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ENG 3705-001: American Multicultural Literatures

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Multicultural Literature's Greatest Hits (and Misses)
English 3705 – Spring, 2019
3:30-4:45, Tues/Thurs – Coleman 3160

Instructor: Tim Engles
Office: CH 3831

Instructor's email: tdengles@eiu.edu
Office hours: 12:00 – 2:00, Tues & Thurs,
Wed. 1:00 – 2:00, and by appointment

Required texts:

Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior* (1976)
Sandra Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street* (1984)
Helena María Viramontes, *Under the Feet of Jesus* (1995)
Adrian Tomine, *Shortcomings* (2007)
Mat Johnson & Warren Pleece, *Incognegro* (2008, 2018)
Eve L. Ewing, *Electric Arches* (2017)

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

Since the beginnings of institutionalized “multicultural literature” in the 1990s, many minority-authored texts have attained canonical status among scholars and educators. We will juxtapose several such works with other worthwhile, but less familiar ones. Guiding questions will include: What works have the gate-keeping readers in our culture highlighted in terms of “multicultural literature,” and what kinds of works have they missed? Why have some literary works attained canonical multicultural status, while others that also deserve recognition have been largely overlooked? How can scholars of multicultural literature, canon formation, and related social issues help us sort through these matters?

We will conduct our course as an inquiring conversation on these matters, with your active participation central to our work. Because we are a relatively small group, the success of our conversations will depend heavily on everyone's participation. It is therefore crucial that you keep up with the reading, and that you do so with careful attention.

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 more than a quick skimming over. Instead of wolfing them down right before class or merely reading online summaries, 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, and to give credit to those who do the readings carefully and come to class prepared to discuss them, I will occasionally give “pop” quizzes at the beginning of class (see next page for more on quizzes).

Grades: Each assignment will be graded on a 100-point scale (90-100 = A, etc.), and your final course grade will be determined in the following way:

Paired presentation	10%
Event response and analysis	15%
Mid-term exam	15%
Final exam	20%
Major project	20%
Participation/forum responses/ quizzes/attendance	20%

Missed quizzes, missed exams, and late essays: Reading **quizzes** will be unannounced and they cannot be made up. These quizzes are one way to reward those who attend class regularly and on time. 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. Again, because the answers to unannounced quizzes come up in class after quizzes are taken, they cannot be made up (even if you come to class late).

There will be no make-up **exams**—students who miss the first exam will substitute a 6-8 page major essay in response to questions written by Dr. Engles. Students who miss the final exam will receive an automatic “Zero” on it, unless arrangements are made ahead of time regarding an essay substitution.

Essays are due at the beginning of class on the due date whether you are in class or not. Late papers will be penalized fifteen points each day they are late. You may of course turn in an essay before its due date if you know you must miss class that day.

D2L Activity: Enrollment in this class requires use of D2L, and you must check it frequently, preferably every day, for information pertaining to the course. Updates about the course will periodically appear there, as will copies of assignment guidelines and certain handouts. Also, D2L (or EIU) email is the quickest, easiest way to reach me if I am not in my office; I welcome any and all questions and comments. If I must miss a class session, I will notify students as soon as I can with a cancellation notice.

Regular use of D2L is crucial for this course—if you do not send me a D2L email message by Friday, January 11 at 3:00 p.m., I will assume that you have chosen against fully participating in the course, and your class participation grade will drop precipitously. See F JAN 11 below on the Daily Schedule for what to include in this message. I am of course in our course's D2L address book, at tdengles@online.eiu.edu (this address will NOT work with regular email).

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 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 merely lecture in this class;

I want us to contribute together to a positive, challenging, interesting learning environment.

Also, be aware that sensitive issues sometimes arise within a course on multicultural material, so we must respect the opinions of others—remember to respond to ideas, rather than to the person stating them. In my opinion, it's okay for discussions to occasionally become “heated,” and “off the topic” of literature, as long as we respect each other as people. 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 students have the same question.

Some pet-peeves of mine, and some requirements that you've probably heard before: in the interests of keeping everyone in class undistracted and focused, please do not read outside materials, chew gum, or eat food in class (drinking beverages is okay), and do not use a computer in class. **Be sure to silence your phone ahead of time, and do not check or write text messages during class.**

If you happen to be expecting an emergency call or text, it's okay to keep your phone on, but be sure to let me know before class begins.

Finally, please refrain from “packing up” during the last few minutes of class; I will signal when the discussion is finished, and I promise to end each class by the time the period is over (you're welcome to call me on it if I don't).

Attendance policy: The rule regarding attendance is: **be here**. I notice and record absences. I expect you to attend class every day, on time, and prepared to discuss the material listed for that day on the “Daily Schedule.” Missing class frequently will lower your final grade as well as your grades on the reading quizzes. More than three undocumented absences will lower your class participation grade to “Zero.” 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 may 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 course. Also, you are responsible for all assignments, whether you attend class or not. Get the phone number or email of one or two other students in class, so you can find out about any missed assignments *before* you come to class.

Academic honesty: Keep in mind, of course, 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.”

ENGLISH 3705 – DAILY SCHEDULE
(this schedule may be subject to change;
bring the day’s reading material to class—
students who don’t do so may be marked absent)

T JAN 8 Introduction to the course and to each other; discussion of Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960)

- ✓ Sometime after class, and before Friday, January 12 at 3:00 p.m., send a **D2L email** to Dr. Engles (see F JAN 12 below for more detailed instructions)

R JAN 10 Reading for today: Malcolm Gladwell, “The Courthouse Ring: Atticus Finch and the Limits of Southern Liberalism” (handout from Tuesday)

F JAN 11 By 3 p.m. today, carefully read the policies and procedures for this course, and then send a D2L email message to Dr. Engles (with our course’s D2L address book, or by writing in the address tdengles@online.eiu.edu)

- ✓ Describe yourself in whatever ways you choose, including your career aspirations
- ✓ Write a statement to the effect that you have read and agree with the course policies and procedures
- ✓ Briefly explain what your understanding of “multicultural literature” was before you signed up for this course
- ✓ Be sure that you “sign” our course contract by adding your name at the end of your email

T JAN 15 Angela Shaw-Thornburg, “On Reading *To Kill a Mockingbird*: Fifty Years Later” (handout from last week)

R JAN 17 Johnson, *Incognegro*

T JAN 22 *Incognegro*

R JAN 24 Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior*, “No Name Woman” & “White Tigers”

T JAN 29 *The Woman Warrior*, “Shaman”

R FEB 31 *The Woman Warrior*, “At the Western Palace”

T FEB 5 Finish *The Woman Warrior* and read excerpt from Sau-ling Cynthia Wong, “‘Sugar Sisterhood’: Situating the Amy Tan Phenomenon” (handout; from *The Ethnic Canon: Histories, Institutions, and Interventions*, edited by David Palumbo-Liu)

R FEB 7 Read half of Tomine, *Shortcomings*

- T FEB 12 Finish *Shortcomings* and excerpt from Yen, “Asian American Masculinity: A Review of the Literature” (handout)
- R FEB 14 Read first half of Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street* (1984)
- T FEB 19 Finish *The House on Mango Street*
- R FEB 21 James Baldwin, “The Manchild” & “On Being ‘White’ . . . And Other Lies” (short story and essay; handouts)
- T FEB 26 Toni Morrison, “Recitatif” (short story; handout)
- R FEB 28 Rebecca Roanhorse, “Welcome to Your Authentic Indian Experience™” (2017; short story; handout)
- T MAR 5 **Mid-term Exam** (Reminder: there will be no make-up exams—students who miss the first exam will substitute a 6-8 page major essay in response to questions written by Dr. Engles.)
- R MAR 7 Viramontes, *Under the Feet of Jesus*, beginning to page 46; Discussion of Paired Presentation Guidelines
- F MAR 8 Deadline to sign up for the English Studies Conference
- March 11 – 15: Spring Break!
- T MAR 19 *Under the Feet of Jesus*, 47-130
- R MAR 21 Finish *Under the Feet of Jesus*
- T MAR 26 begin PechaKuchas (Topic: Multicultural Literature: A Hit and a Miss)
- R MAR 28 PechaKuchas
- T APR 2 NO CLASS – the English Studies Conference will take place all day on the third floor of Coleman Hall
- R APR 4 PechaKuchas
- T APR 9 Ewing, *Electric Arches* (2017), beginning to 46; Discussion of **Final Paper (focused comparison/contrast) Guidelines**
- R APR 11 Finish *Electric Arches*
- T APR 16 Student choice – “missed” multicultural poetry

R APR 18 Student choice -- “missed” multicultural poetry

T APR 23 Project Day: No class—work hard on your final project. If any students would like to consult with Dr. Engles about their projects, he will be available in his office today, 12:00 to 2:00 (emailed questions any time are also of course welcome)

R APR 25 **Final Paper (focused comparison/contrast) due** at the beginning of class; discussion of Final Exam; tearful, heartfelt farewells

Final Exam Period: Thursday May 2, 2:45 – 4:45