English 5349.001: “The (Un)rest of the Story: Crossing Borders, Crossing Nations”

Class Meeting Time: T 7:00-9:30
Classroom: BH 234
Instructor: Kevin Concannon
Office: FC 262
Office Hours: TR 2:00-4:00, W 10-11 and by appointment
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Course Description:
During a recent presidential address to the American Studies Association, Shelley Fisher Fishkin asked “What does it mean to be ‘included’ in or ‘excluded’ from the nation?” This class will take this question as a starting point, examining the power of the nation to marginalize by constructing borders. We will also be interested in how individual or community movement across borders complicates the contours of the nation. Our interest will be comparative in examining the varied construction of national spaces, moving beyond the geographic representation of the border to explore the different “figurative” divisions of race, ethnicity and class that help to determine belonging within the United States.

We will explore texts from a variety of genres, including novels, short stories, plays, and essays that represent a hemispheric understanding of US literature. In this course, we will spend time looking to define what is meant by the/a border, and the ways in which movement back and forth across borders is overdetermined by race and gender. In this way we will explore the United States and the Americas within a transnational context in the hope to understand in what ways labels such “included” and “excluded” can be conceived as synonymous.

Course Requirements:
Attendance and Class Participation (10 points): You can miss one class without penalty; for every subsequent class you miss, five points will be deducted from your grade.

Presentation/Facilitation (15 points). You will be responsible for facilitating one class discussion over the course of the semester. Your responsibilities will include: 1) Presenting to the class the historical and cultural context of your chosen text. 2) Examining specific parts of the text in an effort to explain its deeper meaning and to develop your overall approach to the text. 3) Connecting the text to other works that we have discussed in class or to outside texts (be they examples from other literary texts, films, videos etc). 4) Developing questions to prompt class discussion. 5) Responding to comments made in class.

You should not see the presentations as exhaustive in scope, but rather they should be seen as a means of developing ideas (and suggested approaches) that we as a class can explore further during the rest of the semester. Please feel free to meet with me before your presentation.

Short Argumentative Essays (15 points). There will be three short essays that will be due this semester. Each essay will be worth five points and should be seen as an opportunity to examine in some detail a question or point of interest you have with the assigned reading. The essays should not just reflect class discussion, but can use class discussion as a jumping off point. Be careful to choose an idea about which you can create an argument, rather than only a description (2 pages).

Take-Home Midterm (20 points). This midterm will be modeled on the MA exam. However, you will only be required to respond to one of the two questions and you will have the full five days to answer the question (in the MA exam you will have to answer two questions, one from each chosen track). You will be able to pick up the exam on Thursday, October 4th and it must be returned on October 8th by noon. Your response should be approximately eight pages in length. Exam questions will not be sent via email nor will exam responses be accepted via email.

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Final Project (40 points): Your final project should be 10-15 pages in length. Your essay should follow the MLA format as well as draw upon and evaluate secondary sources. Your project must explore how the border is represented in American literature, and can develop in more depth one of the shorter essays you have written over the semester. Similar to your presentation, your final project should provide examples of close textual readings as well as an understanding of the larger historical and social context. Your essay should show connections between secondary and primary sources as well as underscore possible tensions between these different sources.

Grades:
90-100: A
80-89: B
70-79: C
60-69: D
59 and below: F

Required Texts:
Alvarez, Julia. *In the Time of Butterflies*
Escandón, María. *González & Daughter Trucking Co.*
Islas, Arturo. *The Rain God*
Menendez, Ana. *Adios, Happy Homeland!*
Ortiz Cofer, Judith. *The Latin Deli*
Verdecchia, Guillermo. *Fronteras Americanas*

Student Learning Outcomes:
1. Students will be able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of literary terms, concepts, periods and critical approaches. 
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. 

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: 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:** Upon entering the MA in English Program, each student is assigned a faculty mentor by the Graduate Coordinator. You should make an appointment to meet with your faculty mentor every semester to develop a degree plan and monitor your progress toward graduation. Your faculty mentor can also answer questions and provide valuable information about the comprehensive examination, other degree requirements, Ph.D. programs, and career opportunities. To finalize your degree plan and register for graduation, you must also meet with the Graduate Student Academic Advisor in the Academic Advising Center for the College of Liberal Arts. This office is located in Driftwood 203E and can be reached at (361) 825-3466.

**Graduate Student Academic Integrity Statement:** English graduate students are expected to "conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty" (Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi Graduate Catalog). The Student Code of Conduct defines Academic Misconduct as cheating, plagiarism, multiple submissions, complicity, fabrication, falsification, and misrepresentation; in addition to "any behavior specifically prohibited by a faculty member in the course syllabus or class discussion" (Student Code of Conduct, Article III, 1. Academic Misconduct). Academic misconduct is a serious offense that will result in the professor assigning a serious penalty, possibly including failure for an assignment, failure in a course, or recommendation for dismissal from a program (TAMUCC Graduate Catalog, Academic Honesty). For each Academic Misconduct case, the faculty member must file a record, including a description of the disciplinary action taken, along with any materials involved, with his or her college dean, who will forward a copy to the Office of Student Affairs. Further information regarding the judicial process is available on the website of the Office for Student Affairs.

**Course Outline:**

**Tuesday, August 28:** Introductions; Review of Syllabus; Mary Pat Brady, “Border” (in *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*), David E. Johnson and Scott Michaelson, “Border Secrets: An Introduction” and Thomas King “Borders”

**Tuesday, September 4:** History and Definitions (con’t): Oscar J. Martinez, *Troublesome Border*, pp. 3-29; Leslie Marmon Silko, “The Border Patrol State.” Start reading *González & Daughter Trucking Co*


**Tuesday, September 18:** Violence and the Nation: Marissa K. Lopez “Nuevas Fronteras/ New Frontiers” and Alicia Gaspar de Alba, *Desert Blood* (pp. 1-33). Begin reading Julia Alvarez’s *In the Time of the Butterflies*.

**Tuesday, September 25:** Transnational American Studies: Read Randolph Bourne’s “Trans-national America” and Shelley Fisher Fishkin’s “The Transnational Turn in American Studies.” Continue reading *In the Time of the Butterflies*.

**Tuesday, October 2:** Post-National American Studies: Finish reading *In the Time of the Butterflies*. Read “Introduction to Post-Nationalist American Studies” and *Fronteras Americanas*. Short Essay #2 due.

**October 4:** **Pick up Midterm Exam at my office at noon.**

**October 8:** **Return Midterm at noon at my office. Late midterms will not be graded.**

**Tuesday, October 9:** Movement and American Identity: Begin reading Arturo Islas’ *The Rain God*.

**Tuesday, October 16:** History (Re)writing, Circularity and Hope: James Clifford “Traveling Cultures.” Continue reading *The Rain God*

Tuesday, October 30: Read Antonio Benítez-Rojo “Introduction: The Repeating Island” and begin reading *Adios, Happy Homeland!* Short Essay #3 due

Tuesday, November 6: Finish reading Ana Menéndez’s *Adios, Happy Homeland!*

Tuesday, November 13: Begin reading Judith Ortiz Cofer’s *The Latin Deli*

Tuesday, November 20: Continue Reading *The Latin Deli*

Tuesday, Nov. 27: Finish reading *The Latin Deli*

Tuesday, December 4: Research Project due.