English 5349.001
Topics and Genres in Literature:
Trauma Across the Americas
Fall 2014
T 7:00-9:30 PM
OCNR-222

Instructor: Dr. Dale Pattison
Office: Faculty Center 255
Office Hours: W 12:30-1:30; T/TH 12:30-2:30 and by appointment
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Course Description

The trauma narrative has emerged in the past several decades as a focal point for literary studies. More than just describing traumatic events, the trauma narrative invites the reader into the mind of the protagonist, simulating the psychological residue that often accompanies the processing of traumatic events. Trauma narratives strategically deny readers access to the traumatic event at the core of the text, and readers are left to navigate a textual space defined by absence and disconnection. This course examines trauma narratives across the Americas, paying particular attention to the ways in which trauma is fundamentally intertwined with the political, social, and cultural histories of the Americas. Taking a transnational approach, the course will address literature from South America, Central America, the Caribbean and the United States, attempting to find common threads within and between these diverse cultural experiences. One of the aims of this course is to demonstrate the ways in which the United States and its neighbors to the south share a history of political strife and institutional oppression. Indeed, much of the trauma experienced by characters in these texts occurs not as a result of physical violence perpetrated against them, but rather from one’s increasing awareness of individuals’ tenuous relationship to the state. Violence, to be sure, does not always entail physical harm. In addition to the six novels on the reading list, students will develop a deep understanding of trauma theory and its many iterations, and students will be expected to apply these theories in both critical essays and in-class discussions. By the end of the semester, students will be able to negotiate the terrain of trauma theory and will be equipped to confront the unique opportunities literature presents for representing and simulating trauma.

Course Texts

Bolaño, Roberto. Amulet.
Danielewski, Mark Z. House of Leaves.
Mootoo, Shani. Cereus Blooms at Night.
Silko, Leslie Marmon. Ceremony.
Spiegelman, Art. In the Shadow of No Towers.
Viramontes, Helena María. *Their Dogs Came with Them.*
Walter, Jess. *The Zero.*

**Course Grading**

The course will be structured on a 1000-point scale. The scores you receive on your writing assignments and participation will be totaled at the end of the semester, and your final grade will be calculated based on this score. The points will be distributed as follows:

- **Writing Assignment #1:** 300 points
- **Writing Assignment #2:** 400 points
- **Annotated Bibliography:** 100 points
- **Presentation on Bibliography:** 100 points
- **Participation:** 100 points

Participation will be calculated based on class attendance, participation in class discussions and preparedness for class discussions. Students will be expected to bring their text to class every day, having read the assignment due for that day.

**Course Objectives**

1. To develop a rich understanding of trauma theory, and to engage these theories critically in argumentative writing.
2. To situate primary texts within a socio-historical framework.
3. To engage the body of literary criticism surrounding the primary texts and to situate the student’s writing within this body of criticism.
4. To prepare student writing for scholarly publication, academic conferences, and entry into public discourse.
5. To improve students’ proficiency in speaking and writing about literature.
6. To situate the U.S. within a transnational political, social, and cultural milieu that includes Central America, South America, and the Caribbean.

**Student Learning Outcomes**

Students who successfully complete ENGL 5349 will be able to:

1. Recognize the connections between literary works and their social, historical, and cultural contexts
2. Respond critically to literary works and engage critical theory in sophisticated ways.
3. Communicate their ideas through cogent critical analysis of the course texts.
4. Contribute to the scholarly community by way of conference presentations, scholarly publications, etc.
5. Use research methods to access the body of criticism surrounding primary texts.
Class Policies

Academic Honesty/Plagiarism
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 automatic failure of the course and possible expulsion from the university.

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.

Policy on class attendance: Students are allowed a maximum of two (2) absences. All absences count equally, irrespective of the cause, and students who exceed two absences will be penalized one letter grade on their final grade for every absence over the limit.
• If you are unable to attend class, you do not need to email me to explain the circumstances. You should contact another student in class and copy his/her notes.

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.

If I am absent: If I need to cancel class because my car broke down, or if I am ill, etc., I will try to get someone to post a sign. I also will try to email you all before class. However, if you come to class and I am not here by the time 15 minutes has elapsed (from when class is to start), please assume that class is canceled.

Late Writing Projects: All papers are due on the date listed on the syllabus. Students submitting their papers after this time will lose one letter grade for every class period that the paper is late. Students must submit their assignments via the link provided on Blackboard.

Blackboard Grade Center: You will see grades for assignments, exams, and blackboard discussion postings appear on Blackboard during the semester. While these scores may be
useful in tracking your grade throughout the semester, they should NOT be used to calculate your final grade. Several point categories will not appear on Blackboard (such as Participation and Reading Quizzes), and only I will have access to these scores. If you are ever concerned about your grade, visit me in my office and we can discuss the issue in person.

**Statement of Academic Continuity:** In the event of an unforeseen adverse event, such as a major hurricane and classes could not be held on the campus of Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi; this course would continue through the use of Blackboard and/or email. In addition, the syllabus and class activities may be modified to allow continuation of the course. Ideally, University facilities (i.e., emails, web sites, and Blackboard) will be operational within two days of the closing of the physical campus. However, students need to make certain that the course instructor has a primary and a secondary means of contacting each student.

**Classroom/Professional 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.

**Resources**

**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.

Disabilities 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 at (361) 825-5816.

Blackboard 9.1: To log into Blackboard, go to: http://bb9.tamucc.edu. You must have a NET ID (also known as an Active Directory account) to log in. For instructions on how to get this account and more information about using Blackboard, go to: http://distance-education.tamucc.edu/student_resources.html. If you need additional help at any time to access, download, or print course materials on Blackboard, please contact the Island Online (IOL) Help Desk by telephone at (361) 825-2825 or by email at iolsupport@tamucc.edu.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES:

UNIT ONE—Introduction to Trauma

WEEK 1—September 2nd
Class Introduction; Syllabus Overview; Reading Assignments
In-Class Discussion/Activity

WEEK 2—September 9th
Freud, Sigmund. “Beyond the Pleasure Principle.” (Blackboard)
Caruth, Cathy. “The Wound and the Voice.” (Blackboard)
Douglass, Ana and Thomas A. Vogler. “Introduction.” Witness and Memory: The Discourse of Trauma. (Blackboard)

WEEK 3—September 16th
Bolaño, Roberto. Amulet
Bell, Duncan; “Introduction: Memory, Trauma and World Politics” (Blackboard)
Tal, Kali. Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma. Chapter One. (Blackboard)

WEEK 4—September 23rd
Tobar, Héctor. *The Tattooed Soldier*.

**WEEK 5—September 30th**  
Mootoo, Shani. *Cereus Blooms at Night* (1-157)  
Laub, Dori. “Bearing Witness, or the Vicissitudes of Listening.” (Blackboard)

**WEEK 6—October 7th**  
Mootoo, Shani. *Cereus Blooms at Night* (158-289)  
**WRITING ASSIGNMENT #1 DUE**

**UNIT TWO—Trauma as Text**

**WEEK 7—October 14th**  
Silko, Leslie Marmon, *Ceremony*  

**WEEK 8—October 21st**  
Viramontes, Helena María. *Their Dogs Came with Them*.

**WEEK 9—October 28th**  
Danielewski, Mark Z., *House of Leaves* (1-235)  
De Certeau, Michel. “Spatial Stories.” (Blackboard)

**WEEK 10—November 4th**  
Danielewski, Mark Z., *House of Leaves* (235-Finish)  
Freud, Sigmund. “The Uncanny.” (Blackboard)

**UNIT 3—Trauma Time and the Memory of 9/11**

**WEEK 11—November 11th**  
**ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE**  
**PRESENTATIONS**

**WEEK 12—November 18th**  
Edkins, Jenny. “Remembering Relationality: Trauma Time and Politics.” (Blackboard)  
Breithaupt, Fritz. “Rituals of Trauma: How the Media Fabricated September 11.” (Blackboard)  
Žižek, Slavoj. “Welcome to the Desert of the Real.” (Blackboard)  
Spiegelman, Art. *In the Shadow of No Towers*.

**WEEK 13—November 25th**  
Walter, Jess. *The Zero*. (1-166)

**WEEK 14—December 2nd**  
Walter, Jess. *The Zero*. (166-Finish)

**WRITING ASSIGNMENT #2 DUE THURSDAY, DECEMBER 4th**