English 4361.001: Ethnic American Literature: Border Literature

Class Meeting Time: TR 11:00-12:15  
Class Location: OCNR 132  
Instructor: Kevin Concannon  
Office: Faculty Center 262  
Office Hours: M 10-11, TTH 1-2, 3:15-4:15 and by appointment  
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Semester: Spring 2012

Course Description: This course is designed to provide an overview of contemporary Chicana/o African American and Native American literature and culture. The class will be organized in a loose chronological framework—beginning with the Chicano Movement—but we will be primarily interested in drawing transcultural connections between the works that we read.

Since literature involves more than reading texts, but involves history, the environment, culture, gender and politics, we will take the time to explore the larger context of many of the works we are reading. In other words, we will explore the various ideas, historical occurrences, and political changes that help to inform the production of the material we explore in class. To this end, the exams and worksheets will be more than “reading tests,” but will also include questions about a work’s context, seeking to place a text in a larger flow of ideas and historical changes.

Required Texts:

Acosta, Oscar Zeta. *The Revolt of the Cockroach People*  
Butler, Octavia. *Kindred*  
Erdrich, Louise. *Tracks*  
Escandón, María. *Esperanza’s Box of Saints*  
Islas, Arturo. *The Rain God*  
Johnson, Charles. *The Middle Passage*  
King, Thomas. *Truth and Bright Water*

Student Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will be able to analyze the meaning of an “American” literature from a multicultural perspective in order to understand the changing makeup of national identity.  
2. Students will be able to demonstrate presentation skills and the ability to lead class discussion.  
3. Students will be able to write critically and creatively in order to explore literature.  
4. Students will be able to analyze literature within a larger social, historical and cultural context.  
5. Students will be able to demonstrate their knowledge of MLA citation.

Course Requirements:

Class Participation: 10 points (5%)  
Midterm and Final Exam: 50 points each (50%)  
Collaborative Teaching Activity: 15 points (7.5%)  
2 Short Analytical Essays: 10 points each (10%)  
Research Essay: 20 points (10%)  
Creative Essay: 15 points (7.5%)  
Class Work: 20 points (10%)
1. Attendance: Much of this class will be conducted as a mixture of discussion and lecture, so you should come to class every day and be prepared to talk about the assigned readings. You may miss two classes without penalty. After that, two points will be deducted from your final grade for every class you miss.

2. Midterm and Final Exam (SLO #1, #3, #4): The exams will include essay questions and identifications of quotes and terms taken from the readings and class discussion. The final exam will not be cumulative but will include an essay question that addresses the readings throughout the semester.

3. Collaborative Teaching Activity (SLO #1, #2, #4): Working with one other student in the class, you both will spend a total of 10-15 minutes discussing/analyzing an assigned work of literature. Your presentation should make clear the historical context of the work as well as explain or identify important terms, themes or ideas. Please do not read from a prepared essay or from a PowerPoint presentation (though PowerPoint can be used). You should encourage class involvement by asking questions, providing handouts etc. Please feel free to meet with me before your presentation.

4. Analytical Essays (SLO #1, #3, #4): The essays should be 2 pages in length and should use the MLA format. You should keep your use of secondary sources to a minimum (or not at all). No late papers will be accepted for any written assignment (including the research or creative essay).

5. Research Essay (SLO #1, #3, #4, #5): This essay of 5-7 pages is due near the end of the semester and will allow you the opportunity to expand on one of the short essays you wrote earlier in the semester or to analyze one of the other texts in class. You must incorporate secondary sources in this essay and follow the MLA format.

6. Creative Essay (SLO #3): In this assignment, you want to write a short story or cycle of poems that draw upon one or more of the ideas discussed in class. You will also include with this writing a reflection letter that will explain the rhetorical choices and the thematic connections you have made.

7. Class Work (SLO #1 and #4): There will be occasional in-class assignments that will be handed in for a grade. The assignments cannot be made up, but there will be opportunities in class for extra credit.

Course Evaluation:

180-200: A  
160-179: B  
140-159: C  
120-139: D  
119 and below: F

Reminder to English Majors: As part of the English undergraduate capstone course (ENGL 4351), all English majors are required to submit a portfolio of writings in different discourse genres that they have completed for their college classes. To help you prepare for this assignment, you should keep a copy of all essays, research papers, literary analyses, creative and report writing, etc., so that you will have an ample selection from which to choose when the portfolio comes due.

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.

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 CCH 116 and 119, at 825-5816. If you need disability accommodations in this class, please see me as soon as possible.

Course Schedule:
*Minor changes may be made during the course the semester.

**Week 1: Introductions and Class Overview (January 12)**

**Week 2: The Chicano Movement (Jan. 17/19)**
*Readings: Ruben Salazar: “Who is a Chicano? And What is it the Chicanos Want?” (handout), Rudy Gonzales “I am Joaquin” (handout), Judy Baca “Our Land Has Memory” (mural), Lorna Dee Cervantes “Poem for the Young White Man Who Asked Me How I, an Intelligent, Well-Read Person Could Believe in the War Between Races” (handout) Begin reading *The Revolt of the Cockroach People*

**Week 3: The Chicano Movement con’t (January 24/26)**
*Readings: Continue reading *The Revolt of the Cockroach People*.

**Week 4: The Borderlands: Politics, Imperialism, and Cultural Expression (Jan. 31/Feb. 2)**
**Analytical Essay due February 7 on The Revolt of the Cockroach People***

**Week 5: The Borderlands con’t: Religion, Hope, and Despair (Feb. 7/9)**
*Readings: Continue reading *The Rain God*

**Week 6: The Borderlands con’t: Gender and Violence (Feb. 14/16)**
*Readings: Finish Reading *The Rain God*. Read Alicia Gaspar de Alba *Desert Blood* (handout). Start reading María Escandón’s *Esperanza’s Box of Saints*

**Week 7: Religion, Faith and Identity (Feb. 21/23)**
*Readings: Continue reading *Esperanza’s Box of Saints*
Week 8: The Disappearance of the Border? (Feb. 28/March 1)  
*Readings: Finish reading Esperanza’s Box of Saints. Start reading Charles Johnson’s The Middle Passage  
Analytical Essay due March 1 on The Rain God or Esperanza’s Box of Saints

Week 9: Midterm: March 6

Week 10: Spring Break (March 13/15)

Week 11: Towards a Border Chronology (March 20/22)  
*Readings: Finish discussion of The Middle Passage. Begin reading Octavia Butler’s Kindred

Week 12: Crossings (March 27/29)  
*Readings: Continue discussion of Kindred  
Creative Essay due: March 29

Week 13: Mapping Difference/Discovering Home(s) (April 3/5)  
*Readings: Finish discussion of Kindred. Start reading Louise Erdrich’s Tracks

Week 14: Home con’t. (April 10/12)  
*Readings: Continue discussion of Tracks

Week 15: Canadian-US Border: The Politics of Home (April 17/19)  
*Readings: Finish reading Tracks. Start reading Thomas King’s Truth and Bright Water  
Research Essay due: April 19

Week 16: The Politics of Home con’t (April 24/26)  
*Readings: Finish reading Truth and Bright Water

Week 17: Final: May 1