ENG257 African American Lit
Weekly Reading and Writing #7

Tuesday:
- *Realism, Naturalism, Modernism* 1940 – 1960 pages 1355 – 1368
- Richard Wright, pages 1399 – 1402, *Blueprint* page 1403 – 1410

Thursday
- Margaret Walker p 1617 – 1618 and *For My People* p 1619 and *For Malcolm X* p 1621; Gwendolyn Brooks p 1623 – 1625 and *kitchenette building* p 1625; *The Lovers of the Poor*, p 1635; *We Real Cool* p 1638; *Malcolm X* p 1640; and *Negro Hero* (backside)

WRITING: please choose one response for Wright and one response for one of the poets

- **Wright’s *Blueprint for Negro Writing*** opens with a critique of the Harlem Renaissance. After you’ve read this essay, reconsider the literature that we’ve studied as we build the African American canon. Do you agree with Wright in his assessment of that literature as pandering to white readers and neglecting the “Negro masses”?
- **Wright’s *Blueprint for Negro Writing*** locates and celebrates the origins of African American cultures in black vernacular traditions. Choose some of the works from the vernacular tradition to explain and support his points.
- Write a letter in response to **Richard Wright**. Explain to him why you disagree (or agree) with his thesis by choosing one section from *Blueprint* to respond to (with specifics!).
- Compare **Walker’s** sonnet for Malcolm X with **Brooks’** poem on Malcolm X and/or other elegies for Malcolm X in our anthology. Does Walker’s individual elegy seem representative of the form? How is her dirge distinctive?
- Consider the narrative structure of *For My People*. What does **Walker** gain with her use of the prose-poetry structure of this particular lyric? If you are so moved, write your own “for my people” lyric.
- In 1963, the poet Louis Simpson criticized **Brook’s Selected Poems** for its racial themes, commenting, “Although a Negro might not be able to write well without revealing her race, the writing’s unimportant if being a Negro is the only subject.” Use any of the poems in this selection as support (and any other Brooks’ poems you’re familiar with) and argue for or against Simpson’s critique.
- Consider the quote above and replace *Negro* with *woman* and consider the same quote with any poem, e.g. her “domestic poems.”
- Dorrie Miller was an African America hero of WWII who won the Navy Cross for his service in the battleship *Arizona*. At the time of his ship’s attack at Pearl Harbor, blacks were only “permitted” to serve in noncombatant positions. When a gunner aboard the *Arizona* was killed, Miller, who was serving as a naval cook, took over the gunner’s post and shot down four enemy planes. Consider this background (and any further research on this poem and/or military segregation) and explore and write about the imagery and themes in *Negro Hero*.
- Use **Brooks’** theme and style in *Negro Hero* and write your own protest poem in honor of a contemporary hero.