

ENGLISH 284 – Introduction to Ethnic Literature of the United States

Spring 2022

Meeting Times: Mon./Wed. 9:30-10:45AM in CPS 230
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LAND AND WATER RECOGNITION

As we learn together throughout this course, we shall acknowledge the history of the lands and waters that are home to the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. We honor the Mamaceqtawak (The People), known today as [the Menominee](#), whose lands and waters UWSP occupies and whose citizens are [buried on university grounds](#). We honor the Hoocągra (People of the Sacred Voice), known today as [the Ho-Chunk Nation](#) of Wisconsin and [the Winnebago Tribe](#) of Nebraska, whose lands and waters UWSP occupies and whose citizens are buried on university grounds. We honor the Anishinaabeg (True People), known today as the [Ojibwe or Chippewa](#), whose citizens are buried on university grounds. We honor the Bodwe'wadmi (Keepers of the Fire), known today as the [Potawatomi](#), whose citizens are buried on university grounds.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Most of us are probably familiar with the maxim that “America is a melting pot,” a place where peoples from across the globe come together to coexist and blend peacefully. While this vision of multiculturalism makes us feel good, it is perhaps overly simplistic. Closer examination of current and historical events illustrates that America has, from its founding, been a site of conflict and struggle for groups perceived as “Other.” Likewise, a critical examination of the American literary canon illustrates that certain writers—women, writers of color, immigrant writers, LGBTQIA+ writers, disabled writers, etc.—have often been ignored, underappreciated, or relegated to “minor” status. In this class, we’ll be reading works of literature by writers who have challenged that canon, including authors from African American, Asian American, Latinx, and Native American communities. To encourage depth of comprehension and analysis, our readings represent a strategic sampling of ethnic literatures rather than an exhaustive survey.

All the writers we’ll read question what it means to be simultaneously “American” and “ethnic.” Throughout the semester, we’ll draw on concepts from critical race theory and postcolonial theory to help supplement our discussions of these works. Emphasis will be placed on understanding the historical and cultural contexts from which each of these texts emerged—particularly the variety of ways in which ethnic communities have become American: voluntary and/or forced migration, colonization, the redrawing of national boundaries, and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. By the end of the course, students should have a clear understanding of the practice of intersectional analysis, as well as of the nuance and variety of American ethnic literatures.

Ongoing questions for consideration will include:

- How does the way that someone becomes American shape his/her American identity?

- How does one define one's own ethnic identity? How do factors such as class, gender, sexuality, dis/ability, language, and citizenship status affect that process of identity formation?
- How does one live life "on the hyphen," as both an American and an ethnic minority?
- How have writers of color sought to complicate, undermine, or expand the canon of American literature?
- How can ethnic literatures help us to imagine American multiculturalism in a way that acknowledges both its problems and its possibilities?

TEXTS

You are not required to purchase from the University Store. Used copies, photocopies, digital copies, and library copies are perfectly acceptable, provided that you read the same assigned sections of text as everyone else. If purchasing our required books will cause you insurmountable financial difficulty, please reach out to me so that I can get you access to our readings.

Primary Texts (available at University Store)

The Essential Gwendolyn Brooks, edited by Elizabeth Alexander
Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories by Sandra Cisneros
Love Medicine by Louise Erdrich
Afterland by Mai Der Vang

Secondary Texts

Secondary readings on the historical and cultural context of each work (these will be uploaded and announced throughout the semester)

TECHNOLOGY

This class will utilize Canvas for distributing reading materials, participating in discussion boards, and submitting assignments. Office hours will be conducted via Zoom. If you have not activated your UWSP e-mail account, please visit the [Manage Your Account](#) page to do so. You will use your UWSP account to login to the course from the [Canvas Login Page](#), and you will use it to activate your [UWSP Zoom account](#).

You can get training on Canvas through the [Self-enrolled/paced Canvas training course](#). Zoom also offers [live trainings](#) every day, as well as [video tutorials](#).

View this website to see [minimum recommended computer and internet configurations for Canvas](#). View this website to see [minimum recommended computer and internet configurations for Zoom](#).

TECH SUPPORT

UWSP Technology Support

- Visit with a [Student Technology Tutor](#)
- Seek assistance from the [IT Service Desk](#)
- IT Service Desk Phone: 715-346-4357 (HELP)
- IT Service Desk Email: techhelp@uwsp.edu

CLASS COMMUNICATIONS

Your UWSP email account is the university's standard method of communication with you, **and you should check it daily**. If there are any changes to our schedule I will notify you by email.

If you have a question about the course or about an assignment that isn't confidential or personal in nature, please post it in the Course Q & A Discussion forum. I will post answers there so that all students can view them. Students are encouraged to respond to each other's questions, too.

INSTRUCTOR RESPONSE TIMES

If you want to reach me, **it is best to do so by email**, as I do not always see Canvas messages in a timely fashion. **Be advised that I only read and respond to email messages between 7AM-7PM Monday through Friday.** If you contact me outside of those hours, don't expect an immediate response.

I will respond to student emails within 24 hours of receiving them, except on weekends. If you contact me during the weekend, I will respond within 48 hours. If you haven't heard from me within the above time frames, please re-send your message.

COURSE POLICIES

COVID-19 MITIGATION

This course will follow the most current COVID-19 policies established by the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point.

Face Coverings

At all UW-Stevens Point campus locations, **the wearing of face coverings is mandatory** in all buildings, including classrooms, laboratories, studios, and other instructional spaces. Any student with a condition that impacts their use of a face covering should contact the Disability and Assistive Technology Center to discuss

accommodations. This is university policy and not up to the discretion of individual instructors. **Failure to adhere to this requirement could result in a formal withdrawal from the course.**

Other Guidance

- Monitor your own health daily. If you are unvaccinated, you are required to complete the [symptom screening form](#) each day you are on campus.
- If you are unvaccinated, you must complete regular testing as required by the university.
- **If you have [COVID symptoms](#), do not come to class.** E-mail me, contact Student Health Services (715-346-4646), and register for a [COVID test](#).
 - As with any type of absence, students must communicate their need to be absent and complete the course requirements as outlined in the syllabus.
- If you are unvaccinated and have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, [the university requires you to quarantine for 5 -10 days](#).
- If you are vaccinated and have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, you do not have to quarantine unless you have symptoms. However, [you should schedule a COVID test within 5-7 days of exposure and monitor your symptoms for 14 days](#).

Contact Tracing

- This course will use a seating chart to facilitate contact tracing. You will sit in the same location each class period.
- You will work in designated groups and/or pairs all semester.
- If, for whatever reason, you want to change your assigned seat, group, etc., you need to contact me to request permission.

ABSENCE AND LATENESS POLICY

You will be given **three “free” absences for the semester**, which will not impact your grade. You will still be responsible for completing all assignments and readings due during such absences, and you will need to contact a classmate for lecture notes. **Absences beyond those three will negatively impact your participation grade** (see pages 9-10 for grading criteria).

That said, some of us may need to miss more than three classes due to testing positive for COVID or having to quarantine. **If you find yourself in this situation, or if you have other extenuating circumstances that result in more than three absences (ex: family crises, physical/mental health crises, other personal crises), reach out to me.** I am willing to excuse such absences if you are in regular communication with me. You will still be responsible for completing all assignments and readings as outlined on the syllabus, and you will need to get notes from a classmate.

Finally, please arrive to class on time. If you know that you will need to arrive late or leave early, let me know in advance. Failure to notify me that you will be late will result in a tardy, barring extraordinary circumstances. **Three tardies will be considered an absence. If you are more than twenty minutes tardy to class, you will be marked absent.**

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

If you have a documented disability and verification from the [Disability and Assistive Technology Center](#) and wish to discuss academic accommodations, please contact me as soon as possible. It is the student's responsibility to provide documentation of disability to Disability Services and meet with a Disability Services counselor to request special accommodation *before* classes start.

The Disability and Assistive Technology Center is located in 609 Albertson Hall and can be contacted by phone at (715) 346-3365 (Voice) (715) 346-3362 (TDD only) or via email at datctr@uwsp.edu.

STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC HONESTY

Some of the assignments in this class will require the use of sources. When you use sources, you must cite them. In this course, we will exclusively use MLA citation. The use of an unacknowledged source will result, *at minimum*, in your being required to redo the assignment for reduced credit. Depending on the nature and extent of the misuse, such behavior may result in a zero for the assignment or an F for the course. **If you are unsure how to cite a source properly, please ask me.** Other forms of academic dishonesty, such as purchasing work, copying the work of classmates, etc., will also result in a major course penalty, including possible failure of the course. A report may also be submitted to the Dean of Students. For more information about UWSP's policies regarding academic misconduct, see the [Academic Integrity Brochure](#).

SAFE SPACE POLICY

We're all required to be respectful of each other's identities and opinions. There will be zero tolerance for slurs, derogatory language, harassment, belittlement of ideas, or belittlement of others' work. If you need clarification, please refer to the [statement on communal rights and responsibilities](#) in the University Handbook. **If you feel unsafe in any class discussion, please speak to me immediately so that we can resolve the problem.**

Some of the material that we cover may be triggering (i.e. produce an overwhelmingly negative physical and/or emotional response). I will always offer content warnings for such readings and/or viewings. **If you suspect that a particular assignment will be triggering to you, then contact me so that you and I can discuss how you would like to approach the material.** I am happy to offer options including: submitting that

week's written work to me privately, stepping out of the classroom as needed, skipping certain sections of the reading, or completing an alternative assignment.

If you have any concerns about the class or the material, please come and talk to me so we can try to work out a solution as quickly as possible.

GUIDELINES FOR OFFENSIVE AND/OR ARCHAIC TERMINOLOGY

In telling their stories, some of the writers we'll read use offensive slurs. I will always provide you with advance warning when this is the case. **If such terms are triggering to you, please let me know so that we can decide how to proceed.**

I will not replicate offensive language in lectures, discussion, or written course materials. If I must reference an offensive term, I will do so elliptically—for example, saying “n-word” in place of the slur. **I ask that you do the same during class discussions. Additionally, if your written work quotes a section of text that includes an offensive term, use dashes or asterisks rather than writing out the word (ex: n----- or r*dsk*n). If you are uncertain whether a term is offensive, email me to ask.** If someone accidentally replicates such a term, I will correct the error and ask them to avoid using it in the future, and/or ask the student to resubmit written work after deleting the term in question.

Some of our readings are historical. As such, they make use of archaic terms when referring to specific minority groups. I will provide advance notice when this is the case, and I will use contemporary terminology in all lectures, discussions, and course materials. **I ask that you do the same in class discussions. Additionally, if your written work quotes a section of text that uses an archaic term, please replace it with contemporary vocabulary using brackets—for example [African American] or [Native American]. If you are unsure of the correct terminology, please email me to ask.** If by chance someone uses an archaic term during discussion or in written work, I will correct the error and ask them to use the contemporary term in the future, and/or ask the student to resubmit written work after replacing the term in question.

PERSONAL EMERGENCIES

Any student facing challenges that affect their academic performance should contact the [Dean of Students](#) for support. Such challenges may include but are not limited to the following: mental or physical health crises, addiction, family crises, food insecurity, housing insecurity, financial insecurity, incidents of hate/bias, interpersonal violence, or sexual assault/harassment. If you feel comfortable, you may also notify me of your situation. In such cases, I can provide flexibility on assignment deadlines and attendance, offer an incomplete in the course, or approve withdrawal from the course.

Be advised that **I am a mandatory reporter. I can promise privacy, but not**

confidentiality. I must inform the university if a student shares that they've experienced or witnessed certain events: sexual assault/harassment, incidents of hate/bias, violent crime, thoughts of or attempts to self-harm, or abuse/neglect of minors. Think carefully about whether you would like to make a report to the university before disclosing such information to any UWSP employee. If you do not want to report, but still want to let me know that you're dealing with a personal issue, you should speak in generalized terms.

Finally, please check out the Campus and Community Resources page on Canvas. I've compiled a list of organizations and agencies you can turn to for help—both on-campus and off.

GRADING AND ASSIGNMENTS

Reading: Each week, there will be assigned readings with specific suggestions of things to look for or to think about as you read. Doing the reading, thoughtfully, is necessary preparation for you to be able to participate fully in, and benefit from, the class. You should also take notes on your observations and reactions.

Participation: You should attend class regularly and participate to the best of your ability. Class activities will include discussion and workshops. See pages 9-10 for grading criteria.

Reading Responses: Reading responses will be informal, low stakes writing assignments. They're intended to help you reflect on readings, hone close reading skills, and explore ideas. Prompts for these will be posted on Canvas.

Exams: This course will have one exam. I will explain the format in the weeks leading up to the exam date.

Essays: You'll write a short essay (2-3 pgs.) and a final research essay (4-6 pgs.). Details about these assignments, including grading criteria, will be posted on Canvas and explained in class. The rough draft and final draft of each essay should be submitted to Canvas. **All essays must go through the peer review process. I will not accept work that hasn't been peer reviewed.**

Peer review: Peer reviews will be graded assignments; each one is worth 5% of your overall score for the class. The quality of your feedback to classmates will determine your grade. Minimal comments, vague comments, unhelpful comments, or rude comments will result in a poor score. Offer your classmates thorough, constructive, and encouraging advice about how to improve their writing.

Peer reviews cannot be made up. If you fail to submit a rough draft, you will not be assigned peer reviews. If you submit your rough draft more than a few days late, I cannot guarantee you'll be assigned peer reviews. You cannot complete missing peer

reviews once revised drafts have been submitted. Any of the above situations will result in a zero for the assignment.

Revision: You will have the opportunity to revise your short essay. Your original grade and your revision grade will be averaged in order to determine your final score for that paper. Details about revision expectations and deadlines will be provided on Canvas.

Your grades will be determined using the following rubric:

Reading Responses	10%
Exam	20%
Short Essay	20%
Research Essay	30%
Peer Review	10%
Participation	10%

There will be no final exam in this class. I will be using the plus/minus system for final grades. Please note: to ensure fairness, all numbers are absolute, and will not be rounded up or down at any stage. Thus a B- will be inclusive of all scores of 80.000 through 83.999.

A = 93-100 A- = 90-92 B+ = 87-89 B = 84-86 B- = 80-83 C+ = 77-79 C = 74-76
 C- = 70-73 D+ = 67-69 D = 64-66 D- = 60-63 F = 0-60

Criteria for Participation

	Ideal	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Attendance	Is present for the entirety of each class meeting, or (rarely) is absent for a compelling reason, which is shared with the instructor promptly.	Attends consistently (at least 85% of the time). Occasional absences or late arrival are mostly for a valid reason.	Missing class, arriving late, or leaving early, more than 15% of the time, or less often but without explanation.
Preparation	Always gives evidence of preparation when called on or quizzed.	Gives evidence of preparation when called on or quizzed at least 85% of the time.	Gives evidence of being unprepared more than 15% of the time.
Attentiveness	Consistently comes equipped (book, notebook, etc.) to class. Is always listening actively when not speaking.	Usually comes equipped and is listening actively when not speaking.	Attends to something other than class activities (e.g. texting, Facebook, studying for another class).

Quality of Contributions	Makes comments that stand out for the level of careful thought they demonstrate about the material and the unfolding conversation.		Makes comments that reflect inattentiveness to others' contributions, are irrelevant, or otherwise tend to derail the conversation.
Classroom Community	Improves the conversation in a significant way. (E.g. helps draw others out, makes extra effort to contribute if shy, etc.)		Impairs the conversation in a significant way. (E.g. dominates discussion, talks while others are talking, treats other students or their ideas with disrespect.)

Extra Credit Opportunities

I will keep an eye out for relevant events that you may attend for extra credit points. If you opt to attend an event, you will need to write a one-page, double-spaced response that you email to me. Each response is worth two points applied toward your reading responses.

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS, LATE WORK, FALLING BEHIND:

Acceptable Submission Formats

All written work for the class **must be submitted as either a Word document or a PDF**. Canvas cannot read files from other word processing software, and URLs for Google Docs are not always accessible.

Late Work and Extensions

Late assignments will lose a full letter grade for each calendar day—not each class day—they are late. An assignment turned in five days late is thus only worth half credit.

Extensions are negotiable if you anticipate needing more time. To request an extension, email me at least two calendar days before the assignment is due. We will set a new due date that must fit into the syllabus (i.e., the deadline must precede any other due dates for the unit). I will hold you to that new due date and deduct points if you miss it.

Exceptions to the 48-hour policy can be made if you are dealing with unexpected or extraordinary circumstances, such as a family crisis, mental or physical health crisis, etc. In such cases, **you still must email me ASAP to request an extension.**

All extension requests must be submitted in writing.

Expiration Dates for Missing Work

An assignment “expires” four weeks after its due date. Peer reviews are an exception to this policy; they expire 24 hours before the revised draft of the essay under review is due. If you miss an assignment, you can earn at least half credit if you submit it prior to its expiration date.

After an assignment’s expiration date has passed, I will no longer accept it and you’ll receive a zero. This policy prohibits students from piling work up indefinitely and provides them a clearer sense of their standing in the course.

Falling Behind

If you have any trouble keeping up with assignments or readings, let me know as early as possible. Be proactive in informing me when difficulties arise. It is your responsibility to understand when you need to ask for an extension, request an incomplete, or drop the course.

OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION

The [Tutoring-Learning Center](#), located in the basement of the library (Room 018), can provide help with writing and many other skills you will need to succeed in college. Their regular hours are Monday – Thursday 9:00am – 8:00pm, Friday 9:00AM – 1:00PM.

The TLC offers both synchronous and asynchronous tutoring through their [Online Writing Lab](#). I strongly encourage you to use their services. Email tlctutor@uwsp.edu to set up an appointment.

COURSE SCHEDULE

**Subject to change at instructor’s discretion*

DATE	COURSE CONTENT AND READINGS
MONDAY, 1/24	Introduction to the Course Important Terms and Concepts
WEDNESDAY, 1/26	Refresher/Crash Course: Close Reading Prose <i>Woman Hollering Creek</i> , “Mericans” Vladimir Nabokov, “Good Readers and Good Writers” (PDF on Canvas) READING RESPONSE #1 DUE BY MIDNIGHT, SAT. 1/29
MONDAY, 1/31	Context: Sandra Cisneros and Chicana Literature <i>Woman Hollering Creek</i> , “Never Marry a Mexican”

WEDNESDAY, 2/2	Context: Malinche and La Llorona <i>Woman Hollering Creek</i> , “Woman Hollering Creek” – content warning for domestic violence READING RESPONSE #2 DUE BY MIDNIGHT, SAT. 2/5
MONDAY, 2/7	Prompts for Short Essay Context: Emiliano Zapata and Curanderismo <i>Woman Hollering Creek</i> , “Eyes of Zapata” – content warning for graphic violence Ana Castillo, “Brujas and Curanderas” (PDF on Canvas)
WEDNESDAY, 2/9	Context: Chicanx Identities <i>Woman Hollering Creek</i> , “ <u>Bien</u> Pretty” ESSAY TOPIC PROPOSAL DUE BY MIDNIGHT, SAT. 2/12
MONDAY, 2/14	Writing Workshop: Crafting Strong Thesis Statements and Body Paragraphs for Literary Analysis Example Student Essays (PDFs on Canvas)
WEDNESDAY, 2/16	ROUGH DRAFT OF SHORT ESSAY DUE Peer Review Procedures and Tips for Good Feedback Revision Workshop PEER REVIEW DUE BY MIDNIGHT, SAT. 2/19
MONDAY, 2/21	INDIVIDUAL PAPER CONFERENCES
WEDNESDAY, 2/23	INDIVIDUAL PAPER CONFERENCES
MONDAY, 2/28	REVISED DRAFT OF SHORT ESSAY DUE Refresher/Crash Course: Close Reading Poetry <i>The Essential Gwendolyn Brooks</i> , “kitchenette building” and “a song in the front yard”
WEDNESDAY, 3/2	Context: Gwendolyn Brooks and African American Literature <i>The Essential Gwendolyn Brooks</i> , “Notes from the Childhood and the Girlhood” READING RESPONSE #3 DUE BY MIDNIGHT, SAT. 3/5
MONDAY, 3/7	Context: The Black Arts Movement <i>The Essential Gwendolyn Brooks</i> , “We Real Cool” and “A Primer for Blacks” – content warning for racial slurs and archaic language Listen to Brooks reading “We Real Cool” (link on Canvas)

WEDNESDAY, 3/9	Context: Emmett Till and Carolyn Bryant <i>The Essential Gwendolyn Brooks</i> , "A Bronzeville Mother Loiters in Mississippi. Meanwhile, a Mississippi Mother Burns Bacon" – content warning for depiction of a hate crime READING RESPONSE #4 DUE BY MIDNIGHT, SAT. 3/12
MONDAY, 3/14	REVIEW FOR MIDTERM EXAM
WEDNESDAY, 3/16	MIDTERM EXAM
MARCH 18-27	SPRING BREAK
MONDAY, 3/28	Context: Louise Erdrich and Native American Literature <i>Love Medicine</i> , "World's Greatest Fisherman" and "The Beads" – content warning for self-harm and domestic violence
WEDNESDAY, 3/30	Context: The Story Cycle/Composite Novel <i>Love Medicine</i> , "Saint Marie" and "Wild Geese" – content warning for child abuse and sexual consent issues READING RESPONSE #5 DUE BY MIDNIGHT, SAT. 4/2
MONDAY, 4/4	Context: Anishinaabe Culture/History <i>Love Medicine</i> , "The Island" and "Love Medicine" Doerfler, Sinclair, and Stark, "Bagijige: Making an Offering" (PDF on Canvas)
WEDNESDAY, 4/6	Context: The Myth of the Vanishing Indian <i>Love Medicine</i> , "The Plunge of the Brave" Thomas King, "You're Not the Indian I Had in Mind" (PDF on Canvas) READING RESPONSE #6 DUE BY MIDNIGHT, SAT. 4/9
MONDAY, 4/11	Context: Multiple Editions of <i>Love Medicine</i> <i>Love Medicine</i> , "Flesh and Blood" and "Crown of Thorns" – content warning for addiction and domestic violence
WEDNESDAY, 4/13	<i>Love Medicine</i> , "The Good Tears" and "Crossing the Water" – content warning for domestic violence READING RESPONSE #7 DUE BY MIDNIGHT, SAT. 4/16

MONDAY, 4/18	Context: Mai Der Vang and Asian American Literature <i>Afterland</i> , “Dear Soldier of the Secret War” and “Final Dispatch from Laos” – content warning for graphic violence Mai Neng Moua, Introduction from <i>Bamboo among the Oaks</i> (Canvas PDF)
WEDNESDAY, 4/20	Context: Hmong American History and Spirituality <i>Afterland</i> , “Transmigration” and “Dear Exile” – content warning for graphic violence “Hlu Plig: The Soul Calling Ritual” (link on Canvas) READING RESPONSE #8 DUE BY MIDNIGHT, SAT. 4/23
MONDAY, 4/25	Prompts for Research Paper Context: Refugitude/Refugeetude <i>Afterland</i> , “Your Mountain Lies Down with You” and “Matriarch” Viet Thanh Nguyen, “On Being a Refugee, an American— and a Human Being” (PDF on Canvas)
WEDNESDAY, 4/27	Context: Hmong and Hmong American Writing <i>Afterland</i> , “Cipher Song” and “Mother of People without a Script” TOPIC PROPOSAL DUE BY MIDNIGHT, SAT. 4/30
MONDAY, 5/2	LIBRARY INSTRUCTION SESSION
WEDNESDAY, 5/4	WRITING DAY/CONFERENCE DAY
MONDAY, 5/9	ROUGH DRAFT OF RESEARCH PAPER DUE Revision Workshop
WEDNESDAY, 5/11	PEER REVIEW DUE Semester Wrap-Up
FINALS WEEK EVERYTHING DUE BY 10AM ON 5/18	REVISED DRAFT OF RESEARCH PAPER DUE OPTIONAL REVISION OF SHORT ESSAY DUE