ENGLISH 2335.002:
Themes and Genres of the Americas
Fall 2015
TR 11:00-12:15 p.m.; CI 109

Instructor: Dr. Wendy Walker
Office: Faculty Center 126
Office Hours: MW 1:00-3:00 p.m.; R 12:30-1:30 p.m.; other times available by appointment
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*The best way to reach me is via email. While I try to respond to all email within 24 hours, I am not available outside of regular business hours and likely won't respond after 5 p.m. or on weekends.

"Power & Equality," Shepard Fairey

Course Description: Women Writing Resistance
The authors that we will read this semester cry out against oppression and inequality while simultaneously exemplifying the possibility of coalition building between seemingly disparate groups; the act of writing, then, is a deliberate challenge to the status quo. Therefore, we will examine writing as a creative act that is a form of political activism that employs definite aesthetic strategies for resisting dominant cultural norms. We will read short stories, poems, fiction and nonfiction by women who write to resist. Their stories of resistance to oppression are global, for the conditions they present exist worldwide. But
through the act of writing, these authors seek to envision and manifest a more equitable, peaceful, sustainable future for the Americas and the world.

In addition to the thematic focus of the course, the course work is also designed to allow you to explore what you know about literature’s connections to writing and culture as well as what you know about yourself as a member of society. Therefore, I am especially interested in helping you explore the intersection of the personal and public, the private and the social in your thinking, your reading, your writing, and your life. This class will ask you to explore what you know about culture (academic and otherwise) and yourself. We will look at writing, our own and that of others, as articulations of knowledge. We will, therefore, need to continually ask ourselves a number of important questions, such as:

- Who is the author of this piece?
- Why was this piece written? What “knowledge” does it attempt to impart?
- What do we know about the historical, social, and cultural background of this piece?
- How do I connect to this piece? (How do I relate to it through my own life and experience?)

Of course, our work should not be limited to these questions, and many more will arise throughout our discussions. However, it is important to remember that the work we do should involve deep analysis.

**Required Texts***:

**Recommended Text**:

*Several additional texts will be made available via Course Documents in Blackboard (Bb); you are required to print these texts and bring them to class on the day assigned. You must bring assigned texts with you to class; if texts are not in hand, you will be considered absent that day."

**Course Objectives**:
1. To consider how ideas, values, beliefs, and other aspects of culture express and affect human experience by examining the connections between literary works and their social, historical, and cultural contexts.
2. To use literature to explore ideas that foster aesthetic and intellectual creation in order to understand the human condition across cultures and nationalities.
3. To recognize the distinctive characteristics of relevant literary periods, genres, and writers.
4. To understand and use basic literary terms and concepts.
5. To develop analytic skills by close reading, class discussion, and writing.
6. To use writing as a tool for learning.

**Student Learning Objectives:**
Students who successfully complete this course will be able to demonstrate knowledge and skills in four Core Objectives defined by the Higher Education Coordinating Board of the State of Texas:

**Critical Thinking**
CT1. Generate and communicate ideas by combining, changing, or reapplying existing information.
CT3. Analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information.

**Communication Skills**
CS1. Develop, interpret, and express ideas through written communication.

**Personal Responsibility:**
PR1. Evaluate choices and actions, and relate consequences to decision making.

**Social Responsibility:**
SR3. Engage in regional, national, and global communities.

**Course Requirements and Policies:**
Grading: In order to succeed in this class you must do all of the assigned work; this includes reading assigned texts prior to class, participating in in-class discussions, completing all informal writing assignments (missing just one or two will lower your grade substantially), and collaborating with your peers on analysis and interpretation. Therefore, if you are absent during any class period, contact the instructor and/or a classmate immediately. Please also note the absence and tardy policy explained in this syllabus.

Informal Writing: This includes in-class essays, guided writing, freewriting, response journal writing, explications, comparisons/contrasts, reviews or any combination of these. As these are informal assignments, it is not necessary to worry about grammatical or style conventions, but I do ask that they be typed and double-spaced, and typically these should be a minimum of one and a half to two full pages in length. These will most often be submitted via Blackboard; if you do not submit these via Blackboard, you will receive a zero for the assignment. Homework is due prior to the beginning of class, and will not be accepted late.

Please note: I prefer that you prepare assignments using Microsoft Word* (in .doc or .docx format). I will also accept .rtf documents. I will not accept assignments created using Pages, as they are not compatible with most campus computers. Assignments created using Pages or any other incompatible software will receive a failing grade. In addition, email and/or hard copies of assignments will not be accepted unless directed otherwise.
If you do not have Microsoft Word or Office Suite, TAMUCC now provides free access to all students. For more information about Office 365, go here: http://it.tamucc.edu/Office365/Office365.html

Formal Writing (Quizzes, Essay, and Exams):
Quizzes will be given randomly throughout the semester, and will include questions based on previous discussions as well as questions based on the assignment due on the day the quiz is given. You must be in class to take the quiz; no make-up quizzes will be given.

You will also be asked to write a literary analysis that discusses the texts we will read this semester. This is a formal essay assignment that will require close reading and synthesis of sources. You will be given a grading rubric well in advance of the due date; due date yet to be determined.

There will also be midterm and final exams. These are essay exams for which you will be given multiple prompts to which you must respond. Typically, I give prompts on a Thursday and give you until the following class period (Tuesday) to complete the exam; therefore, they are take-home exams and necessarily open-book. I will also require you to submit these to either Turnitin.com or SafeAssign, so you’ll need to plan time to do this before submitting.

**NO LATE ESSAYS OR EXAMS WILL BE ACCEPTED. You must turn these in prior to the class period in which it is due or receive a failing grade on the assignment.**

Grading Scale*:
Participation, quizzes, informal writings, group work, etc. 30%
Midterm Exam (Due Tuesday, October 13) 25%
Literary Analysis (Due Tuesday, December 1) 15%
Final Exam 30%

A = 90-100%  B= 80-89%  C= 70-79%  D=60-69%  F=59% or below

*I use Blackboard to record grades, and while this allows you to consistently check your standing in the class, please note that Blackboard does not allow me to weigh grades until final calculations are done. Therefore, grades may appear higher than they actually are. If you ever have questions about your standing in the class, please contact me directly.

Academic Integrity/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 a failing grade for the course and students risk being placed on academic
probation, suspension, or expulsion. If you are unsure about whether or not you might be plagiarizing, please talk to me.

Attendance: Because the formal work you do in the course depends on your in-class participation, collaboration with your classmates, and discussion, your grade will be lowered if you miss more than four classes; it will be lowered by 1/3 for each absence beyond the initial four. That is, a B will drop to a B- and so on. Additionally, please note that NO ABSENCES ARE EXCUSED. (So, if you are sick, and have a doctor’s note, that absence is still included in the four allowed absences you are allotted for the semester.) Therefore, please consider the following:

- If you must miss a class, you are responsible for what you missed; you will be expected to be prepared for the next class that you attend and will not get an extension on any homework that is due. (I recommend that you exchange contact information with a peer so that you can get notes on that day’s discussion, etc., as I will not provide these.)
- Excessive tardiness and/or leaving early will also lower your grade.
- If you participate in a sport or some other university sanctioned event or activity that requires you to miss class do not take this course during your travel season.
- Lastly, I am not unsympathetic to tragedy and understand that family deaths occur at incredibly inconvenient times. However, this has become one of the most overused and abused excuses given for missing classes and/or major assignments. Therefore, I require a copy of the obituary (with your name listed as a surviving family member) if a death in the family is why you are unable to submit a major assignment when it is due.

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. **Friday, November 6** is the last day to drop a class with an automatic grade of “W” this term.

University Community Discourses, Diversity and Personal Responsibilities: Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi has a diverse student population that represents the population of the state. Our goal is to provide you with a high quality educational experience that is free from repression. You are responsible for following the rules of the University, city, state and federal government. We expect that you will behave in a manner that is dignified, respectful and courteous to all people, regardless of sex, ethnic/racial origin, religious background, sexual orientation or disability. In class discussions, readings, and writing throughout this quarter, we will examine ideas from diverse perspectives. At this university, students and faculty are afforded an academic environment that allows for intellectual expression; challenging issues and ideas may arise, but none of these should be expressed in an inappropriate manner either verbally or in writing. One of the goals of a
university is to challenge us to think again about what we know (and all that we don’t know). This demands that we all share responsibility for creating and maintaining a democratic and civil learning environment in our classrooms and in the larger university community: we will be conscious of and accept responsibility for what we say and do, how we act, how our words and actions have consequences, and how our words and actions affect others. Racism, sexism, and other non-democratic or oppressive behaviors are unacceptable. Behaviors that infringe on the rights of another individual will not be tolerated.

**Special Notices:**

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.

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.

**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

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

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.

**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.

**Tentative Schedule:**

August 27: Introduction to Course
September 1: Virginia Woolf, from *A Room of One’s Own*
September 3: Gloria Anzaldúa, “Speaking in Tongues: A Letter to Third World Women Writers” (Bb)
September 8: U.S. Third World Feminism; Phillis Wheatley, selected poems (Bb)
September 10: Alice Walker, “In Search of Our Mother’s Gardens”
September 15: Blackstar, “Thieves in the Night”
September 17: Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*
September 22: *The Bluest Eye*, cont’d.
September 24: *The Bluest Eye*, cont’d.
September 29: *The Bluest Eye*, cont’d.
October 1: Nellie Wong, “When I Was Growing Up”;
October 6: Cherrie Moraga, “La Guera”
October 8: Barbara Cameron, “Gee, You Don’t See Like An Indian From the Reservation”
October 13: Midterm Exam due; Chrystos, “I Walk in the History of My People”
October 15: LeAnne Howe, *Shell Shaker*
October 20: *Shell Shaker*, cont’d.
October 22: *Shell Shaker*, cont’d.
October 27: *Shell Shaker*, cont’d.
October 29: *Shell Shaker*, cont’d.
November 3: Audre Lorde, “The Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power”
November 5: Naomi Quinonez, “La Diosa in Every Woman”; Kate Rushin, “The Bridge Poem”
November 10: *Mother Tongue*, cont’d.
November 12: *Mother Tongue*, cont’d.
November 17: *Mother Tongue*, cont’d.
November 19: *Mother Tongue*, cont’d.
November 24: *Mother Tongue*, cont’d.
November 26: No class; Thanksgiving holiday
December 1: Literary Analysis due; Gloria Anzaldúa, “La Prieta”