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ENG 2850-001 Postcolonial Literatures in English

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English 2850, section 001: Postcolonial Literatures in English

Spring 2022 | Coleman 3691 | Tuesday/Thursday, 12.30 PM-1.45 PM

Instructor: Dr. Bobby Martínez

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Virtual Zoom Office Hours: Mondays, 12 NOON-2 PM; Wednesdays, 12 NOON-2 PM; Tuesdays, 3 PM-4 PM; & by APPOINTMENT

Class Websites: D2L course page

Course Description:

English 2850 (3-0-3 credits) is designed to be an introduction “to African, Indian and West Indian literatures in English in their sociocultural and historical contexts; examination of concepts of culture, civilization, colonization and independence; and English as a global language.” In this iteration of the course, we will include Latin American literary and cinematic narratives (novels and films) that will broaden our understanding of the complicated ways in which the postcolonial condition has affected the concept of identity—both personal and national—in the late twentieth century and early twenty first century. In particular, we will consider the innovative strategies that Latin American writers use to address problems of existence, political strife, and nationhood—from the excitingly bizarre literary experiments of “magic realism” to the current re-invigoration of gritty social realism and crime fiction, mystery narratives. We will also consider writers from the Latinx movement and discuss how this newly emerging conception of cultural identity is explored in literature and film.

Central to all these explorations will be a set of thematic questions: How do these writers imagine new conceptions of the self/identity? How are personal issues of love, romance, and family altered? And most importantly, just what is “history,” and how do narratives of the past affect us? This course is open to majors and non-majors, and it is a great course for future teachers and anyone interested in gaining a more in-depth global perspective. This course counts towards the minor in Latin American and Latinx Studies.

Required Texts (at TRS):

- Michelle Cliff, *No Telephone to Heaven*
- Alicia Gaspar De Alba, *Desert Blood: The Juarez Murders*
- Valeria Luiselli, *Lost Children Archive*
- Guadalupe Nettel, *Natural Histories: Stories*
- Santiago Roncagliolo, *Red April*
- Héctor Tobar, *The Tattooed Soldier*
- Juan Gabriel Vásquez, *The Sound of Things Falling*
- Alejandro Zambra, *The Private Lives of Trees*

Film Screenings:

- Franco Rosso, *Babylon* (1980)
- Flavio Alves, *The Garden Left Behind* (2019)
- Cary Fukunaga, *Sin nombre* (2009)
- Issa López, *Tigers Are Not Afraid* (2017)
- Ciro Guerra & Cristina Gallego, *Birds of Passage* (2018)

Course Goals & Objectives:

During this class, you will work on and develop the following skills:

- Create or develop a greater understanding of twentieth- and twenty-first century Latin

- American history and culture;
- Create or develop a greater understanding of Latin American literary and artistic styles and movements;
 - Create or develop an understanding of critical concepts of postcolonialism;
 - Be able to analyze and assess the meaning and importance of non-fiction material (e.g., political documents, cultural/intellectual essays, scholarly assessments) and the relevance it bears on literary works;
 - Demonstrate an appreciation of the diverse experiences and perspectives that shape human culture, in service of global citizenship;
 - Improve your public speaking skills through course discussions and in-class presentations;
 - Improve your writing (and research) skills through formal and informal writing assignments;
 - Develop written and oral communication skills;
 - Identify world-shaping forces and events in Latin American culture;
 - Develop a critical perspective of the relationship between Latin American culture, cinema, and literature vis-à-vis U.S. culture, cinema, and literature.

Screenings in and Readings for Class:

You are required to attend all class film screenings and to do all assigned reading for this course. More importantly, you are expected to read all assignments and watch all films **carefully and conscientiously**, meaning you are to make note of your reactions to the readings/films and be prepared to share your critical thoughts and interpretations of the works we cover. If you do not understand something in the reading, you should read it again and work at its meaning; likewise, if something about a film is perplexing, watch it again and think about it carefully. This process is what is known as “critical reading” and “critical thinking”: you must study a writer’s language or filmmaker’s films and think critically about its meanings and ramifications.

The text listed above is available from Textbook Rental (TRS). Other required readings will be available online via our course page on D2L. On the day that a text is to be discussed, you must have that work with you in class. For **electronic readings (PDF or Web documents), you must have readable access to those documents in class on the day the material is discussed**. Since this course emphasizes careful reading and writing, you must either print out the document(s) or use a laptop, desktop, iPad, Kindle, or Nook to view them. *Using Smartphones to view readings for class discussion is not acceptable, unless directed to do so by the instructor.*

Content Warning:

Contemporary, and especially postmodern, texts (“texts” meaning novels, films, music, poems, etc.) often use violence and disturbing misappropriations of sex (rape and other forms of sexual abuse) as a way to get readers’ attention and tell stories that represent realities and challenges they see in their worlds. Some of our texts may prove either emotionally painful for or morally offensive to you. If you’re unwilling to read such material, please consider switching to another course. If you consider this literature worth reading but find yourself upset by it, always feel free to talk to me during my office hours, and to bring up your concerns during class if you are comfortable.

Smartphone/Social Media Policy:

To protect the safety of the classroom and the privacy of the students, usage of cell phones or smartphones during class to videotape, to text, and to access social media sites or apps (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, YouTube, etc.) **is strictly forbidden**. I also strongly encourage you to not post any class-related content or speech to social media in order to protect the privacy of you and your classmates. Smartphone or cell phone use during class will only be permitted with the prior approval of the instructor.

Successful Behaviors for the Course:

- Check Panthermail (e-mail) several times **daily**
- Visit class web site (D2L) or other recommended web resources frequently (use Firefox or Safari browsers)
- Use text editions found at Textbook Rental
- Attend class and actively participate **daily** in discussion
- Take notes during class lectures and discussions
- Take notes while reading and watching films
- Contact the instructor if you miss class

Active Participation and Attendance:

Active attendance means that you are present in class each day in both *body and mind*—that is, I expect you to come to class each day having completed any required reading or listening or viewing assignments and ready to share your thoughtful, considered ideas. **Missing class and not completing assignments are not acceptable.** *If you become ill or experience family or personal difficulties beyond your control, then you must notify me of your absence as soon as possible.* Not completing daily assignments and not contributing to class discussion will result in poor participation grade scores. If you miss more than three (3) classes, your final course grade will be penalized: starting with the fourth (4th) absence, a "+" or "-" will be deducted from your final course grade.

Turning in Assignments & Improving Your Work:

Assignments turned in via D2L Dropbox must be in **Microsoft Word format**. Instructor feedback will be embedded in graded writing. Be sure to review and save your graded essays. One of your most important tools for improvement will be the comments and corrections I make in or suggest to your writing. *If you wish to see your writing improve and your grade rise as the semester progresses, you must carefully refer back to these written comments as you write subsequent essays.*

Guidelines for Specific Assignments:

All written work should be formatted thus:

- Upload all writing assignments to D2L Dropbox in Microsoft Word format
- Use Double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman or Cambria font
- Use 1" (top/bottom) and 1.25" (left/right) margins
- Include your name, course name, professor's name, and date on the front page
- Include a witty or informative title for your essays
- Place your name and page numbers in the headers of your essays
- Turn in all written work electronically via D2L Dropbox

Assignments:

- Discussion Leader Paper and Presentation (1-2 pages): 10%
- Paper #1, Close Argumentative Analysis (5-7 pages): 15%
- Paper #2, Argumentative Research Paper (7-9 pages): 20%
- Midterm Exam: 15%
- Attendance & Participation: 20%
- Final Exam: 20%

Grading Scale:

- A = 94-100
- A- = 90-93
- B+ = 87-89
- B = 84-86
- B- = 80-83

- C+ = 77-79
- C = 74-76
- C- = 70-73
- D = 64-69
- F = 63 and below

Specific Writing Assignments:

All papers should be submitted in Word, double spaced, in 12-point, Times New Roman font, with 1" (top/bottom) and 1.25" (left/right) margins. Make sure to include your name, course name, professor's name, and date on the front page; a title for your paper; and your name and page numbers in the headers of the paper. Staple your papers.

- Paper #1, Close Argumentative Analysis (5-7 pages): You must choose to write about one of the novels or films we have covered in the first half of the course. You should identify a specific topic of interest to you in the novel and develop an argument that interprets that aspect of the novel. For example, you may wish to discuss the treatment of a certain character or theme, the use of a recurring image, motif, or word/phrase in a given work, but make sure your topic is focused. Remember, this is a short paper that must present a convincing interpretation of the work you have chosen.
- Paper #2, Argumentative Research Paper (7-9 pages): This paper requires you to build a more sophisticated argument about one or more of the texts we will study in this course (or a text related to this course outside of the required reading). This paper requires close analysis of primary texts as well as the integration of outside critical/scholarly opinion and arguments (i.e., use of outside research from journal articles or academic book studies). The choice of text for this paper must be different from the choice of your first paper. Outside research is required for this paper (at least two academic/professional sources). You must cite your sources in MLA format.
- Discussion Leader Paper and Presentation (1-2 pages): Early in the semester, you will be asked to select a day of class for which you will be responsible for opening class discussion. To prepare for this brief class presentation, you should complete a 1-2 page paper that targets a passage in the reading assigned for the day and demonstrates your critical thinking about the text. This short writing assignment should prepare you to share your ideas for class discussion.

The English Department Statement on Plagiarism:

Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism—"The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one's own original work" (Random House Dictionary of the English Language)—has the right and responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignments of a grade of F for the assigned essay and a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Office of Student Standards. Respect for the work of others should encompass all formats, including print, electronic, and oral sources. **Failure to cite ideas or writing not your own will constitute plagiarism.**

Students Pursuing English Education/Teacher Certification:

Students seeking Teacher Certification in English Language Arts should request each of their English Department professors to complete the "Application for English Department Approval to Student Teach" before the end of the semester. This online evaluation form is available here: <https://www.eiu.edu/english/machform/view.php?id=19831>.

Student Academic Integrity:

Students are expected to maintain principles of academic integrity and conduct as defined in EIU's Code of Conduct (<http://www.eiu.edu/judicial/studentconductcode.php>). Violations will be reported to the Office of Student Standards.

Disability Services:

If you are a student with a documented disability in need of accommodations to fully participate in this class, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services (OSDS). All accommodations must be approved through OSDS. Please stop by McAfee Gym, Room 1210, or call 217-581-6583.

Student Success Center:

Students who are having difficulty achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the Student Success Center (www.eiu.edu/~success) for assistance with time management, test taking, note taking, avoiding procrastination, setting goals, and other skills to support academic achievement. The Student Success Center provides individualized consultations. To make an appointment, call [217-581-6696](tel:217-581-6696), or go to McAfee Gym, Room 1301.

Tech Support:

If you need assistance with D2L, call D2L Support toll free at 1-877-325-7778. Support is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. E-mail and Chat options are also available on the "My Home" page after logging in to D2L. Other D2L resources including a D2L Orientation course for students are available on the same page. For technical questions regarding other software, hardware, network issues, EIU NetID/password, or Panthermail, please contact the ITS Helpdesk at 217-581-4357 during regular business hours (8 am-5 pm) or submit a help ticket at <https://techsupport.eiu.edu/>. If you have a question regarding course content, contact your instructor.

COVID-19 Practices & Expectations on EIU's Campus:

All students, regardless of vaccination status, are required to wear face coverings during class.

Students may sit in any classroom seat where they are most comfortable. All reasonable efforts will be made to provide modifications to classroom seating arrangements if needed; however, this may not be possible in all situations.

Students should not attend class if they are ill or feelsick and should consult the student health clinic if they have any COVID-19-like symptoms. Everyone in the campus community is responsible for following practices that reduce risk. If you have a health condition that may require a potential classroom accommodation or variation from current EIU COVID-19 policy, please contact Student Disability Services (studentdisability@eiu.edu or 581-6583) to determine what options may be available based on current CDC guidance.

If you are unable to follow EIU's COVID-19 guidelines, you may be asked to leave class or office hours as compliance with public health guidance is essential. Accommodations for instruction and make-up work will be made for students with documented medical absences according to IGP #43 [<https://castle.eiu.edu/auditing/043.php>]. To view the latest EIU COVID-19 related information and any policy updates, please visit <https://www.eiu.edu/covid/>.

Assignment Schedule for English 2850, Spring 2022

Note: Activities and assignments may be subject to change.

Date	What's Happening in Class	Homework
Tues., 1/11	Introduction to course; introduction to postcolonialism and literature	Read poems by Diaz and Bhatt (D2L)
Thurs., 1/13	Discuss poems	Read Stuart Hall's "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" (D2L); take notes while you read! Bring essay to class on Tuesday
Tues., 1/18	Discuss Hall's essay and postcolonial identity	Start reading Michelle Cliff's <i>No Telephone to Heaven</i> (1-50); take notes as you read
Thurs., 1/20	Discuss Cliff's <i>No Telephone to Heaven</i>	Read Cliff's <i>No Telephone to Heaven</i> (51-121); take notes as you read
Tues., 1/25	Discuss Cliff's <i>No Telephone to Heaven</i>	Read Cliff's <i>No Telephone to Heaven</i> (121-172); take notes as you read
Thurs., 1/27	Discuss Cliff's <i>No Telephone to Heaven</i>	Finish reading Cliff's <i>No Telephone to Heaven</i> (173-224); take notes as you read
Tues., 2/1	Discuss Cliff's <i>No Telephone to Heaven</i>	
Thurs., 2/3	Watch Rosso's <i>Babylon</i> ; take notes as you watch	
Tues., 2/8	Discuss <i>Babylon</i>	Start reading Guadalupe Nettel's <i>Natural Histories: Stories</i> (11-40); take notes as you read
Thurs., 2/10	Discuss Nettel's <i>Natural Histories</i>	Read Guadalupe Nettel's <i>Natural Histories: Stories</i> (41-80); take notes as you read
Tues., 2/15	Discuss Nettel's <i>Natural Histories</i>	Finish reading Guadalupe Nettel's <i>Natural Histories: Stories</i> (81-122); take notes as you read
Thurs., 2/17	Discuss Nettel's <i>Natural Histories</i>	
Tues., 2/22	Watch López's <i>Tigers Are Not Afraid</i> ; take notes as you watch	
Thurs., 2/24	Discuss <i>Tigers Are Not Afraid</i> Paper #1 due on Monday, 2/28, by 5 pm in	Start reading Vásquez's <i>The Sound of Things Falling</i> (pp. 3-83); take notes as you read

	D2L Dropbox	Start studying for Midterm Exam!
Tues., 3/1	Discuss Vásquez's <i>The Sound of Things Falling</i>	Read Vásquez's <i>The Sound of Things Falling</i> (pp. 84-144); take notes as you read Study for Midterm Exam!
Thurs., 3/3	Discuss Vásquez's <i>The Sound of Things Falling</i>	Read Vásquez's <i>The Sound of Things Falling</i> (pp. 145-225); take notes as you read Study for Midterm Exam!
Tues., 3/8	Discuss Vásquez's <i>The Sound of Things Falling</i>	Finish reading Vásquez's <i>The Sound of Things Falling</i> (pp. 226-298); take notes as you read Study for Midterm Exam!
Thurs., 3/10	Discuss Vásquez's <i>The Sound of Things Falling</i>	
3/14- 3/18	No Classes – Spring Break!	Study for Midterm Exam!
Tues., 3/22	Midterm Exam	
Thurs., 3/24	Watch Guerra & Gallego's <i>Birds of Passage</i> ; take notes as you watch	Start reading Alicia Gaspar de Alba's <i>Desert Blood: The Juarez Murders</i> (1-50); take notes as you read
Tues., 3/29	Discuss Guerra & Gallego's <i>Birds of Passage</i>	Read Alicia Gaspar de Alba's <i>Desert Blood: The Juarez Murders</i> (51-100); take notes as you read
Thurs., 3/31	Discuss Gaspar de Alba's <i>Desert Blood</i>	Read Alicia Gaspar de Alba's <i>Desert Blood: The Juarez Murders</i> (101-181); take notes as you read
Tues., 4/5	Discuss Gaspar de Alba's <i>Desert Blood</i>	Read Alicia Gaspar de Alba's <i>Desert Blood: The Juarez Murders</i> (182-232); take notes as you read
Thurs., 4/7	Discuss Gaspar de Alba's <i>Desert Blood</i>	Read Alicia Gaspar de Alba's <i>Desert Blood: The Juarez Murders</i> (233-310); take notes as you read
Tues., 4/12	Discuss Gaspar de Alba's <i>Desert Blood</i>	Finish reading Alicia Gaspar de Alba's <i>Desert Blood: The Juarez Murders</i> (311-

		346); take notes as you read
Thurs., 4/14	Finish discussion of Gaspar de Alba's <i>Desert Blood</i>	
Tues., 4/19	Watch Flavio Alves's <i>The Garden Left Behind</i> ; take notes as you watch	
Thurs., 4/21	Discuss <i>The Garden Left Behind</i>	
Tues., 4/26	Activity to be determined (TBD)	
Thurs., 4/28	Activity TBD Last Day of Class	
Fri., 4/29	Paper #2 due by 5 pm in D2L Dropbox	

Final Exam set for Wednesday, May 4, 8 AM-10 AM