

English 245
Introduction to Latina/o Literature
Winter 2009

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

Office: 263 PLC
Office Hours: M 8 – 10:00 am
W 8:00 – 9:00 am

Course Description:

Latina/os have lived and worked in what is now the United States since before the founding of the country. During our time here, Chicana/os and Latina/os have produced a number of literary texts and critical works designed to document our experiences as racialized subjects. In this course we will read a variety of literary and critical texts that seek to answer the following questions: Who are Chicana/os (Mexican Americans)? What does it mean to be a Latina/o in the United States at this time? What are the differences between Chicana/os and Latina/os? What are the similarities? What historical trajectories shape(d) our lives? How do Chicana/os and Latina/os continue to evolve and change as groups in the U.S.?

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
Sandra Cisneros, *Caramelo*
Junot Diaz, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*
Judith Ortiz Cofer, *The Line of the Sun*
Ernesto Quiñones, *Bodega Dreams*
Piri Thomas, *Down These Mean Streets*
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 5. The assignment 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 of 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 Thursday, January 29 during our regular class meeting. The final will take place on Monday, March 16 at 8:00 am.

4. **Discussion Questions:** All students will sign up for two discussion questions during the quarter. Students will introduce their discussion questions with a brief (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. 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.

Those NOT presenting on a given day are responsible for reading the discussion question prior to our class meeting. For this reason, discussion questions **MUST** be posted to the discussion forum on Blackboard 24 hours **prior** to the next class meeting. Please plan your reading accordingly.

Grading

Mid-Term: 30 percent each

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.
- 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. If I am forced to clean up, I will no longer allow food or drink in the classroom.

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>
Tuesday 1/6		Introduction
Thursday 1/8		George Lipsitz, “The Possessive Investment in Whiteness” (Blackboard). George Lipsitz, “Cruising Around the Historical Bloc” (Blackboard)
<u>Week 2</u>		
Tuesday 1/13		Juan Gonzalez, from <i>Harvest of Empire</i> (Blackboard)
Thursday 1/15		Suzanne Oboler, “Hispanics in the United States: ‘We All Sing a Different Song’ (Blackboard), Gloria Anzaldúa, “La Conciencia de la mestiza: Towards a New Consciousness” (Blackboard)
<u>Week 3</u>		
Tuesday 1/20		Piri Thomas, <i>Down These Mean Streets</i> 1-156
Thursday 1/22		<i>Down These Mean Streets</i> 156-240
<u>Week 4</u>		
Tuesday 1/27		<i>Down These Mean Streets</i> 241-end, Mid-term review
Thursday 1/29		Mid-term
<u>Week 5</u>		
Tuesday 2/3		Ernesto Quiñones, <i>Bodega Dreams</i> 1-127
Thursday 2/5		<i>Bodega Dreams</i> 127-end
<u>Week 6</u>		
Tuesday 2/10		Judith Ortiz Cofer, <i>The Line of the Sun</i> 1-189
Thursday 2/12		<i>The Line of the Sun</i> 132-end 182-end
<u>Week 7</u>		
Tuesday 2/17		Junot Diaz, <i>The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao</i> 1-75
Thursday 2/19		<i>Oscar Wao</i> 76-154
<u>Week 8</u>		
Tuesday 2/24		<i>Oscar Wao</i> 155-253
Thursday 2/26		<i>Oscar Wao</i> 254-end
<u>Week 9</u>		
Tuesday 3/3		Sandra Cisneros, <i>Caramelo</i> 1-236
Thursday 3/5		<i>Caramelo</i> 237-323
<u>Week 10</u>		
Tuesday 3/10		<i>Caramelo</i> 323-395

Thursday 3/12

Caramelo 395-end , **Term Paper Due**