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2020

Fall 2-23-2021

ENG 3705-600: American Multicultural Literatures

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Recommended Citation

Engles, Tim, "ENG 3705-600: American Multicultural Literatures" (2021). *Fall 2020*. 74.
https://thekeep.eiu.edu/english_syllabi_fall2020/74

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Coming of Age in Multicultural Comics

English 3705–Fall, 2020

Instructor: Tim Engles

Office hours: Via email, or by appointment via D2L

Books you should have received from EIU’s Textbook Rental (listed chronologically, not in the order in which we will read them):

Citizen 13660, Miné Okubo (1946)

Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art (1993)

One! Hundred! Demons!, Lynda Barry (2002)

Swallow Me Whole, Nate Powell (2008)

Yummy: The Last Days of a Southside Shorty, Neri & DuBurke (2010)

Darkroom: A Memoir in Black & White, Lila Quintero Weaver (2012)

Ms. Marvel, G. Willow Wilson, et al. (2014)

The Outside Circle, Laboucane-Benson & Mellings (2015)

Honor Girl, Maggie Thrash (2015)

Bingo Love, Tee Franklin, et al. (2017)

They Called Us Enemy, George Takei, et al. (2019)

COURSE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

(these words constitute our contract; much of the following may seem familiar or tempting to skim over, but you really need to read it all carefully)

Official Catalog description: (3-0-3) Emphasis on race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality in literatures from 1700 to the present, featuring African-American, Asian-American, Native-American, Latino/a writers and immigrant American Writers. Prerequisite: ENG 1002G.

Instructor’s description: As certain forms of comics have ascended to the lofty-sounding status of “graphic narratives,” many such works also fall into the genres of “multicultural literature” and “coming of age narratives.” We will study those that belong in all three. Our course will begin with a review of the intricacies of comics itself as a “sequential art,” and of methods traditionally deployed by authors of the *bildungsroman*, or coming of age novel. As we move on to a diverse array of graphic narratives, guiding questions will include: How do authors from diverse backgrounds combine the visual and verbal tracks of comics in ways that draw from, signify on, and otherwise differ from conventional methods? If characters in comics are simplistic representations of people, and stereotypes are too, how do comics artists portray diverse characters in ways that avoid the pitfalls of ethn racial caricature?

A brief definition of *bildungsroman* has two important parts:

a novel that recounts the development (psychological and sometimes spiritual) of an individual from childhood to maturity, to the point at which the protagonist recognizes his or her place in the world.

This type of novel first arose in Germany during the eighteenth century, which is why we still use the German term to describe it (*bildungsroman* literally translates to “novel of education”). Hundreds of American novels now conform to this format—perhaps thousands. Those which have become canonized or otherwise famous are typically written by middle-class, white, heterosexual, non-disabled American writers, and they almost always contain protagonists who also occupy those dominant categories.

We will take both a formal and a sociological/anthropological approach to our material, considering along the way how various forms of the dominant/minority dynamic play out in different societal contexts. Early on, we will also review the “formal” intricacies of comics itself as a “sequential art,” seeking a better grasp of just how they work as a form of storytelling.

This course will require dedicated daily work, including extensive readings, biweekly quizzes or response papers, a final formal essay and online presentation, and a final exam. Because success in online courses requires especially active student engagement, it is crucial that you keep up with the readings and related assignments, and that you do so with careful attention. Note that while you can to some extent work at your own pace in this course, there are strict deadlines for various assignments (always 11:59 p.m. on the due date). In order to help keep us all working together, you also will not be able to work all that far ahead—course material will be rolled out during the semester on a biweekly basis, which means that at any given time, you will have to wait to do the activities and assignments coming up in the following weeks.

Learning Objectives: The following objectives apply to all of the biweekly modules. More generally, upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Better interpret literary works that express a wide range of cultural perspectives and values, and think more critically and write more analytically about them.
2. Demonstrate a solid apprehension of the conventions of coming-of-age narratives and the differences that can arise when such material is set in varied cultural contexts.
3. Demonstrate an increased understanding and appreciation for varied social, cultural, intellectual, and aesthetic ideas and methods.
4. Better apprehend academic scholarship and better utilize concepts and terminology drawn from it.
5. Produce effective written critique of multicultural literature and the issues it raises.
6. Use improved research skills to find useful secondary materials, and properly apply the principles of documentation.
7. Apply concepts and terminology from other fields of research to the study of literature.

Technical requirements: Students in this course should already have taken the [D2L Student Orientation](#). Students will need regular access to the Internet while using a laptop or desktop computer. Students will also need to download and upload email attachments and create PowerPoints with recorded voiceover.

A note about reading: Since one skill you will be developing in this class is the art of textual analysis, you must give the readings and viewings more than a quick skimming over. Instead of wolfing them down and rushing to complete them, set aside enough time to read and view

carefully. As you read, consider taking notes and then deciding for yourself what each author is trying to describe and bring to light. In an online course, because we will not meet regularly in a classroom, you are also more responsible for pacing yourself as you read, establishing your own schedule so that you complete reading (and other) assignments on time.

Also, to ensure that your final grade reflects your reading effort, we will have quizzes on required readings and other course materials. Quizzes in this course will have a required completion date and they cannot be made up. As noted below, we will have one exam, a final “take-home” essay exam.

Academic integrity: Remember also that this course follows the Academic Integrity policy followed by all Eastern Illinois University students. Plagiarism and cheating is not tolerated, and the consequences are severe. For any concerns you might have in this area, see EIU’s Code of Conduct. If you have specific questions about whether any particular method you want to use might violate this code, be sure to ask Dr. Engles about it, either by email or during his online office hours. **Cheating** in this course includes, but is not limited to:

- Sharing information during a quiz or the final exam
- Doing homework or taking a test or quiz in place of another student, OR asking someone else to take a test, quiz or do homework for you
- Submitting the same paper from another course without permission
- Taking credit for work that is not your own
- Not citing a source where submitted material was found or used
- Lying to protect yourself or another student who has cheated

Grades, assignments, and significant deadlines: Unless otherwise indicated, I will grade assignments within three days of their due date. All assignments in this course will be graded on a 100-point scale (90-100 = A, etc.), and your final course grade will be determined in the following way:

Discussion Forum Postings and General Participation*	20%
Average of Response Papers (2-3 pages each)	20%
Average of Quizzes	15%
Presentation Project**	15%
Final Paper (6-8 page essay)	15%
Final Exam (essay questions, 5-7 pages total for answers)	15%

*Note that reading my comments on response papers and actually viewing the various recorded presentations is part of the participation grade—I am able to see who does and doesn’t do both.

**You will have a choice of doing a recorded presentation on either a multicultural coming of age graphic narrative that we *will not* read together, or on a graphic short story that you yourself have made—if you choose the latter, it’s okay to completely lack drawing skills.

Course materials will be released as biweekly Modules. To a limited extent, students can work at their own pace. However, given the possibility at any point that software and internet

connections may be down or working slowly, and because (as explained more fully below), late assignments are not accepted in this course, I *strongly* recommend against waiting until just before deadlines to complete assignments.

Regarding formal written Assignments: Writing must be submitted in Word format, according to MLA guidelines and standards when applicable. One exception is that the Response Papers DO NOT require a Works Cited page. If you are unfamiliar with MLA guidelines, you should consult [Purdue's Online Writing Lab](#).

Regarding late submissions: Again, papers and other assignments will be graded on a 100-point scale, and late papers will be penalized fifteen points for each day they are late, beginning one hour after the time that they are due. All assignments are due by 11:59 pm on their due date.

General grading rubric: We will assess a sample student essay along with the rubric used by EIU instructors as they grade writing assignments—more on that particular rubric later. More generally, your assignments in this course will be graded in the following terms. See below for a rubric that applies to class participation:

A grade of A indicates work that is truly outstanding in every way. In addition to completely and promptly following the guidelines for the assignment, work that receives an A grade provides a depth of analysis that adds substantive insight to the conversation surrounding the writing's topics and issues. This level of work engages deeply with the themes, issues and ideas involved in a particular text and often links those themes, issues and ideas to the larger ones reflected in our overall course. In this way, such work helps all who read it understand the topics and issues better and more deeply. A-level work is rare, and it should be noted that merely writing MORE than what was assigned does not necessarily merit a grade of A.

A grade of B indicates that, in addition to completing the assignment on time and completely, you have provided a depth of insight and analysis that shows that you have thought deeply about the assignment and its implications, that you have engaged actively with the topic at hand, have thought carefully about it, and that this thought is reflected in clear, cogent and insightful writing. In other words, B-level work does more than simply complete the assignment; it engages deeply with the assignment. Again, it should be noted that merely writing MORE than what was assigned does not necessarily merit a grade of B.

A grade of C indicates that you have completed the assignment as required in an adequate, satisfactory and punctual manner. All necessary components of the assignment are present and completed according to what was required. The writing is clear and grammatically correct. In other words, merely doing the assignment adequately and on time will earn you a grade of C.

A grade of D indicates that the work does not meet the requirements of the assignment in some major respect(s). Although parts of the assignment may be satisfactory, an assignment that merits a D is incomplete or does not otherwise adequately address the

requirements of the assignment. In other words, work might be given a D if it does not engage adequately with the assigned topics and issues. Note that a grade of D may be given to work that partially completes the assignment, but is incomplete.

A **grade of F** indicates that the assignment is either extremely incomplete or that it does nothing to engage with the assigned topic.

Regarding Discussion Forums: Since we cannot meet in person, and since there are too many of us to arrange synchronous meetings online, our Discussion Forums will be an extremely important way for us to discuss our course materials together. Notice above that class participation is a large part of your final grade; below is a rubric that I will use for grading your participation. I will not assign a grade to each of your posts, but I will be closely watching, and participating in, our Discussion Forums.

Be aware that just as listening to others in an in-person classroom is important, so too is reading posts by other students. D2L allows me to see how often you do so (just as it allows me to see whether you watch the Recorded Presentations), and I can also tell when a student hastily dips in and out of Forums, merely dropping in their own posts and merely doing the minimal amount of required replies to others. On the other hand, be wary of writing overly long posts; do write enough to get your well-supported points across, but also be aware that writing *a lot* would mean that your post will largely go unread.

Discussion Forum Grading Rubric

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Grade: A</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>D</i>
<i>Response to Prompt</i>	Brought new, well-supported understanding to discussion of the prompt's topic	Good response but could have been more clearly connected to prompt	Attempted adequate response but may have missed main idea or wandered too far from topic	Post(s) not made at all, or not at all connected to topic
<i>Replies to other students (when required)</i>	Clear, direct and detailed engagement with other students; specific references to others' ideas; reads most posts by others	Engaged with other students but could have been more specific or original	Engagement with other students minimal; very brief, or vague; reads very few posts by others beyond those replied to	Missing or extremely weak replies; doesn't read posts by others
<i>Language</i>	Proper use of clear, mostly error-free language; appropriately professional communication	Language could have been clearer or more polished at some points	Communication is weak, unclear, or highly inappropriate in an academic setting	Breaking of basic rules of appropriate communication in an academic environment OR post was not made
<i>Evidence</i>	Clear connections made to specific course issues and topics, with solid supporting evidence	Some good evidence, but lacking in examples and specificity	Little supporting evidence presented	Misunderstood nature of evidence or lacked evidence entirely
<i>Timeliness</i>	Post and any required replies met deadlines	One deadline or one component may have been missed	Deadlines were missed or did not include all requirements	Post(s) extremely late or missed entirely

Email Activity: Enrollment in this class requires use of your D2L email account, and you must be alert for messages pertaining to the course. Watch our main course page also for “News” items. It is okay to write to Dr. Engles with your regular EIU account, but we will mainly use D2L for announcements and assignments. Email is the quickest, easiest way to reach me, and I welcome any and all emailed questions and comments—I always respond within 24 hours, and usual much sooner. Again, it’s okay to also use my regular email address if you prefer: tdengles@eiu.edu (but be aware that you cannot write to outside email addresses from D2L).

Respect for Diversity: It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well served by this course, that students’ learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. I have also worked to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, and culture. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated—please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups. In addition, if any of our coursework conflicts with your religious events, please let me know so that we can make arrangements for you. Also, all people have the right to be addressed and referred to in accordance with their personal identity. In this course, we will have the chance to indicate the name that we prefer to be called and, if we choose, to identify pronouns with which we would like to be addressed. I will do my best to address and refer to all students accordingly and to support all of you in doing so as well.

Information for Students with Disabilities: If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Student Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible. Also, of course, let me know and what I can do to help accommodate your needs.

Help with course content and procedures: As explained in the Introduction Module, our course has a “Need Help?” Discussion Forum where students can ask questions about the course that I (Dr. Engles) can likely answer. Asking a question there about course content and procedures is a good idea, because others (who may well have the same question) will be able to see my answers. If you have questions that you want to ask me individually, email is of course okay, either in D2L or to tdengles@eiu.edu. Unless otherwise indicated, I will respond to the “Need Help?” Discussion Forum questions and any student email within twenty-four hours (and usually much sooner).

Technical Support: As noted above, students in this course should already have taken the D2L Student Orientation. In order to succeed in this online course, your skills should include (but are not limited to): navigating an online course management system (in this case, D2L), composing emails, accessing online files and web links, and submitting properly formatted assignments via the D2L Dropbox system.

For technical support with D2L, you can contact the ITS Help Desk at 217-581-4357 or itshelp@eiu.edu or CATS Training Services for Students at 217-581-8358.