

ENGLISH 284 – Introduction to Ethnic Literature of the United States
Spring 2020

Professor:	Lauren Gantz
Meeting Times:	T TH 11:00AM-12:15PM in CCC 321
Email:	lgantz@uwsp.edu
Office:	CCC 428
Office Hours:	M T 1:00-3:00PM, or by appointment

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, Latina/o, 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 elements of 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, 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

Note: 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)

Woman Hollering Creek, by Sandra Cisneros
Brown Girl, Brownstones, by Paule Marshall
Love Medicine, by Louise Erdrich
The Refugees, by Viet Thanh Nguyen
Afterland, by Mai Der Vang

Available on Canvas:

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

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

If you have a disability and need accommodations for this course, please contact the Office of Disability Services. Call 715-346-3365, email dissv@uwsp.edu, or visit the Office in room 609 of the Learning Resource Center.

ABSENCE AND LATENESS POLICY

You will be given **two free absences** for the semester. Absences beyond those two will impact your participation grade (see grading criteria for explanation). Exceptions to this policy include absences for religious observances and/or course accommodations documented with Disability Services. Please ensure you arrive to class on time; **three tardies will count as an absence, and if you are more than fifteen minutes late, you will be marked as absent for the meeting.**

If you have to miss class, you are still responsible for turning in all assignments due on the date of your absence, and for completing assigned course readings. I would also advise contacting a classmate for notes. Please do not email me asking, "Did I miss anything?" The answer will always be, "Yes." If you need clarification of your

classmates' notes, then you are welcome to contact me.

RELIGIOUS HOLY DAYS

By UWSP policy, you must notify me of a pending absence due to a religious holy day within the first three weeks of class. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, I will give you an opportunity to complete the missed work.

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. MLA citation style is preferable but use any format with which you are familiar. 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, cheating on exams, 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: <http://www.uwsp.edu/dos/Documents/AcademicIntegrityBrochure.pdf>

EMAIL

Your UWSP email account is the university's standard method of communication with you, and you should check it regularly. I may at times use email to contact the class as a whole, or individual students; I will routinely use the course home page in Canvas for reminders and announcements.

Be advised that while I do check my email regularly throughout the week and on weekends, **I only read and respond to messages between 7AM-7PM**. Please contact me during those hours, unless it's an emergency.

TECHNOLOGY POLICY

Computers and tablets can be used for taking or referring to notes, checking Canvas, and/or accessing class materials. If I see you using these devices for purposes unrelated to our course, I will ask you to get back on task. Recurring problems may result in penalties including reduced participation grades and/or being marked tardy or absent for the class period(s) in question.

Cellphones should be out of sight and either turned off or silenced. If I see your phone out during class time, I will ask you to put it away. Refusal to comply with this policy will result in your being asked to leave the classroom. If you are expecting an urgent call,

please let me know at the start of class. If you must take a call, please step out of the classroom as quickly and quietly as you can.

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, or belittlement of ideas. If you need clarification, please refer to UWSP's Community Rights and Responsibilities Handbook (<http://www.uwsp.edu/dos/Documents/CommunityRights.pdf>). As a general rule, use common sense and treat others as you wish to be treated. 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 you and I can discuss how you would like to approach the material. I am happy to offer options including: stepping out of the classroom if discussion proves too intense, remaining quiet during class, and in extreme cases, skipping specific sections of our readings.

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.

PERSONAL EMERGENCIES

Any student facing challenges that may affect their academic performance is encouraged to contact the Dean of Students for support. Such challenges may include but are not limited to: mental or physical health crises, family crises, food insecurity, housing insecurity, financial insecurity, incidents of hate/bias, interpersonal violence, or sexual assault/harassment. Furthermore, please notify me if you feel comfortable doing so. That will enable me to provide any resources that I possess, including flexibility on assignment deadlines and/or attendance, or taking an incomplete in the course.

Be advised: **I am a mandatory reporter.** If you disclose to me that you have been a victim of sexual assault/harassment, hate/bias, or any crime, **I am required to inform the university.** Likewise, if you disclose to me that you are experiencing thoughts of self-harm, or have engaged in self-harm, **I must inform the university.** Think carefully about whether or not you would like to make a report before disclosing to me, or 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.

If you've experienced any of the aforementioned issues, 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 REQUIREMENTS

Reading and preparation for class: For all class meetings, there will be assigned readings with specific suggestions of things to look for or to think about as you read. Doing the reading, thoughtfully, *before class* is necessary preparation for you to be able to participate fully in, and benefit from, the class meeting. You should also take some notes on your observations and reactions. I may call on individual students orally, have you write briefly about the reading early in class, or give a brief reading quiz as a way to check preparation and begin discussion.

Attendance and participation: You should attend class regularly and participate to the best of your ability. Class activities will include discussion and workshops. See pages six and seven for grading criteria.

Reading responses: Reading responses will be informal, low-stakes writing assignments. They're meant to help you reflect on readings and explore ideas. Prompts for these will be posted on Canvas.

Exams: This course will have one exam. We'll discuss 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 provided in handouts, posted on Canvas, and discussed in class. The rough draft and final draft of each essay should be submitted to Canvas.

Peer review: All essays must go through the peer review process—I will not accept projects that haven't been peer reviewed. On peer review days, you must bring a *completed* draft of your essay. If you do not have a completed draft, you will be sent home and marked absent for that class period. If you have to miss class on a peer review day, or do not have your draft completed in time for peer review, it is *your responsibility* to find a classmate to review your paper on his/her own time.

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 and quizzes	15%
Exam	20%
Short essay	25%
Final essay	30%

Participation

10%

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.
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SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS AND LATE WORK:

Take-home assignments: In order to pass the course, you must complete every assignment. Take-home assignments are due *by the beginning of class* on the due date.

Late take-home assignments will lose a letter grade for each calendar day (note: not each class day) they are late. Extensions are negotiable if, knowing your own academic schedule and obligations, you anticipate needing more time for an assignment. **To request an extension, you must speak with me in person at least two calendar days before the assignment is due.** Together we will arrive on a later due date that must fit into the syllabus (i.e., the new due date 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. **Do not e-mail me the night before something is due to ask for an extension; I will refuse. Plan ahead.**

You must build in time for possible technological failure ("my computer crashed") or contingency ("I left my flash drive with my paper on it at home"). **Late work is late, regardless of circumstance.**

In-class assignments and activities: In-class work (quizzes, exams, etc.) can **only** be made up under extraordinary, unavoidable circumstances. You must provide me with documentation of the reason for your absence.

OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION

Copies of all course documents and additional resources will be available in **Canvas**.

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. Appointments are recommended but not required. Phone 715-346-3568 or email tlctutor@uwsp.edu.

COURSE SCHEDULE

**Subject to change at instructor's discretion*

T 1/21	Introduction to the Course Useful terms and concepts
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- TH 1/23** Refresher/Crash Course: Close Reading Strategies
Woman Hollering Creek, "Mericans"
Due by Saturday at midnight: Reading Response 1
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- T 1/28** Context: Sandra Cisneros and Chicano/a Literature
Woman Hollering Creek, "Never Marry a Mexican"
Read Alicia Gaspar de Alba's "Malinche's Revenge" (Canvas)
- TH 1/30** **Reading Quiz 1**
Woman Hollering Creek, "Woman Hollering Creek" (**content warning:**
domestic violence)
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- T 2/4** *Woman Hollering Creek*, "Eyes of Zapata" (**content warning:** graphic
violence)
Read Ana Castillo's "Brujas and Curanderas" (Canvas)
- TH 2/6** Prompts for Essay One
Woman Hollering Creek, "Bien Pretty"
Due by Saturday at midnight: Topic Proposal for Essay One
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- T 2/11** **PEER REVIEW ESSAY ONE**
- TH 2/13** Revision Workshop
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- T 2/18** Context: West Indian Migration to the U.S.
Brown Girl, Brownstones Book 1 and Book 2
Philip Kasnitz, "The Three West Indian Immigrations" (Canvas)
- TH 2/20** **ESSAY ONE DUE**
Context: Paule Marshall and African-American Literature
Brown Girl, Brownstones Book 3 chs. 1-4
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- T 2/25** *Brown Girl, Brownstones* Book 3 chs. 5-7
- TH 2/27** **Reading Quiz 2**
Brown Girl, Brownstones, Book 3, chs. 8-10
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- T 3/3** *Brown Girl, Brownstones* Book 4 chs. 1-4 (**content warning:**
homophobia)
- TH 3/5** *Brown Girl, Brownstones* Book 4 chs. 5-8 (**content warning:**
homophobia)
Due by Saturday at midnight: Reading Response 2
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- T 3/10** **Exam Review**
Brown Girl, Brownstones Book 4 chs. 9-11
 Read W.E.B. Du Bois's "Of Our Spiritual Strivings" (Canvas)
- TH 3/12** **EXAM**
- T 3/17** **SPRING BREAK**
- TH 3/19** **SPRING BREAK**
- T 3/24** Context: Louise Erdrich, Anishinaabe History, and Native American Literature
Love Medicine, "The World's Greatest Fisherman" and "The Beads" (**content warning:** self-harm)
 Doerfler, Sinclair, and Stark, "Bagijige: Making an Offering" (Canvas)
- TH 3/26** *Love Medicine*, "Saint Marie" and "Wild Geese" (**content warning:** child abuse)
Due Saturday at midnight: Reading Response 3
- T 3/31** *Love Medicine*, "The Island" and "The Plunge of the Brave"
 Thomas King, "You're Not the Indian I Had in Mind" (Canvas)
- TH 4/2** **Reading Quiz 3**
Love Medicine "Flesh and Blood" and "Love Medicine"
- F 4/3** **LAST DROP DAY**
- T 4/7** *Love Medicine*, "Crown of Thorns" and "Resurrection" (**content warning:** domestic violence, self-harm)
- TH 4/9** *Love Medicine* "The Good Tears" and "Crossing the Water"
Due Saturday at midnight: Reading Response 4
- T 4/14** Context: Viet Thanh Nguyen, Vietnamese History, and Asian American Literature
The Refugees, "Black Eyed Women" and "War Years" (**content warning:** sexual assault, violence)
 Ellen D. Wu, "Imperatives of Asian American Citizenship" (Canvas)
- TH 4/16** **Reading Quiz 4**
 Introduction to Final Essay Prompts
The Refugees, "I'd Love You to Want Me" and "Fatherland"

T 4/21 *The Refugees*, “On Being a Refugee, an American—And a Human Being”
Read Isabelle Thuy Pelaud, “Hybridity” (Canvas)

TH 4/23 Context: Mai Der Vang, Hmong History and Literature
Afterland, “Dear Soldier of the Secret War”; “Transmigration”; “Dear Exile”
(**content warning**: violence)
Mai Neng Moua, “Introduction” from *Bamboo among the Oaks* (Canvas)
Due Saturday at midnight: Reading Response 5

T 4/28 *Afterland*, “Final Dispatch from Laos” and “Your Mountain Lies Down with
You” (**content warning**: violence)

TH 4/30 **Library Instruction Day**
**Due Saturday at midnight: Topic Proposal and Bibliography for Final
Paper**

T 5/5 **Individual Conferences for Final Essay**

TH 5/7 **PEER REVIEW FOR FINAL ESSAY**

5/11 FINAL PAPERS AND REVISED SHORT ESSAYS DUE BY 2:30PM