

Spring 1-15-2016

ENG 3705-001: American Multicultural Lit

Jamila Smith

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ENG 3705
Spring 2016
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****Please don't contact me via D2L, as I often don't receive those emails.**

Course Description:

In this course we will explore the beauty and complexities of reading, discussing, writing, and critiquing a variety of multicultural texts. Though not intended to serve as a full examination of any group or experience, we will challenge ourselves to foster thoughtful, respectful, culturally-informed perspectives, and situate our knowledge within the larger conversation on community engagement and social justice pedagogy. Focus will center on multigenred readings and film that highlight diversity within race, social class, (dis)ability, gender, sexuality, age, and intergenerational family dynamics.

Course Themes: Identity & Culture; Education & Society

Learning Goals:

- Engage in critical readings and analyses of multicultural texts, and develop an appreciation for diversity in literature.
- Demonstrate an understanding of various intersectional theories and their impact on marginalized people.
- Examine the impact of community engagement and social justice pedagogy within multicultural literature, and explore ways to bridge the gap between the community and university.
- Develop and sharpen communication skills through in-class discussions, presentations, community mapping, narrative and essay writing.

Required Texts:

Americanah, Adichie
Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian, Alexie
Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress, Baldacchino
The House on Mango Street, Cisneros
Mockingbird, Erskine
Playing in the Dark, Morrison
American Born Chinese, Yang

*You will read an additional text of your choosing.

****Handouts will be distributed throughout the semester.**

Special Needs:

Students with documented disabilities should contact the Office of Disability Services (581.6583) as soon as possible so we can work out appropriate accommodations.

Cell Phones:

Please put your cell phone on silent or vibrate during class time.

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 original work" (Random House Dictionary of the English Language)—has the right and the 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 Judicial Affairs Office. Respect for the work of others should encompass all formats, including print, electronic, and oral sources.

The 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, or go to 9th Street Hall, Room 1302.

The Writing Center:

I encourage you to use EIU's Writing Center located at 3110 Coleman Hall. This free service provides one-to-one conferences with writing center consultants who can help you with brainstorming, organizing, developing support, and documenting your papers.

The writing center is open to help any student from any major at any stage of his or her writing process, and its system of one-to-one conferences demonstrates value and respect for individual writers, all of whom can benefit from feedback about their works in progress.

To schedule an appointment, you can drop by the center (3110 Coleman Hall) or you can call 581-5929. The writing center is open Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., and 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. On Friday hours of operation are 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Course Guidelines and Expectations:

1. As this is an interactive course, participation is required. You help create this atmosphere by making an effort to answer and ask questions during class discussion and group work, and by responding thoughtfully and respectfully to other people's comments and responses. Disrespect of me and/or your fellow classmates, along with coming to class unprepared will not be tolerated. You will be asked to leave AND marked absent for the class period. Participation is worth **25 points** of your grade and includes self-directed discussion, questions posed during class, ability to answer questions indicative of close textual reading, and being alert during class sessions (i.e., no cell phone activity, sleeping, disruptive

conversations, or use of laptops/ipads/tablets, etc for anything other than work for my class). Points will be deducted for behaviors indicative of anything other than full participation. This is a collaborative learning experience, so constructive criticism and open discussion is encouraged. Attendance is obviously a prerequisite for participation, so if you have more than three (3) un-excused absences, you will lose 5 points per class session you miss.

2. Absences will only be excused when the following conditions are met: a) Circumstances that can be documented on paper (illness, police accident report, university events, etc) b) I receive notification PRIOR to the class that you will be unable to attend. If there is an assignment due the day you will be absent, please email it to me Prior to the start of class. In the same manner, I expect each student to be on time to class. If you happen to be tardy, please do not disrupt the class. If you are over 10 minutes late to class with no prior notification, you will be marked absent.
3. You are expected to have ALL assignments prepared to turn in on the due date. All assignments should be typed, double-spaced, Times New Roman 12 pt. font. Please proofread and edit all papers. **NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS ACCEPTED OR MAKE-UP WORK PROVIDED** unless you are in compliance with the extreme circumstances section above. Do not put extra space between paragraphs. Student information (name, class title, assignment) is single-spaced, in the top left-hand corner of your paper. Additionally, you are expected to bring the proper supplies with you to class each session, including the text we're reading.

Caveat:

In the event that class participation begins to fade, I reserve the right to distribute a pop quiz over the readings and/or class lectures. The quiz will be worth 10 points and will be taken from the final project.

Assignments:

**Please be prepared for possible changes.*

***Homework (reading and writing) is assigned at my discretion and its completion is a requirement for the next class session.*

1. **Reading Reflections (3points a piece/30 points total)** As this is a discussion-centered course, for the first 10 weeks of the semester, you will need to submit a Full 1 page **typed** paper. The purpose of these brief papers is twofold: to make critical connections with the readings and for me to ensure that you are keeping up with the assignments. These papers will also help to make our conversations more lively and informed. Each paper should include the following: a reflection on the main theses/themes of the texts, 3-4 central questions that you have about the texts, and most importantly, connections that you are seeing between the texts and your growing awareness of Multicultural Literature. Most often, these papers will be due every **Monday** for the first 10 weeks and will be used to generate lively discussion throughout the week. I will inform you each time a paper is due. At times, I

will provide questions to guide your reflections. Remember, participation is a large portion of your grade, so you will be called upon to facilitate in-class discussion.

2. **Critical Essay (30 points)** As we journey together through the texts, I will provide you with a writing prompt based on the questions, comments, and critiques derived from our discussions. This prompt will be the foundation of your 5-7 page essay. This essay must be grounded in theory and supported by textual evidence. I highly encourage writing from personal narrative in order to form and further your position(s). **Essay Due: February 19th**
3. **My Multicultural Literature (20 points)** For this assignment, you will select a multicultural text not included in the required readings, but inspired by your professional goals and/or genre of interest, and present in a creative format. Specific guidelines will be provided during the semester. **Presentations: Weeks Six and Eight**
4. **“Bridging the Gap” (40 points)** Here, you will bring your understanding of cultural diversity to life by “mapping” your community for the purposes of social justice awareness and activism. More details to come. **Presentations: Weeks Twelve-Fourteen**
5. **Final Project (55 points)** *Americanah* is a powerful novel that brings together many of the intersectional oppressions we will cover throughout the semester. As such, we will take this novel slowly, but you will present a final paper that articulates your understanding of assimilation, race relations, and identity. **DUE April 29th**

Tentative Schedule of Readings and Assignments:

**I want you all to get the most out of this course; thus, I am flexible with altering the schedule as long as you are keeping up with the material and actively participating in small and large group discussions.*

Week One: Introductions/Culture, Cultural diversity, Cultural communities

- Class discussions
- Begin film

Week Two: Family, Race, Class

- **1/18 MLK Day-NO SCHOOL**
- Begin *House on Mango Street*
- Revisit conversation on cultural community

Week Three: Cisneros and Narratives

- Discussion of *House on Mango Street*
- Writing from Place
- *Lions in Winter Festival 1/29 and 1/30*

Week Four: Racism/Classism/Sexism

- *Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian*
- Intersectionality theory
- Class discussions
- In-class writing prompts

Week Five: Cont.

- Begin *American Born Chinese*
- **2/12 Lincoln's Day-NO SCHOOL**

Week Six: Intersectionality within the Graphic Novel

- Class discussions
- Begin "My Multicultural Literature" presentations
- Essay One **DUE 2/19**

Week Seven: Intergenerational family dynamics

- Film

Week Eight: Film analysis

- In class exercises
- Continue "My Multicultural Literature" presentations
- Begin *Mockingbird*

Week Nine: (Dis)Abilities/Loss/Text to Life Connections

- Small and large group activities on *Mockingbird*
- "Bridging the Gap" discussion

Week Ten: Spring Break

- Begin reading *Americanah*

Week Eleven: Return to "Bridging the Gap"

- Discussion of *Americanah* in sections
- Excerpts from *Playing in the dark*

Week Twelve: Presentations

- *Americanah*, cont.
- Presentations, cont.
- Begin discussion of final project

Week Thirteen: Sexuality and Gender roles

- Read *Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress*
- Film and class discussions
- **4/8 English Studies Day**

Week Fourteen: Wrapping Up

- Complete sexuality and gender roles
- Complete “Bridging the Gap” presentations
- *Americanah* discussion
- Final discussion of final project

Week Fifteen: Conferences, in-class work days, feedback, etc.

Week Sixteen: The Finale

* 4/29 Final project **DUE**

Evaluation:

Participation	25 points
Reading Reflections	30 points
My Multicultural Literature	20 points
Critical Essay	30 points
“Bridging the Gap”	40 points
<u>Final Project</u>	<u>55 points</u>
Total	200 points

Grading:

190-200=A 189-180=B 179-170=C 169-160=D 160 or below=F

****Dr. Smith’s Advice****

If at any point throughout the semester you are confused or unclear about the expectations of the course, course material, a grade you’ve received, or any other matters, I strongly encourage you to speak with me during office hours. It is my hope that all students succeed in this course, but I can only help if I’m aware of a problem.