Course title and number: ENGL 338.501: American Ethnic Literature
Term: Spring 2013
Meeting times and location: MWF 11:30-12:20 5 3XX LAAH

Instructor information:
Name: Dr. Larry Oliver
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Office location: 5XX LAAH

Catalog Description: Multi-ethnic study of American Literature, the writings of Black Americans, American Indians, Latinos/Latinas, Jewish Americans, as well as other ethnic groups.

Description:

Students in this course will read and discuss a wide variety of literary works by American writers of different racial and ethnic origins. Major themes explored include double consciousness, cultural hybridity, critical whiteness, passing, immigration and assimilation, exclusion and marginalization, geographical and psychological displacement, environmental injustice. This course will ultimately reveal how wider social forces shape the philosophical outlooks and aesthetic sensibilities of American writers of different ethnic and racial origins and help students develop an appreciation for what the study of literature of ethnic groups that may be different from theirs can teach us about ourselves and our shared humanity. Material from this course will include written texts and such visual representations as photographs, illustrations, films, or theatrical performances.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Identify the rich diversity of themes, styles, and genres that form the modern multicultural literatures of the United States
2. Articulate the complexities of “ethnic” and “American” identities
3. Articulate valid interpretations of the assigned readings in their historical and social contexts
4. Apply such factors as race, class, and gender to shape the composition and interpretation of texts and their associated visual representations.
5. Respond respectfully to perspectives and values different from one’s own.
6. Write clear, concise, and grammatically correct analyses of literary texts.
7. Correctly cite page references parenthetically within an essay.
8. Use the MLA database to locate scholarly commentary on literary texts.

Core Curriculum Objectives:

Critical Thinking Skills (CTS): The course will enhance critical thinking skills through consistent reading and class discussion of key ideas in works by American writers of different racial and ethnic origins.
Communication Skills (CS): The course enhances communication skills through small and large group discussion of ideas, issues, questions, and themes central to course readings and their associated visual representations.

Personal Responsibility (PR): The course will enhance personal responsibility through engagement with moral and thorny ethical issues that arise in class readings.

Social Responsibility (SR): The course enhances social responsibility by providing students with a cross cultural understanding of how history, region, and broader social forces have shaped the distinctive literary traditions in works by American writers of different racial and ethnic origins.

Evaluation of Core Objectives

CTS: The evaluation of critical thinking skills will be based on exams and class participation and may include written work. Exams will be designed to allow students to demonstrate their ability to evaluate and synthesize key ideas from the assigned reading. Class room discussion will focus on helping students better understand the nuances and complexities in works by American writers of different racial and ethnic origins.

CS: The course will help students learn how to develop a greater understanding of American writers of different racial and ethnic origins that may involve guided writing assignments in which they will receive feedback, exams in which students will be expected to effectively convey key ideas from the course succinctly and clearly; and class room discussion in which students will learn how to express questions and thoughts about the subtleties of each text under examination. Material from this course will include written texts and such visual representations as photographs, illustrations, films, or theatrical performances.

PR: The course material throughout the semester will offer students an opportunity to reflect upon personal responsibility through such topics as immigration and assimilation, exclusion and marginalization, geographical and psychological displacement, decimation of Native American peoples and cultures, blatant and subtle forms of discrimination, and environmental injustice. Students will explore these topics through group discussion, writing assignments, and exams.

SR: The evaluation of social responsibility will be based upon an end-of-the-semester short writing assignment in which students will be asked to reflect upon how their knowledge of literatures from previous historical periods and cultures outside of their own has changed in light of the new information that they now possess. Students will be expected to demonstrate how key insights from the course have helped broaden their understanding of how history, culture, and philosophical outlooks have shaped the literary traditions of American writers of different racial and ethnic origins.

Required Textbooks:


**Course Requirements:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Response to a special event or film</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Response papers (5 x 3%)</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exam #1</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exam #2</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td>30%</td>
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</tbody>
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Grading Scale: 90-100 = A; 80-89 = B; 70-79 = C; 60-69 = D; 59 and below = F

Exams will be composed of short questions, written in class in a bluebook. Items will be drawn from the readings and class lectures. On the final exam students will be asked to answer a question in which they will have to reflect upon how their knowledge of literatures from historical periods and cultures that may be different from their own has changed in light of the new information that they now possess.

Response papers: 300-400 words, typed, double-spaced. Papers will be penalized 1 point for being poorly written.

*For Attendance policy* see University Student Rules: [http://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule07](http://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule07)

*The University Writing Center*, which is located on the second floor of Evans Library, offers a variety of resources, including peer tutors, that can help you improve your writing. Visit: [http://writingcenter.tamu.edu/](http://writingcenter.tamu.edu/)

- **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Policy Statement**
  The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact Disability Services, in Cain Hall, Room B118, or call 845-1637. For additional information visit [http://disability.tamu.edu](http://disability.tamu.edu).

- **Academic Integrity Statement and Policy**
  "An Aggie does not lie, cheat or steal, or tolerate those who do." For additional information, please visit: [aggiehonortamu.edu](http://aggiehonortamu.edu)

**SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS**

An asterisk by the title indicates that you must write a response paper to a segment of the book *before* that segment is discussed in class. I will likely send you announcements, supplemental
information, or adjustments to the assignments during the semester, so please check your TAMU email account each day.

(*Growing Up Ethnic in America is abbreviated below as Growing Up.*)

**Week 1**  
Course introduction. What is American “ethnic” literature? What is “American” culture?


MLK holiday – no classes

**Week 2**  
James Weldon Johnson, chap. 1 of *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* and “Brothers” (in *Autobiography* 135-37)

*Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (chaps. 2-10)

Finish *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*

**Week 3**  
**Writing Workshop**


**Week 4**  
*Leslie Marmon Silko, Ceremony* (to 37)

*Ceremony* (37-94)

*Ceremony* (94-140)

**Week 5**  
Finish *Ceremony*

Review and practice questions

Exam #1 (bring bluebook)

**Week 6**  
Poetry

Sherman Alexie, “This Is What It Means” (*Growing Up* 287-301) and Sandra Cisneros, “Mercans” in *Growing Up* (169-72)

*Helena Viramontes, Under the Feet of Jesus* (to 46)

**Week 7**  
*Under the Feet of Jesus* (49-90)

*Under the Feet of Jesus* (90-130)
Finish *Under the Feet of Jesus*

**Spring Break**

**Week 8**  


Roshni Rustomji, “Thanksgiving in a Monsoonless Land” (*Growing Up* 326-410)

**Week 9**  
Exam #2

* Toni Morrison, *A Mercy* (to 9)

Toni Morrison Continued.

**Week 10**  
*A Mercy* (9-83)

*A Mercy* (84-119)


**Week 11**  
Lucinda Roy, “Effigies” (*Mixed* 47-64)


**Week 12**  
* Moustafa Bayouni, *How Does It Feel to Be a Problem?* (Preface and Rasha)

*How Does It Feel* (Sami)

*How Does It Feel* (Akram)

**Week 13**  
Diane Abu Jaber, “My Elizabeth” (*Mixed* 97-116)


Danzy Senna, “Triad” (*Mixed* 309-24)

**Week 14**  

(Redefined day) Last class meeting

**Final Exam.** On the final exam students will be asked to answer a question in which they will have to reflect upon how their knowledge of literatures from previous historical periods and cultures that may be different from their own has changed in light of the new information that they now possess. Students will be expected to demonstrate how key insights from the course have helped broaden their understanding of how history, culture, and philosophical outlooks have shaped the literary traditions of American writers of different racial and ethnic origins.