

# Mark Twain and Race

**Studies in  
American  
Literature**

**TTH  
3-4:50 PM**

Prof. Kim D. Hester Williams



## **ENGL 482 Class #2668**

Mark Twain made an indelible mark on American literature and letters. William Faulkner spoke of Twain as "the father of American literature." Toni Morrison's scholarly and literary career was both influenced and informed by Mark Twain's writing. In fact, in an article published on the day Morrison passed (August 6, 2019), author Matt Seybold noted that:

In her 1996 introduction to the Oxford edition of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Morrison narrates her decades-long, evolving relationship with Twain and his critics. ...Morrison repeatedly and forcefully came to the defense of Twain [whom she said] was...being subjected to what she called the "purist and yet elementary kind of censorship designed to appease adults rather than educate children."

This course looks at the prolific writings of Mark Twain through the lens of "race", focusing on his iconic representations of the racial dilemma in America with works such as the novels, *Pudd'nhead Wilson* and the classic novel, *Huckleberry Finn*, which was recently reimaged by Percival Everett in his responsive novel, *James*, recasting the iconic figure of Jim in the *Huckleberry Finn* novel. The latter was the recipient of the 2024 National Book Award--a testament to the persistent popularity of Mark Twain's fiction. Join us for a deep and engaging exploration of America and "Race" through the lens of Mark Twain's fiction and the man, himself!

