English 2335.001: Themes and Genres in the Literature of the Americas

Spring 2012
MW 3:30-4:45
BH-103

Instructor: Dr. Deidre Hall
Office: FC 256
Phone: 361-825-3739
Email: deidre.hall@tamucc.edu
Office hours: MTWR 3-3:30 and 4:45-5:30; and by appointment

Course Description

“Each time I sailed from Spain to the Indies I found that when I reached a point of a hundred leagues west of the Azores, the heavens, the stars, the temperature of the air and the waters of the sea abruptly changed….” Christopher Columbus, *Narrative of the Third Voyage, 1498-1500*

In this course, we will consider changing representations of the Americas, from the first descriptions by European explorers and settlers of a lush but dangerous land—profoundly “different” from their homelands—to nineteenth-century attempts to reinforce perceived cultural boundaries between North and South America, to twentieth-century efforts to change or to erase those same boundaries. Along the way, we will think and talk about the ways in which our authors use the rhetorical tools, particularly genre, at their disposal to influence readers.

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Recognize the connections between literary works and their social, historical, and cultural contexts
- Respond critically to literary works

Required texts

In addition to the following texts that you will need to purchase, shorter readings will be available under “Course Documents” on Blackboard. Also, make sure to check your student email regularly for important messages and updates.

- Derounian-Stodola, Kathryn Zabelle, ed. *Women’s Indian Captivity Narratives*
- Melville, Herman. *Benito Cereno*
- Hurston, Zora Neale. *Tell My Horse: Voodoo and Life in Haiti and Jamaica*
- Cisneros, Sandra. *The House on Mango Street*
Graded Activity
Your final grade breaks down this way:

- **60%** Exams
  3 in-class exams, consisting of a set of identifications and an essay, at 20% each; note that our course schedule includes ample review for each exam.

- **20%** Essay
  Short essay (4-5 pages; approximately 1000 words) responding to one of our texts, due in advance of our class discussion; you will sign up for a particular text and receive a detailed assignment sheet during the second week of class.

- **20%** Class Participation
  Class participation includes regular contributions to class discussion; unannounced reading quizzes; short in-class writing assignments; and periodic group work.

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**My Expectations and Policies**

**Attendance**
Regular attendance is essential to your success in this class. Please arrive on time: repeated tardiness will lower your participation grade. Students are allowed a maximum of three absences without a grade penalty. Four absences will lower your participation grade by one letter grade; five absences will lower your final grade by two letter grades. Six absences will result in failure of the course. I am aware that sometimes crises (such as serious illness or family issues) do arise during the course of the semester; please let me know as soon as possible if you are dealing with an exceptional situation that is interfering with your schoolwork. I may ask you to provide documentation in order to excuse certain absences or to offer makeup exams. If you are absent, check your email for any announcements and obtain notes from a classmate (or two). I will be happy to answer your questions regarding missed classes after you have reviewed the notes.

**Participation and Preparation**
This course demands not only your regular attendance but also your active participation. Although this class generally follows a lecture format, every class meeting will include some discussion. Please complete all assigned readings prior to each class (see attached course schedule). As you read, begin to think critically about how each text speaks to previous readings and what new ideas it raises. I certainly don’t expect you to have all the answers to these questions—we’ll work through them together as a class—but I do expect you to contribute regularly to class discussion.

**Late Work**
A penalty of one letter grade per day late applies to any work not turned in on time. If you provide me with documentation of an illness or an emergency, the penalty will not apply.
**Academic Integrity**
All work completed for this class must be your own. If you paraphrase, summarize, or quote from outside sources in your short essay, follow MLA citation guidelines; please don’t hesitate to ask me if you are unsure about citing sources. Any instances of plagiarism or cheating will be prosecuted to the fullest extent according to University regulations.

**Electronic Devices**
Please turn off and disengage with phones before class. If you wish to take notes on a laptop, you will need to sit in the first rows of the lecture hall.

**Notice to Students with Disabilities**
Texas A&M University Corpus Christi complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act in making reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. If you suspect that you may have a disability (physical impairment, learning disability, psychiatric disability, etc.), please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities Office, located in Driftwood 101, at 825-5816. If you need disability accommodations in this class, please see me as soon as possible.

**Academic Advising**
The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. The Academic Advisor will set up a degree plan, which must be signed by the student, a faculty mentor, and the department chair. The College’s Academic Advising Center is located in Driftwood 203E, and can be reached at 825-3466.

**Grade Appeal Process**
As stated in University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, and University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. These documents are accessible through the University Rules web site at [http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html](http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html). For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Office of Student Affairs.

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**Helpful Hints**

**Use the Writing Center**
The Writing Center offers assistance with any writing assignment for any class. I offer extra credit (added to your participation grade) for Writing Center visits. You’ll need to bring me a stamped sheet from the Writing Center to receive your extra credit. See the Writing Center website (http://casa.tamucc.edu/tutoring.php?subject=writing_center) for hours and info.
Talk to Me
Feel free to drop by office hours or make an appointment to see me about any questions or concerns. I can help you to navigate any hurdles that may be popping up if I know what those challenges are.

Course Schedule
Make sure that you have completed the assigned readings before each indicated class meeting.
Readings available on Blackboard are marked “Bb.”

Week 1
1/12  Course introduction

Week 2
1/17  Understanding genre; defining “America”
1/19  “Two Accounts of Creation” (Bb); Columbus, from Journal of the First Voyage to America (Bb); signups for response papers (in class)

Week 3
1/24  Yuchi, “Creation of the Whites”; Handsome Lake, “How America Was Discovered” (Bb)
1/26  Champlain, from The Voyages of Samuel de Champlain, 1604-1618 (Bb)

Week 4
1/31  Bradstreet, “The Prologue [To Her Book]” and “The Author to Her Book” (Bb)
2/2   Inés de la Cruz, “In Reply to a Gentleman from Peru” (Bb)

Week 5
2/7   Derounian-Stodola, A True History of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson
2/9   Rowlandson, con’t

Week 6
2/14  Franklin, “Remarks Concerning the Savages of North America”; Apess, “An Indian’s Looking Glass for the White Man” (Bb)
2/16  Derounian-Stodola, A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison

Week 7
2/21  Jemison, con’t; practice essay and exam review
2/23  Exam #1

Week 8
2/28  Olmsted, from A Journey through Texas (Bb)
3/1   Thoreau, “Resistance to Civil Government” (Bb)

Week 9
3/6   Thoreau, con’t; Child, from Appeal in Favor of That Class of Americans Called Africans (Bb)
3/8   Melville, Benito Cereno

3/12-3/16 Spring Break

Week 10
3/20  Melville, Benito Cereno
3/22  Melville, con’t

Week 11
3/27  Melville, con’t; exam review
3/29  Exam #2

Week 12
4/3    Hurston
4/5    Hurston, con’t

Week 13
4/10   Hurston, con’t
4/12   Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street*

Week 14
4/17   Cisneros, con’t
4/19   Yamashita, *Tropic of Orange*

Week 15
4/24   Yamashita, con’t
4/26   Yamashita, con’t

Week 16
5/1    Exam #3