ENG 5010-001: Studies in Twentieth-Century American Literature: Multicultural Authors and Authorship

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Studies in Twentieth-Century American Literature: Multicultural Authors and Authorship

English 5010—Fall, 2014
Thursday, 3:30 - 6:00, 3159 Coleman Hall

Instructor: Tim Engles
Office: CH 3831
Email: tdengles@eiu.edu
Office hours: 10:45 – 12:00, Tues/Thurs & by appointment

Required Texts

*The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood among Ghosts,* Maxine Hong Kingston (1975)
*The Bluest Eye,* Toni Morrison (1970)
*Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the American Literary Imagination,* Toni Morrison (1992)
*The End of the Story,* Lydia Davis (1994)
*Erasure,* Percival Everett (2001)

*Maus* (volumes 1 & 2), Art Spiegelman (1986, 1991)
*Face,* Sherman Alexie (2009)

Course Description and Goals*

We will begin with consideration of the notion of “authorship,” including twentieth-century declarations of “The Death of the Author.” Throughout the semester, we will read both creative and scholarly works that directly address further implications for multicultural authors in the United States: How have the works of differently raced, classed, and gendered authors commonly been perceived and read? How are some types of authors granted more “authority” than others? When we read literature written by different kinds of authors, why do we read characters in relation to their authors differently? How do multicultural authors strategically cater to and resist the tendency of many to read their works “ethnographically”? Why, on the other hand, are the works of majority authors rarely read in terms of their group membership?

Students should emerge from this course with a solid understanding of: renowned and lesser-known multicultural works that creatively depict the notion and practical realities of authorship; relevant theoretical concepts that tend to arise in established and recent modes of scholarly inquiry into the complex connections between multicultural authors, their works and their readers; and how to research and write effectively in scholarly modes about such matters.
Our course will be conducted as an inquiring conversation, with your active participation central to our work. Because the success of our conversations will depend so heavily on everyone’s participation, it is crucial that you keep up with the reading, and that you do so with careful attention. At the same time, those of us (including me) who feel comfortable and even enthusiastic about speaking in seminar settings should keep in mind the value of letting others speak, including those who tend to take more time to gather their thoughts before doing so.

Also, the rule regarding attendance is: be here. If you have more than two absences this semester, your course grade will drop a full letter grade for each absence beyond two.

*Here is EIU’s Graduate Course Catalog description:

ENG 5010 - Studies in Twentieth-Century American Literature

(3-0-3) A study of some thematic preoccupation, literary movement, major figure(s), or genre connected with the period. The topic will vary from semester to semester.

Prerequisites & Notes: May be repeated once with the permission of the Department Chairperson. Credits: 3

Graded Course Requirements

1. Response Papers (25% of final course grade) three to four typed, edited, proofread, and double-spaced pages (more is okay, but don’t get carried away), due at the beginning of class. Grades will be based on insight, sincerity, care, and thoughtfulness.

For each response paper (see Daily Schedule for when these are due), quickly summarize your understanding of the reading’s content, in about three sentences. For the rest of the paper, choose one of the following options:

- Write a thoughtful response to the reading that demonstrates why and how you find it enlightening, engaging, and/or confusing. You can quote a sentence or two if that helps, but just refer to page numbers in the reading for anything longer.
- Write a creative response that demonstrates your understanding of, or your confusion about, something in the text. Potential examples: a letter from one character to another; an extensive poem about one or more of the characters; a scene that could have taken place in the book; a short story that works with themes in the book; or another creative mode of your own.

2. Thirty-minute Discussion Guidance and Written Assessment (15%) Each student will choose one day on the Daily Schedule. For this class session, you will begin by briefly explaining your reaction to and understanding of the reading (or, perhaps, of both readings). You will then lead a class discussion, in whatever ways you chose, of the reading or readings. Other members of the class will help you by also having read the
day’s reading assignment(s) carefully. Don’t plan on talking by yourself for long—your main goal is to stimulate class discussion, and you can use any pedagogical methods you chose. After your presentation, you will write a response/assessment (two-three pages, double spaced) on the basis of your reaction to how the session went, what you might have done differently (or more of), and how it changed (or verified) your response to the assigned reading. The response/assessment will be due one week after your discussion guidance.

3. **12-15 page research essay** (25%) This paper will be a focused comparison/contrast of one primary work on Daily Schedule and one creative work that is not listed there (if you have any questions about “primary,” “secondary” and “creative” works, be sure to ask). This essay will be an analysis of these works in relation to our broader course theme of “multicultural authors and authorship,” and/or theoretical concepts we have discussed. A 250-400 word proposal will be required beforehand. The essay should reflect your close attention to and understanding of insights and interpretive concepts that will have arisen throughout the semester, and of course, it must be an entirely new essay (not something that contains material you wrote for a previous course).

A bit more about essays: All writing assignments are due at the beginning of the class period on the day they are due, whether the student is in class or not. **Late-paper penalty:** fifteen points each day late.

4. **Final exam** (25%) This will be a take home—details coming later in the semester.

5. **Active, thoughtful class participation** (10%) Be aware that most of our works are intense, concentrated, demanding readings, and schedule your study time accordingly, partly so that you can be an attentive, active class participant. I will not deliver lectures in this class; because we are a relatively small group, we must all contribute to a positive, challenging, interesting learning environment. Doing so will call for your careful concentration before class on each assigned reading, and your willingness to share your thoughts, questions, and feelings with others about what you read and hear.

**Other Matters**

**Email:** Enrollment in this class requires an email account, and I strongly recommend that you use your free EIU account or another account (be aware that Yahoo, Hotmail, and other free accounts are sometimes too limited for professional purposes). Email is the quickest, easiest way to reach me if I am not in my office; I welcome any and all questions and comments.

You also have an email assignment: By Tuesday of next week (September 2) at 3 p.m., send an email message to Dr. Engles (tdengles@eiu.edu), who will use your email address to subscribe you to the class listserv. In your message, (1) identify which course you’re in (English 5010); (2) describe yourself in whatever way you choose, including your career aspirations; and (3) write a statement to the effect that you have carefully
read and agree with the above course policies and requirements (or perhaps that you disagree with some of them—which is okay, if you explain why).

**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 (once again) 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.”

**Students with disabilities:** 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 Ninth Street Hall, Room 2006, or call 217-581-6583.

**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.

**ENGLISH 5010: DAILY SCHEDULE**
* (this schedule may be subject to change)*

**Note:** This schedule may change; any changes will be announced in advance. Reading assignments are to be completed by the dates on which they appear on the syllabus. BE SURE to bring the appropriate book and any handouts to class that are listed for that day.

R AUG 28 Introduction to the course and each other; discussion of Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author” (1968; emailed essay)

T SEP 2 3 p.m. **Deadline** for sending Dr. Engles (tdengles@eiu.edu) the email that’s described above

R SEP 4 Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior* (1975), “No Name Woman,” “White Tigers,” and “Shaman”; Response Paper due at the beginning of class

R SEP 11 Finish *The Woman Warrior* and also read Hong Kingston, “Cultural Mis-readings by American Reviewers” (1982)

R SEP 25  Finish *The Bluest Eye* and also read Morrison, “Home” (1997)


R OCT 9  Davis, *The End of the Story* (1995); Response Paper due at the beginning of class

[W OCT 15 Official Semester Mid-term]

R OCT 16  Finish *The End of the Story* and read Christopher J. Knight, “Lydia Davis's Own Philosophical Investigation: *The End of the Story*” (2008)

R OCT 23  Excerpts from Doris Sommer, *Proceed with Caution, when Engaged by Minority Writing in the Americas* (1999) and Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987); Response Paper for one or both readings due at the beginning of class

R OCT 30  Plascencia, *People of Paper* (2006); final-paper proposal due at the beginning of class

R NOV 6  Finish *People of Paper* and read Ramón Saldívar, “Historical Fantasy, Speculative Realism, and Postrace Aesthetics in Contemporary American Fiction” (2011)

R NOV 13  Everett, *Erasure* (2001); Response Paper due at the beginning of class

R NOV 20  Continue *Erasure*

NOVEMBER 22 - 26: THANKSGIVING BREAK

R DEC 2  Finish *Erasure* and read Margaret Russett, “Race under *Erasure*” (2005)

R DEC 9  Final Essay due at the beginning of class; discussion of Final Exam

Our Final Exam Period: Thursday, December 16, 7:30-9:30 p.m.