English 4361.001: Ethnic American Literature: Transnationalism and the Border

Class Meeting Time: TR 2-3:15
Class Location: ECDC 219C
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 2015

Course Description:

This course is designed to provide an overview of contemporary Chicana/o, Latina/o, African American, and Native American literature and culture. While this is a vast topic, we will look at representative texts in order to explore gender and identity construction, as well as issues of cultural nationalism. We will also be interested in examining what it means to read texts transculturally, examining how different cultures express their historical identity and respond to (dis)similar experiences of oppression.

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:

Alvarez, Julia. How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents
Butler, Octavia. Kindred
Castillo, Ana. Guardians
Erdrich, Louise. Tracks
Everett, Percival. Erasure
King, Thomas. Truth and Bright Water
Paredes, Américo. George Washington Gómez

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: 5 points
Midterm and Final Exam: 50 points each
Collaborative Teaching Activity: 15 points
2 Short Analytical Essays: 5 points each
Research Essay: 40 points
Creative Essay: 10 points
Class Work (Quizzes and other Assignments): 20 points

No late papers will be accepted for any of the assignments unless: 1) there is a documented emergency and you notify me at least one day prior to the assignment’s due date.

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. In class, you may take notes or read your book via computer, cell phone or Kindle etc. I will not police your use of these items, but if it becomes disruptive to another student or to the classroom, you will be asked to turn them off.

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): These 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).

5. Research Essay (SLO #1, #3, #4, #5): This essay of 10-12 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
Classroom Behavior: Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, as an academic community, requires that each individual respect the needs of others to study and learn in a peaceful atmosphere. Under Article III of the Student Code of Conduct, classroom behavior that interferes with either (a) the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or (b) the ability of other students to profit from the instructional program may be considered a breach of the peace and is subject to disciplinary sanction outlined in article VII of the Student Code of Conduct. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior may be instructed to leave the classroom. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including classrooms, electronic classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.

Academic Integrity: University students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to penalty includes all forms of cheating, such as illicit possession of examinations or examination materials, falsification, forgery, complicity or plagiarism. (Plagiarism is the presentation of the work of another as one’s own work.) In this class, academic misconduct or complicity in an act of academic misconduct on an assignment or test will result in failure for the assignment.

Dropping a Class: I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. Please consult with me before you decide to drop to be sure it is the best thing to do. Should dropping the course be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop the course by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class. April 10 is the last day to drop a class with an automatic grade of “W” this term.

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. Degree plans are prepared in the CLA Academic Advising Center. The University uses an online Degree Audit system. Any amendment must be approved by the Department Chair and the Office of the Dean. All courses and requirements specified in the final degree plan audit must be completed before a degree will be granted. The CLA Academic Advising Office is located in Driftwood #203E. For more information please call 361-825-3466.

Grade Appeals: 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.

Disability Accommodations: 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 (361) 825-5816.

**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.

**Course Schedule:**

*Minor changes may be made during the course the semester.*

**Week 1: Introductions and Class Overview (January 22)**

**Week 2: The Chicano Movement and History/Hemispheric Americas (Jan. 29/31)**

*Readings: Ruben Salazar: “Who is a Chicano? And What is it the Chicanos Want?”
Rudy 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”

Begin reading *George Washington Gómez*

**Week 3: Hemispheric Americas con’t (February 3/5)**

*Readings: Continue reading *George Washington Gómez*
Caroline Levander, *Hemispheric American Studies*

**Week 4: The Borderlands: Religion and Violence (Feb. 10/Feb. 12)**

*Readings: Finish reading *George Washington Gómez*
Read excerpt from Alicia Gaspar de Alba’s *Desert Blood*.
Start reading *The Guardians*
**Analytical Essay due February 17**

**Week 5: The Borderlands Overturned Feb. 17/19)**

*Readings: Continue reading *The Guardians*

**Week 6: The Americas (Feb. 24/26)**

*Readings: Finish reading *The Guardians*
Read the short story “In Cuba I was a German Shepherd”
Begin reading *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*

**Week 7: Hemispheric Time in the Americas (March 3/5)**

*Readings: Continue reading *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*
Week 8: Hemispheric Time in the Americas con’t. (March 10/12)
*Readings: Finish How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents
Midterm: March 12

Week 9: Spring Break (March 17/19)

Week 10: Towards a Border Chronology (March 24/26)
*Readings: Begin reading Octavia Butler’s Kindred
Analytical Essay due March 31 on The Guardians or How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents

Week 11: Crossings (March 31/April 2)
*Readings: Finish discussion of Kindred
Begin reading Erasure

Week 12: Mapping Difference/Discovering Home(s) (April 7/9)
*Readings: Finish discussion of Erasure
Creative Essay due: April 14

Week 13: Home con’t. (April 14/16)
*Readings: Begin reading Tracks

Week 14: The Politics of Home (April 21/23)
*Readings: Finish discussion of Tracks.

Week 15: The Aesthetics of Change (April 28/30)
*Readings: Start reading Truth and Bright Water
Research Essay due: April 28

Week 16: The Aesthetics of Change con’t. (May 5)
*Readings: Finish reading Truth and Bright Water

Week 16: Final: TBA