ENG257 African American Lit  
Weekly Reading and Writing #4

READING: Use your notes on Reconstruction (week three) to help understand this week’s reading. Be familiar with the following terms and what they imply: carpetbaggers, Jim Crow laws, Supreme Court ruling of Plessy v Ferguson, Negro dialect, sociology, octoroon, mulatto, NAACP. Consider the following tropes: signifying, black message / white envelope, voodoo

☐ TUESDAY: Charles Chestnutt’s The Goophered Grapevine, pages 606 – 612

WRITING: Please write on either Chesnutt or DuBois by responding to one of the following prompts (in your writing, please identify which # prompt you’re responding to).

1. In African American literary traditions, the trickster is a figure who usually acts dim-witted, docile, and ignorant but in actuality is just the opposite – sharp, shrewd, and quick-witted. As Gates explains in the section of Folk Traditions:

   “Tales that celebrate the trickster, whether in animal or human form, are universal in human folklore. Still the popularity of Brer Rabbit in the folklore of the slaves attests to the enduring faith of black Americans in the power of mind over matter. The spirit of Brer Rabbit lives in every slave who deceived his master with a smile of loyalty while stealing from his storehouse and making plans for escape” (Gates 161).

   Which character from “The Goophered Grapevine” fits into this tradition? In what ways? And in what ways is the signifying trope present in this story?

2. Consider our course goals and write about one or a few in relation to Chesnutt’s work (e.g. African American literary tradition; relation of African American literature to that of the American Literary Tradition; the tropes repeating; the traits that each work shares).

3. Choose a scene from Goophered and update it by placing it in a contemporary setting. Make choices about dialect and theme and signify on Chestnutt. After your scene, explain the choices you made for your update.


5. Consider our course goals and write about a few in relation to DuBois’ work (e.g. African American literary tradition; relation of African American literature to that of the American Literary Tradition; the tropes repeating; the traits that each work shares).

FORMAT
• Word-process
• Write one (and only one) full page single-spaced
• Include a heading in the upper left-hand corner (your name; date; ENG257 Weekly Writing #4)