

Course Policies & Syllabus ~ English 284

Intro to Ethnic Literature of the United States Spring 2016

University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point, 3 Credits

Patricia R. Dyjak, M.F.A. & Ph.D.

Tuesday & Thursday 11:00 – 12:15 pm CPS 310

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Office: CCC 429
Office Hours: T & R 1:00 – 2:30 PM & *by appointment*

Required Texts: Erdrich, Louise. *Four Souls*. New York, NY: Harper Perennial. 2005.
ISBN: 978-0-06-093522-1
Rankine, Claudia. *Citizen: An American Lyric*. Minneapolis, MN: Graywolf Press.
2014. *ISBN: 978-1-55597-690-3*
Coursepack and handouts.

Course Description:

Where have we come from? Where are we going? “America is a melting pot:” this used to be the common saying, implying that all Americans blended together to create an homogenized, undifferentiated people, a people of one nation. Idealistically, this metaphor works to imply that we are all the same, equal in law, job chances, education, where to live, and more. However, as wave after wave of immigrants, former slaves, and the many peoples indigenous to North America have made clear, “melting pot” means, in practical terms, “bucket of bleach,” that we are all to ‘act white,’ in particular, White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant (WASP), like the good British colony we were, like the people historically in positions of power and authority in the U.S. usually were and often still are.

I think a better metaphor is “America is a chunky stew.” We are diverse ethnicities, races, cultures held in the gravy of our shared commitment to American ideals of equality, free speech, freedom of religion, equality under the law, equal education, safe living conditions, and the pursuit of happiness. All the different elements of the stew – the beef, the carrots, the onions, the peas – contribute to the flavor of the gravy and the nutrition present. And if you are apt to think that the beef is the most important part, stop and think about what new research shows about the ever-increasing importance to our health of those vitamin and mineral-rich vegetables.

Where have we come from? Where are we going? We will begin this course considering the origins of English Studies so that we may discuss the cultural ideology tied to the canon, and how we have come to be where we are today, having “English” as a departmental identifier, rather than “American” [the triumph of language over culture?], having predominantly dead, white, British men and dead, white, American men in the English Curriculum with a smattering of ethnic and specialty literatures (women, Jewish, African-American, Caribbean, etc.) in the U.S. today. The U.S. is founded on the idea and ideal of equality, yet it has an historical inheritance, pervasive in our culture, of a ranking of human beings indicating worth, known as The Great Chain of Being. The Great Chain of Being is anti-equality. So we will consider the influence of The Great Chain of Being, which presents a “cultural arrangement of bodies” [Dyjak], as a “description” of feudal England and Europe which has come to be an idea of what “should be” or should exist, as identified by Lakoff and Turner, and the power of cultural/language metaphors, as identified by Lakoff and Johnson, to work against equality today.

The power of cultural constructions, myths, and other beliefs will be discussed in relation to the texts we read as well as extrapolated to today’s world. The power of the Great Chain of Being, the Mind/Body Split (and other binaries or dichotomies), and the Public/Private Divide, also will be considered both as examples of historical paradigms and as current cultural myths against which those who labor for equality must fight. Old ideas do not disappear, even if we forget them; we inherit their influence in our history.

We will read novels, poems, short fiction, and a book-length performance poem with visual art as we consider the perspectives particular to groups of people traditionally absent from the English canon, the new additions, or the groups that America has begun to recognize as also human. If you know history, my previous statement is neither shocking nor excessive: Black men and women were not considered human when they were brought over to the U.S. as slaves; the people of the Native American Indian Tribes were not considered human and the U.S. government practiced genocide against them; Hispanic people are people from the many nations where Spanish is the primary language AND some indigenous people in the American Southwest who have historically spoken Spanish as their primary language (i.e., not all Hispanics are immigrants). In addition to readings from these groups we also will read some writings from Hmong Americans and other Asian Americans. During the Viet Nam war, the Hmong were American allies and helped American soldiers. There is a large Hmong community in our area, so reading or witnessing their experience and perspectives is important.

I use the word “witness” intentionally. Muriel Rukeyser in *The Life of Poetry* writes about the creation of literature as energy. Poets and writers put their whole, human experience into their art, into creation. This is a life, is energy. She notes that when we read their poem or story, we witness the human condition, we witness a life. In this course, we will be witnessing lives which help make American a stronger, more nutritious nation-stew. We will be expanding our knowledge of the human condition in the U.S.

Requirements:

The course will require students to do two, in-class essay tests, one on Week 4, Tuesday, February 16, and one on Week 12, Thursday April 21; two essays, one due Week 8, Thursday, March 17, of 6 – 8 pages, and one due in lieu of the Final Exam of 8 -10 pages, on Monday, May 16 by 2:30 pm. Additionally, students will write ten, brief (one long paragraph up to a maximum of one page) responses to the reading before each week and send it via D2L by approximately 5:00 pm Monday. There will be no responses required when there is either a test or an essay due that week, nor for the first week. This is indicated on the syllabus.

<u>Percentage</u>		<u>Points</u>	
12.5%	First Medium Essay (8-10 pg)	50 pts	
40%	2 tests (20% each) 1 early, 1 ¾ in	160 pts	(80 pts each)
22.5%	10 Responses (2.25% each)	90 pts	(9 pts each)
25%	Final Essay (13-15 pg)	100 pts	
+	Attendance and participation		
		400 pts total for course	

Responses to the Reading:

These are not essays. This is a reaction to the reading, emotional, anecdotal, and intellectual, (and literary, if you want). You DO need to quote from the text/assigned reading. In your responses what I will be looking for is an engagement with a part of the reading assigned; do NOT give a summary of the reading. Select a part that you found most interesting and compelling and quote (small selections), cite author and page numbers, then explain what you find interesting about that section. You might focus just on the text and your understanding of it, or you might consider its connection to our present world, or you might focus on how you see contemporary attitudes that are inheritors of, related to, or connected to this writing. When we read, you should always be thinking of how the reading connects to our present world, and your specific life. It is absolutely acceptable, and encouraged, that you apply the ideas and perspectives we read to your own life and include them in your response.

I encourage students to look for instances in our world where they see issues or patterns raised in the reading exhibited in the media, art, institutions, or conversations. For example, in the recent past, Richard Sherman, was depicted like King Kong, an ape, holding a blonde woman on *Vogue* (fashion magazine). This reflects the pattern or metaphor of the Great Chain of Being (GCB), discussed by George Lakoff and Mark Turner. Sherman, as a Black man, is considered by this metaphor as lower in the human category, closer to the animal.

Attendance/Participation:

Your participation in class is important: *it is work*. Therefore, you must come to class well-prepared. Attendance is crucial. That being said, this is not a perfect world. Everyone gets two (2) free absences. These two absences will **not** affect your grade. I do **not** want to hear excuses, see doctor's notes, etc. You have a right to privacy. The third absence, and any absence thereafter, is excessive and will lower your grade half a letter-grade for each absence (B to B-). If a student has a total of seven (7) absences, s/he will automatically fail the course. **SAVE** your absences if you know you will be gone. Chronic lateness, or leaving the class for an extended period, will count as a partial absence.

Absences for religious reasons are usually excused. Please inform me if this is the case.

Extra Credit:

When compiling this course, as in any survey course, I was reminded of how I can never do as full of a survey of the many, many ethnic literatures in the U.S. as I would wish, nor can I go into the many, many authors within each category I do choose, nor in-depth on any author. Therefore, I am offering extra credit when you see a film or read a novel or collection of poems and write-up a 2-page, double-spaced analysis of the text using the ideas and focus of the course. You may do **ONE** of these in the first half of the semester, and **ONE** in the second half of the semester. You must get **PRE-approval** from. Extra Credit assignments are worth a possible maximum of 10 points, each.

Professionalism:

Give others the courtesy you expect from them. I expect everyone in class to treat each other respectfully. We will have strong, very different opinions about a number of topics. It is possible to politely disagree with someone's interpretation by focusing on ideas, arguments and the text – never the person.

I reserve the right to remove a student from the classroom if his/her behavior is inappropriate; I reserve the right to remove a student from the course if I determine that the student's behavior is egregious.

Plagiarism:

Don't do it. Come speak to me if you are feeling overwhelmed or lacking in ideas. Plagiarism is stealing; it is cheating. Anyone who plagiarizes – who uses someone else's **words, facts, or ideas** and presents them as their own – will fail the course. **I do not want students to use secondary sources in this course, so no research.**

Confusion:

Confusion is a natural part of learning. Part of the process of learning new things IS to be initially confused; this is normal. If you do not understand everything immediately, or even after sleeping on it, or class discussion, we can meet and discuss things in my office hours, or again as a class.

Reasonable Accommodations for Differently Abled Students

Reasonable accommodations are available for students who have a documented disability. If you are a student with a disability or special need, contact the ADA Coordinator: 210E Old Main Building (715) 346-2002 : eeaoffice@uwsp.edu Web: www.uwsp.edu/equity/index.htm

Please contact me - if you are comfortable doing this - by phone, email, or in person, if there is any way I can help accommodate your learning needs. My contact information is on page one.

Cell Phones:

Cell phones must be turned off during class time. Students who text during class will be dropped/expelled from the course.

Format Requirements for Essays:

1. There are approximately 250 words in a page. You do not include in your word count articles (a, the) or two-letter words. Therefore, the word count you get from your computer/word processing software is not accurate. Quotes from other people/sources do not count.
2. We will be using MLA Style documentation, which you all should have learned in Engl 201: Intro to Literary Study for the English Major. Use this when quoting the literature.
3. Use one inch margins on all sides. **NOTE:** some forms of MS Word default to 1 ½ inch margins, so you may need to change your preferences/default setting for your margins to 1 inch.
4. Use a Times New Roman font, size 12. Use black ink. Put page numbers at the bottom, center of the page.
5. At the top left on the first page of your essay type, single spaced, 1) my name, 2) your name, 3) your email, 4) the date, and 5) what assignment this is. After this, change to double spacing. Do NOT include this information in a header. I don't want it on every page; it takes up space.
6. A title is optional. You should not have a cover page. Double space down from the information listed in Number 4 and type in your title, if you have one, then double space down from there and begin your essay. Double-space your essay.
7. Proofread your writing before handing it in. Check your grammar and your spelling.
8. Final versions of your essay go into a **pocket folder** (not a binder, not an accordion file, not a plastic sleeve) with your name, my name, and the class Engl 284 on the front to be handed in to me at the start of class on the day the assignment is due.
9. Remove extra spaces between paragraphs. In MS Word, open the “Paragraph” window. There is a little box to check that is “do not add spaces between paragraphs of the same style.”

Writing Resources:

In addition to working with me, during my office hours or by appointment, The Writing Lab [**free!**] in the Tutoring-Learning Center (TLC), in LRC 018 (aka the library basement), Mon-Thurs 9:00-4:00, Fri 9:00-12:00, tlctutor@uwsp.edu, 346-3568, provides tutorial assistance by your peers, website: <http://www.uwsp.edu/tlc/>. For this course, I think they will be most helpful in grammatical issues.

end

Syllabus

Intro to Ethnic Literature of the United States Spring 2016

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Tuesday & Thursday 11:00 – 12:15 pm 310 CPS

The Syllabus is subject to change.

Week One:

Tuesday 1/26

Introduction, policies, handout of readings

Thursday 1/28

Barry fr *Beginning Theory: An Intro to Literary and Cultural Theory*, “A Brief History of English Studies” pages 11-19, 32-38, & How English Studies Went from ‘Book’ to ‘Text’ p 38, 46-7, & “Postcolonialism” p. 199

Week Two:

Tuesday 2/2

Response One due in D2L by Monday @ 5:00 pm (approximately)

Lakoff & Turner, The Great Chain of Being, fr *More than Cool Reason*, pages 166-173, 208-213

Thursday 2/4

Lakoff & Johnson fr *Metaphors We Live By*, preface plus pages 3-24, 156-160

Week Three:

Tuesday 2/9

Response Two due in D2L by Monday @ 5:00 pm (approximately)

Two Quotes fr *A Year of Living with More Compassion*; Rukeyser fr *Life of Poetry*, “Where is the Poem?,” “Witness” p 173-180; Winterson “What Is Art For?” p 173-188

Thursday 2/11

Joy Harjo, poems, “A Postcolonial Tale,” “Promise,” “In Praise of Earth,” “Transformations,” “Eagle Poem,” “Perhaps the World Ends Here,” “When the World as We Knew It Ended”

Week Four:

Tuesday 2/16

NO Response due

First Short Test, in class or take-home, class decides

Thursday 2/18

Erdrich *Four Souls*

Week Five:

Tuesday 2/23

Response Three due in D2L

visit to class by Anishinabe Educator and Tribal Judge Alton (Sonny) Smart

Thursday 2/25

Four Souls

Week Six:

Tuesday 3/1

Response Four due

Four Souls

Thursday 3/3

Four Souls

Week Seven:

Tuesday 3/8

Response Five due

Alexie, short stories “Lawyer League”

Thursday 3/10

Alexie, “What You Pawn I Will Redeem”

Week Eight:

Tuesday 3/15

NO Response due

Selections from *Bamboo Among the Oaks: Contemporary Writing by Hmong Americans*

Thursday 3/17

First Essay due; Bamboo Among the Oaks, continued

continue

Spring Break

No classes 3/21 – 3/26

Week Nine:

Tuesday 3/29

Response Six due

Bamboo Among the Oaks – Moua “Endstage” and Sandra Tsing Loh “My Father's Chinese Wives” from the *Norton Anthology of Short Fiction*. Both of these stories exhibit cultural and generational clashes.

Thursday 3/31

Kim, Elaine “Preface,” and Hagedorn, Jessica “Introduction,” Mura, David “Fictive Fragments of a Father and Son” from *Charlie Chan is Dead*

Week Ten:

Tuesday 4/5

Response Seven due

Lew, Walter “Black Korea,” Bacho, Peter “Rico” from *Charlie Chan is Dead*

Thursday 4/7

Rodriguez, Richard “Preface,” “Hispanic,” and “The Third Man” from *Brown: The Last Discovery of America*

Week Eleven:

Tuesday 4/12

Response Eight due

Sandra Cisneros, selected poems; Gary Soto, selected poems.

Thursday 4/14

Anzaldúa, Gloria selections from *Borderlands/La Frontera* including “La conciencia de la mestiza/Towards a New Consciousness.”

Week Twelve:

Tuesday 4/19

NO Response due

Cervantes, Lorna Dee poems; Espada, Martin poems; Gonzalez, Ray “Rattlesnake Dreams;” from *Current from the Dancing River: Contemporary Latino Fiction, Non-fiction, and Poetry*. Gonzáles, Rodolfo “Corky” poem *I Am Joaquin*; Cervantes, Lorna Dee (again) poems; Moraga, Cherrie “A Long Line of Vendidas” from *The Latino Reader: An American Literary Tradition from 1542 to the Present*.

Thursday 4/21

Second Test; in-class or take-home

Week Thirteen:

Tuesday 4/26

Response Nine due

Morrison, Toni “Black Matters” from *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*

Thursday 4/28

clifton, lucille selected poems from *Blessing the Boats; quilting: poems 1987-1990; Next; Mercy; and The Book of Light*.

Week Fourteen:

Tuesday 5/3

Response Ten due

Terrance Hayes, selected poems

Thursday 5/5

Rankine, *Citizen: An American Lyric*

Week Fifteen:

Tuesday 5/10

Rankine, *Citizen: An American Lyric*

Thursday 5/12

Citizen: An American Lyric

Exam Date:

Final Essay Due: Monday, May 16th 12:30-2:30 pm.

You may hand this in earlier. There will be a cardboard box outside my office door.

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