students are familiar with the more popular writers such as Alex Haley because of *Roots*, which



Dr. Glenda Griffen teaches her black writer's class in Johnson Hall. Griffen, an associate professor in the Department of Language, Literature & Communication, also serves as advisor to *The Viking Yearbook*.

they have seen on television."

Griffen added that many students lack knowledge about black writers who have made a mark in the literary history of this country. "It is important that they learn about these writers," she continued. "The more they can learn about those who are like them, the better they can evaluate their own potential, not only in writing literature, but in achieving goals in life, as well."

Learning about black writers will help students understand more about themselves, said Griffen, "and carry on the history of their people by way of their people's literature."

Griffen said her black writers class has "a different structure," because it is designed by the students and instructor

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Dr. Glenda Griffen

together.

"We sat down as a class trying to design the course," said Griffen, adding that students had a voice in selecting the writers to be studied. Those writers include dramatists August Wilson, Lorraine Hansbury and Ossie Davis, and prose writers Richard Wright and Terri McMillian.

"We had difficulty getting a text for the class because the textbook used seventeen years ago is now out of print," said Griffen. "So we had to find a new book for the class—*Breaking Ice*, edited by Terry McMillian. This particular text is very modern and I felt that this was important because many of the students in the class recognized the names of many authors listed in the book."

Griffen said she and the students designed a class with a tight structure that would meet the need of the students.

"Once we have completed most of the class, we'll be able to see if all the things we thought to be important were truly important," she added. "I see this class as something special we're designing for the future of those who are to come after us and I'm hoping that the students who are now enrolled in the class see it the same way."

Griffen said there is so much material

to cover "we need two semesters to study it all."

Griffen has been pleased so far with the students in the Black Writers class. "I find that the students are enthusiastic about the class and that they are hungry for the knowledge in relation to understanding and wanting to know more about black writers in American Literature."

Students enrolled in the course say they find the class exciting and fun.

"The black writers' class has been very interesting and I'm looking forward to exploring more works by my brothers and sisters," said Ayanna Dorsey, a junior English major.

English major Lavenia Dameron said the black writers class is the only literature course at ECSU that has sparked her interest.

"I feel very comfortable reading about experiences that are common in my life," said Dameron. "For example, black writers talk about things like spirituality, being poor, and eating pigfeet and collard greens. They also write about popular expressions that are common only in the black community and black folk tales. They write about conditions that I've lived in and about people named "Junebug."

Dameron said at first she hesitated in taking the class because it was offered so late in the afternoon (four p.m.), "but now I understand how important it is to read about things I can relate to, especially if I am a productive black writer. I encourage other students to sacrifice those Friday afternoons and get in touch with themselves through black literature."

ECSU's new TV station to open by summer

By Pamela Tolson

By midsummer, ECSU's television station will open in the University's telecommunications building, according to Dr. Floyd Robinson, project coordinator.

The television station will be funded by the federal government under Title 3; however, it hasn't been determined how much the station will cost, Robinson said.

"The television station will provide educational capabilities for students," said Robinson, "and it will allow students to learn how a station operates."

Students will "play the same role" at the tv station as they now do at the radio station, said Robinson, working on programming, production and on-air narration.

"Hopefully, the station will become a public program like PBS on channel two," Robinson said. The television station will

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Evonne Martyn

also cover athletic events.

The television station has been a Mass Communication project since 1983. According to Robinson, the radio station, WRVS, was first on the project agenda, which now has 41,000 watts. The music recording studio was second, and the television station was third.

Students at ECSU say they are excited about the new television station.

"I'm happy the television station will be here before I graduate, because it will give me an opportunity to broaden my communication skills," said English/News Media major Lavenia Dameron.

English major Evonne Martyn said she too, was happy with the new station.

"I'm pleased that they are finally taking communication students into consideration in planning the future of ECSU," Martyn said.

"I think it's important to communication students because the experience will help them find jobs after they graduate," said Melanie Harrington, another English major.

"The curriculum for communications students will expand and allow students to take advantage of the new facilities," said Dr. Linda Callahan, Chairperson of

Language, Literature, and Communications. "I hope one or two new faculty members might come on board to teach courses related to the television station."

Broadcast Journalism class will provide exposure to the television station as well the radio station, said Callahan. The television station may do live broadcasts such as sporting events, band performances or choir performances, she said.

The television station will have two editing rooms, a studio, and control room, according to Robinson.

The next project on the list is the Mass Communications and Fine Arts building. Construction will begin this year.

The proposed \$7 million building will house the Art Department, Department of Language, Literature and Communication as well as a television and radio station. It will be located west of the Administration Building.