Course Description

The trauma narrative has emerged in the past several decades as a focal point for literary study. More than just describing traumatic events, the trauma narrative invites the reader into a character's mental space, 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 post-1945 trauma narratives, 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 locate common threads within and between these diverse cultural and national contexts. Indeed, one of the aims of this course is to demonstrate the ways in which the United States and its neighbors to the south share histories of violence and political dispossession. In addition to reading critically the seven novels listed below, students will develop a deep understanding of the many faces of trauma theory, and students will be expected to apply these theories in both critical essays and class discussions. By the end of the semester, students will be conversant in the language 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. Maus I/II.
Tobar, Héctor. The Tattooed Soldier.
Vonnegut, Kurt. Slaughterhouse-Five
Course Grading

The course is 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: 150 points
- Presentation on Bibliography: 50 points
- Participation: 50 points
- Student-Led Discussion: 50 points

Participation will be calculated based on class attendance, participation in class discussions and preparedness for class discussions. Once during the semester, students, alone or in pairs, will lead the class discussion for that day. **Students will meet with me on the Thursday prior to that week's discussion** to share their approaches to the material. 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 5348 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 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, [http://cla.tamucc.edu/about/student-resources.html](http://cla.tamucc.edu/about/student-resources.html). For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean’s Office.

**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 and presentations 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 any other supplemental grades), 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: 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 #203. For more information, please call 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, Room #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:

*Please read secondary texts BEFORE primary texts in any given week

UNIT ONE—Trauma Theory and Literature

WEEK 1—August 30
Class Introduction; Syllabus Overview; Reading Assignments
Hiroshima Mon Amour (dir. Alain Resnais, 1959)

WEEK 2—September 6th
Freud, Sigmund. “Beyond the Pleasure Principle.” (Blackboard)
Douglass, Ana and Thomas A. Vogler. “Introduction: Witness and Memory” (Blackboard)
Caruth, Cathy. “The Wound and the Voice.” (Blackboard)

WEEK 3—September 13th
Bolaño, Roberto. Amulet
Tal, Kali. Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma. Chapter One. (Blackboard)

UNIT TWO—Political Violence, Political Bodies

WEEK 4—September 20th
Nora, Pierre. “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire”
Tobar, Héctor. The Tattooed Soldier.
Student-led Discussion #1
WEEK 5—September 27th
Silko, Leslie Marmon, *Ceremony* (1-138)
**Student-led Discussion #2**

WEEK 6—October 4th
Silko, Leslie Marmon, *Ceremony* (138-Finish)
Laub, Dori. “Bearing Witness, or the Vicissitudes of Listening.” (Blackboard)
**Student-led Discussion #3**

UNIT THREE—Trauma, Witness, Testimony

WEEK 7—October 11th
Mootoo, Shani. *Cereus Blooms at Night* (1-157)
**WRITING ASSIGNMENT #1 DUE**

WEEK 8—October 18th
Mootoo, Shani. *Cereus Blooms at Night* (158-289)
Felman, Shoshana. “Education and Crisis, or the Vicissitudes of Teaching” (Blackboard)
**Student-led Discussion #4**

WEEK 9—October 25th
Marianne Hirsch. “Mourning and Postmemory” (Blackboard)
Spiegelman, Art. *Maus I/II.*
**Student-led Discussion #5**

WEEK 10—November 8th
Vonnegut, Kurt. *Slaughterhouse-Five*

UNIT FOUR—Mediating Trauma

WEEK 11—November 15th
Danielewski, Mark Z., *House of Leaves* (1-235)
Freud, Sigmund. “The Uncanny.” (Blackboard)

WEEK 12—November 22nd
**ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE**
**PRESENTATIONS**

WEEK 13—November 29th
Danielewski, Mark Z., *House of Leaves* (235-Finish)
Hayles, N. Katherine. “Saving the Subject: Remediation in *House of Leaves*” (Blackboard)
**Student-led Discussion #6 (If Necessary)**
WEEK 14—December 6th
Film Screening and Discussion
WRITING ASSIGNMENT #2 DUE FRIDAY, DECEMBER 9, 11:59 p.m. Upload to Blackboard