

## Ethnic Literature in America

ENG 330, Spring 2018, University of Southern Indiana, 3.0 Credit Hours  
TR 1:30pm-2:45pm | Orr Center 2036

Prof. Andy Hines

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Richard Misrach, *Wall*, 2015

The literary scholar Ramón Saldívar makes plain the need for attending to the increasingly complex landscape of ethnic American literature. He argues that “the relationship between race and social justice, race and identity, and indeed, race and history requires [minority] writers to invent a new ‘imaginary’ for thinking about the nature of a just society and the role of race in its construction. It also requires the invention of new forms to represent it” (574). This course surveys literature by Native American, African American, Latinx, Chicana, and Asian American writers in an effort to better understand the new literary forms developed to represent and describe a just society. Our inquiry will be organized with three linked themes: the dispossession of personhood, land, and citizenship; the threat to “speak American”; and the transnational perspectives founded through migration and diaspora. We also focus on developing a critical and intersectional means for interpreting these texts, meaning we will consider ethnicity and race intersect with gender, class, sexuality, and ability. Students will learn of the essential contributions that ethnic American writers make to contemporary debates about globalization, capitalism, and the environment.

## Catalog Description

A survey of significant minority contributions to literature, particularly Black-American, but including Native-American, Asian-American, and Mexican-American. Prerequisite: ENG 201

*USI Core 39: Embedded Experience-Diversity.*

## Course Goals

In this class students will:

- Learn the history of ethnic American literature in the United States by gaining familiarity with major authors, works, and movements.
- Develop methods for interpreting and analyzing ethnic American literature informed by the literary critical practice of ethnic American critics and writers.
- Engage in meaningful discussion about ethnic American literature and its bearing on the history of discrimination, dispossession, and oppression related to ethnicity in the United States.
- Gain skills and techniques in comparative analysis, interpretation, reasoned argument, and other modes of critical inquiry.

## University Core 39

This course fulfills the USI University Core 39 Embedded Experience – Diversity requirement, meaning that it critically addresses “the difference among individuals and groups, representing the full spectrum of human characteristics, ideas, and worldview.”

Course lectures, discussions, readings, and writing assignments provide the materials necessary for students to exceed expectations when it comes to understanding the multifaceted history of ethnic American writers, how ethnic American literature and ethnic American writers have sought widespread social and political change, and how ethnic American literature, ethnic American cultural life, and ethnic American people define a variety of experiences based on the ways that they intersect with ability, class, gender, race, sexuality, and other essential factors.

## Required Texts

Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower* (Grand Central, 2000) ISBN: 978-0446675505

Junot Díaz, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (Riverhead, 2008) ISBN: 978-1594483295

Claudia Rankine, *Citizen: An American Lyric* (Graywolf, 2014) ISBN: 978-1-555-97690-3

Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony* (Penguin, 2006) ISBN: 978-0143104919

Layli Long Soldier, *WHEREAS* (Graywolf, 2017) ISBN: 978-1555977672

Karen Tei Yamashita, *I Hotel* (Coffee House Press, 2010) ISBN: 978-1566892391

These books are available for purchase at the USI Campus Store located on the first floor of University Center West. You can also buy these books elsewhere, but make sure you’re buying the editions listed above.

Other readings will be posted to our Blackboard site, accessible through MyUSI.

## REQUIREMENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS

### Grade Distribution

Participation	15%
Reading Journal	20%
Midterm Paper	25%
Final Paper	25%
Presentation	15%

### Participation

You are expected to come to class prepared to be an active member of discussion. To do so, you'll need to have a firm grasp of the assigned readings, to be equipped with questions you have about the material, and to respect the comments and questions of your classmates. Your contributions are not just to serve the interests of the professor, but the *entire classroom community*. This policy applies to me, as it does to you.

### Reading Journal

You will each set up a journal on Blackboard where you must log at least one entry per week on assigned readings. These informal posts should be between 250-500 words each. The reading journal is designed to help you prepare for class with questions that you have about the assigned reading. It is also a place for you to explore passages that are interesting to you and to for you to make connections to other course readings, as well as other courses. You must complete your weekly journal entry by 11:59pm each Friday, unless otherwise instructed. I am primarily grading this assignment for completion, but exceptional posts will be rewarded.

### Midterm Paper

Near the middle of the semester you will write a formal paper of 5-7 pages that either takes up a topic of your own choosing or responds to one of several prompts I will provide. Either way, the midterm paper requires you to analyze intensively one or two course texts. I will provide more details about this assignment as it approaches. For now, know that you will be graded on your ability to develop a coherent argument that is related to course texts and topics. By coherent argument, I mean that your major claims are well supported with textual evidence and that your writing is easily understood. You may use material from your reading journals and your class presentation in your midterm paper.

### Final Paper

The course will culminate with a formal paper of 7-8 pages on a topic of your own design. Most broadly, the paper should consider an aesthetic, historical, and/or political relationship between several works of literature related to the course. You must be in conversation with scholarly sources in your paper.

We will discuss the final paper assignment in greater depth after midterm. In the meantime, you may want to consider using your reading journal and presentation to help lead you toward a topic, or to be fluent in the area that you would like to write on.

## **Presentation**

Each student will sign up to give one 5-7 minute presentation at the beginning of a class of her choosing. The presentation should provoke and invite a robust class discussion and I expect you to be creative in developing a method to achieve this result. Some tactics may include highlighting a particularly inventive reading of the text, contextualizing historical events that a text engages, or theorizing how your topic relates to any number of issues on campus, in Evansville, Indiana, and beyond. Your presentation must end with one or two open-ended questions that we can discuss as a class. As part of this assignment, you are required to turn in a brief summary of your plans, including your discussion questions and citations for any sources referenced by 8pm the evening before you are to present.

## **COURSE POLICIES**

### **Attendance**

Come to every class on time with the assigned readings and note-taking materials. More than two unexcused absences will adversely affect your overall course grade. Arriving late or not bringing your text to class will also count against you. If you know you will be absent in advance for a university sanctioned reason, contact me ahead of time.

### **Deadlines**

All assignments must be turned in by announced deadlines. If this does not seem possible for a particular assignment, you should contact me well in advance so we can come up with a solution.

### **Screens**

Unless the course reading is posted on Blackboard, I ask that you not use computers, tablets, or any other electronic devices during class. Please put away your phones.

### **Email**

Email is the best way to schedule an appointment with me or to ask me questions about course material. Sometimes – especially around paper deadlines – it may take me more than 24 hours to get back to you, so plan accordingly. I prefer you to use professional email etiquette, meaning that you use salutations, punctuation, and complete sentences. An emoji now and again won't hurt anyone, though.

### **The Writers' Room**

The Writers' Room (ED 1102) is an on-campus resource that provides peer-feedback on writing assignments at any stage of the writing process. They also offer an online feedback resource in case it is difficult to manage an appointment with your schedule. Find more information at [www.usi.edu/university-division/academic-skills/tutoring/writers-room](http://www.usi.edu/university-division/academic-skills/tutoring/writers-room).

### **Disability Support Services**

If you have a disability for which you may require academic accommodations for this class, please register with Disability Resources (DR) as soon as possible. Students who have an accommodation letter from DR are encouraged to meet privately with course faculty to discuss the provisions of those accommodations as early in the semester as possible. To qualify for accommodation assistance, students must first register to use the disability resources in DR, Science Center Rm. 2206, 812-464-1961, [www.usi.edu/disabilities](http://www.usi.edu/disabilities). To help ensure that accommodations will be available

when needed, students are encouraged to meet with course faculty at least 7 days prior to the actual need for the accommodation. However, if you will be in an internship, field, clinical, student teaching, or other off-campus setting this semester please note that approved academic accommodations may not apply. Please contact Disability Resources as soon as possible to discuss accommodations needed for access while in this setting.

### **Title IX – Sexual Misconduct**

USI does not tolerate acts of sexual misconduct, including sexual harassment and all forms of sexual violence. If you have experienced sexual misconduct, or know someone who has, the University can help. It is important to know that federal regulations and University policy require faculty to promptly report incidences of potential sexual misconduct known to them to the Title IX Coordinator to ensure that appropriate measures are taken and resources are made available. The University will work with you to protect your privacy by sharing information with only those who need to know to ensure we can respond and assist. If you are seeking help and would like to speak to someone confidentially, you can make an appointment with a counselor in the University Counseling Center. Find more information about sexual violence, including campus and community resources at [www.usi.edu/stopsexualassault](http://www.usi.edu/stopsexualassault).

### **Academic Integrity**

Plagiarism is a serious transgression and, as such, can be subject to a formal resolution process through the College of Liberal Arts. That said, plagiarism can be difficult to define. Be rigorous about citing any sources you consult while working on assignments for this class. If you have questions about what is and isn't plagiarism, please don't hesitate to ask me. For more about academic integrity at USI visit [www.usi.edu/deanofstudents/academic-integrity](http://www.usi.edu/deanofstudents/academic-integrity).

### **SCHEDULE:**

#### Week 1

T, 1/9: Introductions: What is ethnic American literature?

R, 1/11: James Baldwin, "My Dungeon Shook" and Gloria Anzaldúa, "La conciencia de la mestiza /Towards a New Consciousness" [Blackboard]

### **The Everyday Life of Dispossession**

#### Week 2

T, 1/16: Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower* (pp.1-85)

R, 1/18: *Parable of the Sower* (86-115)

#### Week 3

T, 1/23: *Parable of the Sower* (116-195)

R, 1/25: *Parable of the Sower* (196-224)

#### Week 4

T, 1/30: *Parable of the Sower* (225-293)

R, 2/1: *Parable of the Sower* (294-end)

#### Week 5

T, 2/6: Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony* (pp. 1-78)

R, 2/8: *Ceremony* (78-129)

Week 6

T, 2/13: *Ceremony* (129-202)

R, 2/15: *Ceremony* (202-end)

## **Speaking American**

Week 7

T, 2/20: Junot Díaz, *Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (pp. 1-75)

R, 2/22: *Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (76-165)

Week 8

T, 2/27: *Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (167-261)

R, 3/1: *Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (261-end); **Midterm Paper Due**

SPRING BREAK

Week 9

T, 3/13: Layli Long Soldier, *WHEREAS*

R, 3/15: *WHEREAS*

Week 10

T, 3/20: Claudia Rankine, *Citizen: An American Lyric*

R, 3/22: *Citizen*

## **Between Worlds: Migration and Diaspora**

Week 11

T, 3/27: Karen Tei Yamashita, *I Hotel* (pp. 1-113)

R, 3/29: *I Hotel* (117-189)

Week 12

T, 4/3: *I Hotel* (373-420)

R, 4/5: *I Hotel* (423-489)

Week 13

T, 4/10: *I Hotel* (535-577)

R, 4/12: *I Hotel* (579-605)

Week 14

T, 4/17: Jumpha Lahiri, from *Interpreter of Maladies* [Blackboard]

R, 4/19: June Jordan, "A Report from the Bahamas" [Blackboard]

Week 15

T, 4/24: Wrap up

**Final Paper due by 3:30pm on April 26.**