

English 363
The Politics of New Latina Narrative
Fall 2009

Professor: Dr. David J. Vázquez
Phone: 346-1051
Email: vazquez@uoregon.edu

Office: 263 PLC
Office Hours: M 9 – 11:00 am
W 9:00 – 10:00 am

Course Description:

During the past 30 years, Latina writing has proliferated at an ever-expanding pace. In this course we will examine a variety of texts written by Latinas with an eye towards understanding a number of important questions: What does it mean to be a “Latina” in contemporary U.S./Third World contexts? Is it possible—in fact, is it *desirable*—to construct a category like “Latina/o”? How does gender/class/race affect the representation of identity in literary texts? Can we, in fact, locate a “Latina” aesthetic? What does this aesthetic reveal about history, memory, identity, or other theoretical categories?

Course Goals:

In this course you’ll be required to perform lots of analysis and close reading. In other words, you’ll be doing more than simply restating “WHAT” the text says. Rather, you’ll be attempting to unpack the text by examining specific words, phrases, images, symbols, characters, etc. Your analysis and close readings will help you to understand and explain the more complicated interwoven meanings that lie beneath the surface. You’ll also be required to place texts into dialog with one another, and to begin to make connections between abstract ideas and their representations.

Required Texts

All texts available at the U of O Bookstore, unless otherwise noted
Julia Alvarez, *In the Time of the Butterflies*
Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La frontera*
Sandra Cisneros, *Caramelo*
Judith Ortiz Cofer, *The Line of the Sun*
Helena María Viramontes, *Under the Feet of Jesus*
Various readings available via Blackboard

Requirements

1. **Read, Read, Read!** My main requirement is that you read. The reading for this course is both engaging and intensive. However, falling behind in the reading will spoil the endings of these novels, and put you at a disadvantage during class discussions. If I feel that people are falling behind in the reading, I reserve the right to give reading quizzes. I would prefer to spend our time in class discussing these interesting and provocative texts. However, I will not hesitate to give reading quizzes.
2. **Paper:** There is one paper required in this course. It will be a 3-5 page response paper due at the beginning of class on Friday, December 3. Your task in the paper will be to provide an analysis of a theme related to the course in one or more of the texts. You may also choose to write a paper that performs a close reading on one or more of the texts. See me during office hours for more paper ideas.
3. **Two Exams:** One Mid-term and one Final. The Mid-term will take place on Friday, October 23 during our regular class meeting. The final will take place on Friday, December 11 at 10:15 am.
4. **Discussion Questions:** All students will sign up for one discussion question during the quarter. Students will introduce their discussion questions with a 3-5 minute presentation. While it should

be brief, you should be prepared for a formal presentation. This means that you should be ready to get up in front of the class to explain your ideas and provide supporting cues for our discussion. Please feel free to use the chalkboard, PowerPoint, or any other A/V or visual aids that you like. If you require any additional audio or video equipment, please notify me at least 48 hours in advance.

While your participation grade is not solely dependent on a discussion question, you cannot receive full credit for participation if you do not present a question. If you are not in attendance to present your discussion question, you will not receive credit. All discussion questions **MUST** be posted to the discussion forum on Blackboard 24 hours **prior** to the next class meeting. Please plan your reading accordingly

Those **NOT** presenting on a given day are responsible for reading the discussion question prior to our class meeting. Please make sure to check the discussion question forum on Blackboard before you come to class.

Grading

Mid-Term: 30 percent

Final: 30 percent

Paper: 30 percent

Participation: 10 percent

Policies

- Attendance and Participation: In order to receive full credit for participation, you must come to class prepared. This means **ALWAYS** bring the text(s) with which we are currently working, always bring any other necessary writing materials, always bring your questions about the reading, and always bring a respectful and positive attitude. **Participation includes oral participation**, completing in-class assignments, coming to class prepared (and on time), **AND** presenting your discussion question
 - There is one caveat to this attendance policy. The university has informed us that there is a high likelihood of an outbreak of the H1N1 flu virus (a.k.a. swine flu) this year. Should a serious outbreak of swine flu occur among a significant portion of the class, we will discuss options for alternative class meetings—most likely on Blackboard. In other words, if too many of us (including me) are sick with the flu, we will likely conduct our meetings on Blackboard until the epidemic subsides.
- Tardiness: It is imperative that you get to class on time. I will also respect this aspect of our time together. We all have tight schedules. Please respect me, your classmates, and most of all yourself by getting to class on time.
- All written work must be typed, stapled, and double-spaced with one-inch margins on all sides. Fonts should be no larger than 12 points, and no smaller than 10 points. All written work must include your name, the course, the instructor's name, and the name of the assignment in the upper left corner. Handwritten work will not be accepted. Make sure to number your pages. Please document citations using the MLA format. You can get the MLA style guidelines online at <http://www.liu.edu/cwis/cwp/Library/workshop/citmla.htm> or you can check the reference desk at the library.
- You are responsible for keeping a backup copy of all of your work. Backups may take the form of computer copies, hard copies, or both. In any event, make sure that you have a readily accessible copy of ALL of your work. Your computer crashing is not a valid excuse for missing an assignment.
- **Please turn your off your cell phone.**
- **No laptops, PDAs, or other electronic devices will be allowed.** The only exception to this rule will be in the case of a documented accommodation.
- Bring the assigned text to class.
- Since we meet in the morning, please feel free to bring coffee or any other nourishment that you need. However, make sure to clean up after yourself.

- How to address me: Please feel free to call me Professor Vázquez or Dr. Vázquez. Calling me by my first name is not acceptable. Also, I don't care for Mr. Vázquez (Mr. Vázquez is my father). My preference is for Professor Vázquez.

About Making Life Easier for Each Other

This course is not designed to be competitive. In fact, a competitive atmosphere will work against the activities of the class. Many of the activities are interactive, and each individual deserves the full cooperation of everyone else. **The one rule that is sacred in this classroom is to respect everyone**—each other, me, and the authors. Disagreements will happen and ideas will be challenged, but they must be controlled and expressed *academically*—which means in a civil, well-considered, and intelligent manner. Please note that we WILL be discussing the political ramifications of these texts. These may include discussions that may at first *seem* unrelated to the material at hand. My hope is that you will begin to understand that NO text emerges in a political or aesthetic vacuum. In fact, as we will soon see, these texts have important political and social implications for our everyday lives. For this reason, please bring an open mind and a patient attitude. It is much easier to learn from each other, about each other, and about ourselves when we are listening.

Timeline

This syllabus is primarily a reading guide. As such, it may be subject to revision.

<u>Week 1</u>	<u>Read by This Date:</u>
Wednesday 9/30	Introduction
Friday 10/2	George Lipsitz, “The Possessive Investment in Whiteness” (Blackboard),
<u>Week 2</u>	
Monday 10/5	Sonia Saldívar-Hull, “Reading Tejana, Reading Chicana” and “Chicana Feminisms: From Ethnic Identity to Global Solidarity” from <i>Feminism on the Border: Chicana Gender Politics and Literature</i> (Blackboard)
Wednesday 10/7	Angie Chabram-Dernersian “I Throw Punches for My Race, But I don’t Want to Be a Man: Writing Us—Chicana-nos (Girl, Us)/Chicanas—into the Movement Script” from <i>Cultural Studies</i> (Blackboard)
Friday 10/9	Chela Sandoval “” from <i>Methodology of the Oppressed</i> (Blackboard)
<u>Week 3</u>	
Monday 10/12	Gloria Anzaldúa, <i>Borderlands/La frontera</i> 1-39
Wednesday 10/14	<i>Borderlands</i> 40-75
Friday 10/16	<i>Borderlands</i> 77-98
<u>Week 4</u>	
Monday 10/19	<i>Borderlands</i> 98-end
Wednesday 10/21	Mid-term review
Friday 10/23	Mid-term

Week 5

Monday 10/26 Judith Ortiz Cofer, *The Line of the Sun* 1-131
Wednesday 10/28 *The Line of the Sun* 132-189
Friday 10/30 *The Line of the Sun* 190-end

Week 6

Monday 11/2 Helena María Viramontes, *Under the Feet of Jesus*
1-90
Wednesday 11/4 *Jesus* 91-130
Friday 11/6 *Jesus* 130-end

Week 7

Monday 11/9 Julia Alvarez *In the Time of the Butterflies* 1-117
Wednesday 11/11 *Butterflies* 118-199
Friday 11/13 *Butterflies* 200-256

Week 8

Monday 11/16 *Butterflies* 257-end
Wednesday 11/18 Sandra Cisneros, *Caramelo* 1-49
Friday 11/20 *Caramelo* 50-90

Week 9

Monday 11/23 *Caramelo* 91-236
Wednesday 11/25 *Caramelo* 237-285
Friday 11/27 No Class, Thanksgiving Holiday

Week 10

Monday 11/30 *Caramelo* 286-395
Wednesday 12/2 *Caramelo* 395-end
Friday 12/3 **Term Paper Due**, Final Exam Review