English 4361.001: Ethnic American Literature: Transnationalism and the Border

Class Meeting Time: TR 2-3:15
Class Location: OCNR 259
Instructor: Kevin Concannon
Office: Faculty Center 262
Office Hours: TR 1-2, 3:15-4:15 and by appointment
Email: kevin.concannon@tamucc.edu
Telephone: 825-3874
Semester: Spring 2014

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, 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, 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:
Butler, Octavia. Kindred
Erdrich, Louise. Tracks
Escandón, María. Esperanza’s Box of Saints
Johnson, Charles. The Middle Passage
King, Thomas. Truth and Bright Water
Menéndez, Ana. Adios, Happy Homeland!

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 15-20 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 2-3 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 8-10 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 and quizzes 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:  Students who feel that they have not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in this class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, cla.tamucc.edu/students/studentinfo.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean.

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.

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

Week 1: Introductions and Class Overview (January 23)

Week 2: The Chicano Movement and History/Hemispheric Americas (Jan. 28/30)
*Readings: Ruben Salazar: “Who is a Chicano? And What is it the Chicanos Want?” Judy Gonzales “I am Joaquin”
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”
Mary Pat Brady “The Border” and excerpts from:
Gloria Anzaldúa, “Towards a New Consciousness”
Caroline Levander, Hemispheric American Studies
Rachel Adams, Continental Divides

Week 3: Hemispheric Americas con’t (February 4/6)
*Readings: Begin reading Esperanza’s Box of Saints

Week 4: The Borderlands: Religion and Violence (Feb. 11/Feb. 13)
*Readings: Finish reading Esperanza’s Box of Saints. Read excerpt from Alicia Gaspar de Alba’s Desert Blood.
Analytical Essay due February 13 on The Revolt of the Cockroach People

Week 5: The Borderlands Overturned Feb. 18/20)
*Readings: Begin reading Adios, Happy Homeland! Read excerpt of Linda Hutcheon’s A Poetics of Postmodernism and Edouard Glissant’s Caribbean Discourse

Week 6: The Americas (Feb. 25/27)
*Readings: Continue reading Adios, Happy Homeland!

Week 7: The Americas con’t (March 4/6)
*Readings: Finish reading Adios, Happy Homeland! Begin reading The Middle Passage
Midterm: March 6

Week 8: Spring Break (March 11/13)

Week 9: Towards a Border Chronology (March 18/20)
*Readings: Finish discussion of The Middle Passage. Begin reading Octavia Butler’s Kindred
Analytical Essay due March 18 on Adios, Happy Homeland!

Week 10: Crossings (March 25/27)
*Readings: Continue discussion of Kindred

Week 11: Mapping Difference/Discovering Home(s) (April 1/3)
*Readings: Finish discussion of Kindred. Start reading Louise Erdrich’s Tracks

Week 12: Home con’t. (April 8/10)
*Readings: Continue discussion of Tracks
Creative Essay due: April 8

*Readings: Finish reading Tracks.

Week 14: The Politics of Home and Place con’t (April 22/24)
*Readings: Start reading Truth and Bright Water

Week 15: The Politics of Home and Place con’t (April 29/May 1)
*Readings: Finish reading Truth and Bright Water
Research Essay due: April 29

Week 16: Final: May 6