ENG 3705-001: Multicultural American Literature

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Course listserv: 3705spg@eiu.edu

Required texts:

David Henry Hwang, M Butterfly (1986)  
Gloria Anzaldua, Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza (1987)  
Li-young Lee, Rose (1986)  
Sherman Alexie, Indian Killer (1995)  
Plus: a course packet (available at Copy Express in the student union)

COURSE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES  
(read the following carefully; these words constitute our contract, and I will request your written agreement to them)

COURSE DESCRIPTION: EIU's official description: “A study of American Multicultural literatures from approximately 1700 to the present, featuring African-American, Asian-American, Native American, and Latino/a writers, with emphasis on race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality.” We will take an historical, roughly chronological approach to this material, and we will also cover material that has recently arisen as significant in scholarly approaches to multiculturalism, including whiteness studies, critical race theories, and Arab American literature. It will become clear as we go along that no single perspective can fully represent or explain the American literary experience. Instead, there are many stories and many histories told from many different points of view. Most of us have been educated in only one or two of those histories and literatures, so in this course we will explore more of the recorded, interpreted experiences that make up our multiethnic, polyvocal society. Much of the material in this course will be difficult to grasp and to discuss, so you must be prepared for each class meeting by reading the material carefully beforehand in order to fully participate in our discussions.
COURSE OBJECTIVES:

• To gain insight into forms of American literature written from unfamiliar perspectives, and to understand better the historical and cultural contexts from which such works were written
• To encourage consideration of how cultural factors intersect with others, including race, class, gender, sexuality, and religious preference
• To understand the impact on American literary studies of the opening of “the canon” to new literatures, and to explore the historical and theoretical relationships among canonical and non-canonical texts in American literature
• To practice articulating your well-considered responses to the issues raised by the course

GRADES: Your final course grade will be determined in the following way:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Exam 1</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1st Formal essay (4-5 pages)</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2nd Formal essay (6-8 pages)</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>10-minute presentation and handout</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation/quizzes/attendance</td>
<td>10%</td>
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REGARDING WRITING: When the formal essays are turned in, they MUST be accompanied in a folder by all notes and drafts written towards them, with the final copy of the essay on top of these materials. I will use these materials to gauge and offer comments on your writing process. I WILL NOT GRADE an essay that is not accompanied by material that clearly demonstrates several earlier stages leading up to the final draft, so be sure to save all such materials (if you do most or all of your writing on a computer, print out occasional drafts to include with your final copy). Essays unaccompanied by materials that clearly demonstrate several stages of development toward the final copy will receive an automatic ZERO.

All writing assignments are due at the beginning of the class period on the day they are due. Papers are due at the beginning of class on the due date whether the student is in class or not. Late papers will be penalized fifteen points each day they are late.

REGARDING READING: Since one skill you will be developing in this class is the art of textual analysis, you must give the readings more than a quick skimming over. Instead of wolfing them down right before class, set aside enough time to read carefully—take notes as you read, then decide for yourself, before coming to class, what each author is trying to describe and bring to light. Also, to ensure that your final grade reflects your reading effort, I will occasionally give “pop” quizzes at the beginning of class on required readings. These quizzes will be unannounced beforehand and they cannot be made up. I recognize that some students must be absent at times; accordingly, when I compile your quiz grades at the end of the semester into an average score, I will drop the lowest one—if you miss a quiz, that will be your one dropped quiz. If you don’t miss any quizzes, I will still drop your lowest score from your quiz average.
PRESENTATIONS: Early in the semester, I will give you a list of readings that pertain in various ways to particular readings on our syllabus. Your task will include choosing one of these readings early in the semester; reading it carefully and summarizing on paper its relevance to one of our readings while we discuss that reading; and preparing for the class a one-page handout that succinctly summarizes the main points of the outside reading. The handout must include all relevant bibliographic information for the reading so that your classmates can find it.

MISSED QUIZZES AND LATE PAPERS: Again, because the answers to unannounced quizzes come up in class after they are taken, quizzes cannot be made up (even if you come to class late). These quizzes are one way to reward those who attend class regularly and on time. Again, papers are due at the beginning of class on the due date whether the student is in class or not. Late papers will be penalized fifteen points each day they are late. You may turn in the two essays before their due dates if you know you must miss class that day.

E-MAIL ACTIVITY: Enrollment in this class requires an e-mail account, and you must check it frequently, preferably every day, for messages pertaining to the course. You already have a free EIU e-mail account, which I would prefer that you use. You can use a commercial account for this course, but you MAY NOT use a free web-based account (such as Hotmail or Yahoo) because they often cause problems with listserv subscriptions. Our class discussions will carry over onto the e-mail listserv, and I will occasionally send messages to the entire class. E-mail is also the quickest, easiest way to reach me if I am not in my office; I welcome any and all questions and comments. Getting an e-mail account AND CHECKING IT REGULARLY is crucial for this course—if you do not send me an e-mail message at the above address by Friday, January 11 at 10:30 a.m. to confirm that you have established an account, I will assume that you have chosen against fully participating in the course, and I will therefore drop you. In your message, describe yourself in whatever way you choose (including your major), and also write a statement to the effect that you have read and agree with these course policies and procedures.

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT: In class, I expect all of you to participate in discussions (class participation will be figured into your final grade). The best way to demonstrate that you are an active, engaged, and interested reader is by contributing regularly to class discussions, and by paying close, respectful attention to what everyone else has to say. I do not plan to lecture in this class; I want us to contribute together to a positive, challenging, interesting learning environment. Also, be aware that many sensitive issues tend to arise within a course on multicultural material, so we must respect the opinions of others—try to respond to ideas, rather than to the person stating them. I do not plan to lecture in this class; I want us to contribute together to a positive, challenging, interesting learning environment. If you have questions, no matter how simple or complicated, go ahead and ask me, either in class or via e-mail—chances are that other people have the same question.

ATTENDANCE POLICY: I will take attendance, and I expect you to attend class every day, on time, and prepared to discuss the material listed for that day on the “daily schedule.” More than four missed classes will lower your final grade by one letter grade for each subsequent absence (i.e., if you miss five classes, you can’t get an “A” in this course). Missing class frequently will also harm your grade on the reading quizzes. In addition, note that coming to class “prepared” means coming to class with that day’s assigned reading—anyone who does not
have the day’s assigned reading with them will be considered absent. Regarding tardiness: this is a small class, so late arrivals are disruptive—if for some bizarre reason you wish to get on my bad side, you can easily do so by developing the habit of arriving late for class. If you will not be able to arrive for this class on time because of other commitments, drop it and take another section. Finally, you are responsible for all assignments, whether you attend class or not. Get the telephone number of one or two other students in class, or get ahold of me, so you can find out about missed assignments before you come to class.

ACADEMIC HONESTY: I expect you to act honestly and do your own work in this class, and so does Eastern Illinois University. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the English Department’s policy 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 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 assignment of a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office.”

ONE SPECIAL CONDITION: All students in this course must be available on Tuesday, February 6, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., for a lecture by visiting speaker and activist Tim Wise. Make plans well in advance so that you can attend this lecture.

ENGLISH 3705: DAILY SCHEDULE
(this schedule may be subject to change)

M JAN 7 Introduction to the course and to each other
  • Robert Frost, “The Gift Outright” (1942); Langston Hughes, “I, Too, Sing America” (1925)

W JAN 9 Langston Hughes, “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain” (1926) (handout);
  American Captivity Narratives: “American Indian Captivity: The Literary History,” 9-15

F JAN 11 American Captivity Narratives: Hans Staden, from The True History of His Captivity (1557), 18-39
  • 10:30 a.m.: deadline for sending an e-mail message to Dr. Engles; describe yourself in whatever ways you choose, and also write a statement to the effect that you have read and agree with the above course policies and procedures

M JAN 14 American Captivity Narratives: Hans Staden, from The True History of His Captivity (1557), 40-58

W JAN 16 Takaki, A Different Mirror, “The ‘Tempest’ in the Wilderness,” 24-50
F JAN 18 Course Packet: “Native American Oral Literatures” (21-24), “Native American Oral Poetry” (70-73), and Zuni Poetry: “Sayatasha’s Night Chant” (74-93)

M JAN 21 KING’S BIRTHDAY—NO CLASSES

W JAN 23 Course Packet: Thomas Morton, excerpts from Revels in New Canaan (1637); Manners and Customs of the Indians (of New England) (1637)

F JAN 25 Takaki, A Different Mirror, “Toward the Stony Mountains: From Removal to Reservation,” 84-105

M JAN 28 Gertrude Bonin (Zitkala-Sa), excerpts from Impressions of an Indian Childhood and The School Days of an Indian Girl (1900)

W JAN 30 Charles Waddell Chesnutt, “The Passing of Grandison” (1899)

F FEB 1 Course Packet: Kenneth C. Davis, “What did ‘separate but equal’ mean?” and “Who was Jim Crow?” (from Don’t Know Much about History: Everything You Need to Know about American History But Never Learned, 1990); Richard Wright, “The Ethics of Living Jim Crow” (1937)

M FEB 4 Nella Larson, Passing (1929)


- All students must attend a lecture at 6:30 tonight by speaker and activist Tim Wise in the Coleman Auditorium (in the lower level of Coleman Hall); by Friday at noon, write a two-paragraph response to the class listserv—what parts of Wise’s talk stood out for you, and why?

F FEB 8 LINCOLN’S BIRTHDAY—NO CLASSES

M FEB 11 Nella Larson, Passing

W FEB 13 Passing

F FEB 15 Exam One

M FEB 18 Lonny Kaneko, “The Shoyu Kid” (1976)

W FEB 20 Information on Madame Butterfly (handout); David Henry Hwang, M Butterfly (1986)

F FEB 22 M Butterfly
M FEB 25  *M Butterfly*

- Paper One Due

W FEB 27 *M Butterfly*

R FEB 28  Semester midpoint

F MCH 1  Takaki, *“El Norte: The Borderlands of Chicano America,”* 311-34


W MCH 6  *Borderlands/La Frontera,* “*La Conciencia de la Mestiza: Toward a New Consciousness*”

F MCH 8  Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior* (1976)

M MCH 11–F MCH 15  SPRING BREAK–NO CLASSES

M MCH 18  *The Woman Warrior*

W MCH 20  *The Woman Warrior*

F MCH 22  *The Woman Warrior*

M MCH 25  *The Woman Warrior*


W APR 3  Li-young Lee, *Rose* (1986)

F APR 5  *Rose*
M APR 8 *Rose*

- One-page proposal for final paper due

W APR 10 Toni Morrison, “Recitatif” (1983)


W APR 17 *Indian Killer*

F APR 19 *Indian Killer*

M APR 22 *Indian Killer*

W APR 24 *Indian Killer*

F APR 26 Last day of classes
   Final paper due
   Tearful, heartfelt farewells

Final Exam: TBA