Themes and Genres in the Literatures of the Americas: Hemispheric Studies

Course Description: The themes and genres of American literature are not constant but alter according to scholarly consensus. When literary historians traced the beginnings of American literature from Puritan writers to those of the American Renaissance (i.e., Emerson and Hawthorne), the themes and genres of American literature were construed to be those of a specifically U.S. national literature. As a result, scholars analyzed genres, such as the “great American novel,” and looked for recurring characters, such as the “American Adam,” which they thought were exemplary of this idea of American literature. In recent years, this nationalist frame has been challenged by scholars who argue that American literature should denote not just that of the U.S. nation but also the literatures of the hemisphere spanning from Greenland to the Tierra del Fuego. Broadening the definition of American literature to include texts from across the continent means the context in which we understand this literature must also change. For example, whereas studying the histories of the American Revolution and U.S. Civil War may have sufficed for understanding the development of a nationalist American literature, now scholars look to the U.S.-Mexican and Spanish-American wars as contexts in which to understand the work of authors from Tennessee to Mexico, Pennsylvania to Cuba. This course takes the latter approach to analyze and understand the themes and genres of a more broadly conceived American literature. Prerequisites: ENGL 1301 and ENGL 1302.

Student Learning Outcomes:
- Identify particular genres and themes in literatures from a range of cultures within the Americas.
- Recognize the connections between literary works and their social, historical, and cultural contexts.
- Respond critically to literary works.
- Create an argument about a text using library resources to produce a research paper.
- Use writing as a tool for learning.

Required Texts: Child, Hobomok (Rutgers, 1986)
Pickens, The Free Flag of Cuba (LSU Press, 2002)
Verdecchia, Fronteras Americanas (Talon Books, 1997)
Xicoténcatl (UT Press, 1999)
All other readings available through Blackboard

Recommended Text: MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers (7th edition)

Grading: Essays=35% (essay 1=15%, essay 2=20%); Exams=30% (midterm=15%, final=15%); Participation=25%; Annotated Bibliography Project=10%

Particulars:
- Participation: Students participate by responding to questions posed by myself and their classmates and by asking their own questions about our readings. The completion of short assignments, such as the scavenger hunt, moderation of online discussion, as well as regular blogging will be factored into the participation grade.
• Blogging: Students must post to the classroom blog at least two days per week: once before Wednesday and again after Tuesday but before Friday. Each entry need be no longer than a paragraph and must conclude by posing a question that demonstrates critical thinking about the material. (In other words, avoid asking a question that can be answered by a quick Internet search.) This entry must be about the assigned reading for that week, but you may also use the post to further develop an issue that came up in a discussion from a previous week. Students must engage their fellow bloggers.

• Moderation: Once during the semester, students working in small groups assigned by me will collate all blog entries for the week and use them to formulate questions that will guide online discussion for the following week. Thus, students must be in touch with their group mates; each group member will evaluate his/her colleagues’ participation.

• Essays: Students will write two essays—one close-reading essay of three to five pages, the other a research essay of five to seven pages. Although the first essay will not require outside sources, both essays must include a Works Cited page and will be evaluated according to content (i.e., strength of the thesis statement, organization) and grammar.

• Annotated Bibliography Project: This project is progressive and will build into your final research paper. In the first part, students must demonstrate knowledge of how to use research tools. In the second part, students will use those tools to find one source related to the topic of their research paper and will write an annotation of that source. Each part of this assignment must be completed to receive credit.

• Exams: A midterm and final exam will test students on the course material using a combination of identifications, short answer and essays.

Policies:

Late work: Extensions will be granted for essays (and essays only), no questions asked, if the request is made at least 48 hours before the essay due date. Essays arriving after the due date (or extension date) will be down-graded 1/3 of a grade for each elapsed calendar day. For example, an A paper would become an A- if handed in after it is due. (Structure the time allotted for writing in a way that allows for mishaps, such as glitches with technology.) Exams, on the other hand, are timed and may not be made up.

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity: Students are expected to follow the Academic Honor Code strictly: http://studentaffairs.tamucc.edu/TAMUCC_student_handbook.pdf
Academic misconduct will result in an F on the assignment in question or, in serious cases, expulsion from this class.

Dropping a class: The Registrar’s policy is available here: http://registrar.tamucc.edu/6drop.html

Criteria: Grading criteria is located on the left column of our course site under the Rubrics link.

Technical Support and Requirements: To prepare your computer for using Blackboard 9.1, go to https://iol.tamucc.edu/techreq.php. Blackboard tutorials and help links available on the left column of our course site. IOL Helpdesk contact information: (361) 825-2825 or via email to iol.support@tamucc.edu.
Additional software requirements: PDF files require Adobe Reader; download at: http://get.adobe.com/reader/; files from sites, such as You Tube, might require flash; download at: http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/.

Notice to Students with Disabilities: 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 call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall 116. If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom, or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance.

**Academic Advising:** It is imperative that all students visit regularly with an academic adviser. Each college within the university has an academic advising center, staffed by full-time, professional advisers to assist students with course selection, degree plans, and other academic matters. To find out how to contact the right adviser, go to: [http://www.tamucc.edu/academics/advising.php](http://www.tamucc.edu/academics/advising.php). Students who have yet to declare a major are advised by the Academic Advising Transition Center. For more information, go to: [http://www.tamucc.edu/~aac](http://www.tamucc.edu/~aac)

**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.

**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.


**University Counseling Center:** Confidential counseling services are available by calling (361) 825-2703. [http://counseling.tamucc.edu/](http://counseling.tamucc.edu/)

**Citation Style:** MLA

**Schedule:**

**Unit 1. Politics and Poetics of Discovery, 1492-1992**
Columbus, from *The Four Voyages* (1492-1506)
Barlow, “The Vision of Columbus” (1787)
Flip Wilson, “Christopher Columbus” (1967)
Rushdie, “Christopher Columbus and Queen Isabella of Spain Consummate Their Relationship, Santa Fe, January, 1492” (1991); *Columbiana Scavenger Hunt*

**Unit 2. Foundational Fictions: Historical Romance and Nation-Building in America**
Child, *Hobomok* (1824); Annotated Bibliography Project (part one)

*Xicoténcatl* (1826); Essay 1

**Unit 3. Imagining Empire: Manifest Destiny, Filibustering and Slavery**

Delany, from *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States* (1852)

Whitman, “Song of Myself” (1855); Midterm

Pickens, *The Free Flag of Cuba* (1854); Annotated Bibliography Project (part two)

**Unit 4. Hemispheric Routes**

Martí, “Nuestra América” (1891)

Darío, “To Roosevelt” (1904)

Davis, “General William Walker” (1906)

Neruda, from *Canto General* (1944); Essay 2 Due

**Unit 5. Contemporary Transnational Writing**

Verdecchia, *Fronteras Americanas* (1997); Final