ABSTRACT

SAMANTHA DUKE. Teaching Langston Hughes Thematically: Working with Genre and Bridging the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts 9-12 and the WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition. (Under the direction of Professor W. Jason Miller.)

This Capstone project includes (1) an annotated anthology of Langston Hughes’ works related to the theme of education, and (2) a unit plan for teaching Langston Hughes thematically that addresses the learning standards/outcomes for both the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts 9-12 and the WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition.

Annotated Anthology:
Despite an incredibly prolific writing career spanning multiple genres and decades, Langston Hughes is often limited to his role as poet and Harlem Renaissance writer. I propose that to get an accurate sense of Hughes as a writer, the reader needs to see how Hughes moved between genres and to put his various works into communication with one another as a comprehensive oeuvre. In an effort to enact this conversation, I curated a collection of Hughes’ texts that mention education or education policy/reform in America.

Unit Plan:
This ten lesson unit plan offers a way to look at Langston Hughes’ impressive body of work more holistically in order to (1) recognize the breadth and influence of Hughes’ oeuvre, (2) understand his thoughts on education, and (3) explore the influence of genre on content and style. Students will read texts from Hughes spanning multiple genres; they will then synthesize the texts to share their understanding of Hughes’ meaning/views/values and write analytically about Hughes’ style, particularly the rhetorical choices that he makes according to the conventions of each genre.

This unit is designed to bridge the gap between CCCSS and WPA OS. The activities, assignments, and assessments were designed to meet specific objectives from both sets of standards so the unit can be taught in both the 9-12 English/Language Arts classroom and the first-year composition course. It is easily modifiable to account for course pacing, reading level, writing ability, student interests, and specific course and/or program goals.