

ENGL 1301W
Introduction to Multicultural Literatures of the United States
Summer 2009
240 Amundson Hall
M W TH 1:25 – 4:25
Instructor: John Pistelli
Office: 306B Lind Hall
Office hours: W TH 12:15 – 1:15
Email: piste004@umn.edu

.....

Required texts

Available at Paradigm Copies in the Dinkydome on University Ave and 15th Ave:

Custom course packet

Available at the bookstore in Coffmann Memorial Union (please purchase the specified editions so we can all be on the same page):

Toni Morrison, *Sula* (Vintage)
Maria Irene Fornes, *Fefu and Her Friends* (P A J Publications)
Jaime Hernandez, *Maggie the Mechanic* (Fantagraphics)
David Henry Hwang, *M. Butterfly* (Plume)
Jhumpa Lahiri, *Interpreter of Maladies* (Mariner)
David Treuer, *The Translation of Dr Apelles* (Vintage)

.....

This course will survey literature written between 1965 and 2007 by authors who do not belong to the dominant ethnic, racial, cultural or religious groups of the United States. We will explore questions such as the following: How do broad social trends such as bigotry, oppression, immigration, political activism, religious conflict and economic exploitation shape works of art? What is the relationship between culture (defined broadly as the set of practices and attitudes that characterize a group of people) and individual texts? What are the obligations of writers toward the marginalized or oppressed cultures to which they may belong? How can literature—as an attitude and as an institution—help to resist marginalization and oppression? How has literature changed between the period of 1960s militancy and our current age of globalization and diversity? As this course is also an introduction to literature more generally, we will read works in a number of distinct genres (long and short fiction, drama, graphic narrative, the essay) and look at how each mode of expression gives a unique form to what is expressed. Through close reading and analysis, we will investigate how writers make meaning, and we will be attentive to how creative acts and critical interpretations can alter our perceptions of the world.

.....

Course policies

Grading

There are 100 points available in this course. Here is the point breakdown:

- 15 points – Close reading 1
- 15 points – Close reading 2
- 20 points – Essay 1 and revision
- 20 points – Essay 2
- 10 points – Presentation
- 10 points – Final exam
- 10 points – Attendance and participation

More information about assignments and their criteria will be given during the course.

“Participation” means both regular attendance and active engagement in the class; even if you have perfect attendance, you will not earn more than 7 out of 10 points—that is, a “C-” for this assignment—if you do not speak up in at least each class.

The grading policy in this course conforms to CLA guidelines. Therefore a “C” is equivalent to basic fulfillment of requirements; to achieve a grade higher than a “C” a student must perform beyond the basic requirements. Please keep the following scale and criteria in mind:

- A (90-100).....Achievement outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements
- B (80-90).....Achievement significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements
- C (70-80).....Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect
- D (60-70).....Achievement worthy of credit, even though it fails to meet course requirements fully
- F (0-60).....Represents failure (or no credit) and signifies that the work was either completed but at a level of achievement not worthy of credit, or was not completed without an agreement between the instructor and the student that the student would be awarded an incomplete

Incompletes

A grade of incomplete (“I”) is given only in a genuine emergency, and only for work which is due during the last two weeks of the course. You must make arrangements with the instructor for an incomplete before the last day of class.

Use of computers

All workshop and revised drafts of major assignments must be done on a word processor. Students can use the University's public computer labs, including the ones in Wilson, Walter, and McGrath Libraries. No fee is charged, except to use lab printers. Students may also use one of

the sixteen Macs in the Center for Writing in 15 Nicholson. University Technology Training Center (<http://uttc.umn.edu/training/>) schedules regular training sessions. Students who think that computer access will present a serious difficulty should talk to the instructor immediately.

Assignments

In order to receive credit for this course, you must turn in all required drafts and revisions. If you do not, you will receive a failing grade for the course. Late assignments will receive a lower grade. Keep copies of all your work in a folder dedicated exclusively to this course; back up your work on your computer in case assignments get lost.

Attendance policy

I will take formal attendance at the beginning of every class. You are permitted to miss two of our meetings without apology or excuse—that means you can miss two classes and don't have to contact me about it in any way. If you miss a third meeting without having documentation of a legitimate excuse (serious illness, death in the family etc.), your attendance grade will be lowered. Be advised, however, that there may be in-class exercises, assignments and activities in this course; it is your responsibility to make up any work you have missed even during excused absences. If you miss three or more classes, you will not receive credit for the course and will be asked to apply for a formal withdrawal. If you miss class for any reason, it is your responsibility to ask a classmate rather than the instructor for notes or a summary. Finally, be on time to class—lateness is highly disruptive and it will affect your participation grade. If you are more than five minutes late, you will not be able to sign the attendance sheet.

Student conduct

Please do not engage in behavior that disrupts the learning environment for others. This includes any behavior that substantially or repeatedly interrupts either student learning or my ability to teach. Students responsible for such behavior may be asked to cancel their registration (or have their registration canceled).

In order to avoid disruptions, please observe the following policies: 1. Turn cell phones off and put them away before coming to class. 2. During class, your attention should be directed toward whomever is speaking or to your assigned task; this means no talking to your neighbor, no texting, no cross-word puzzling, etc. 3. During classroom discussions, robust debate and the voicing of all opinions are encouraged, but avoid abusive speech, personal attacks and generally offensive language.

Contact

The best way to contact me with questions or concerns about the course is to come to my office hours. If your schedule conflicts with my office hours, please let me know so that we can arrange to meet at another time. Feel free to email me (with brief, fact-based questions), but please allow 24 hours for a response.

Students with disabilities

Any student with a documented disability condition who needs to arrange accommodations should contact the instructor and Disability Services (626-1333) at the beginning of the semester.

Scholastic dishonesty

The University Student Conduct Code defines scholastic dishonesty as follows: “Scholastic Dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering, forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis.”

(<http://advisingtools.class.umn.edu/cgep/studentconduct.html>)

Plagiarism, representing someone else’s intellectual work as your own, will result in a failing for the assignment, and may result in a failing grade for the course. Plagiarism can include submitting a paper: 1. written by means of inappropriate collaboration; 2. written by you for another course, submitted without the permission of both instructors; 3. purchased, downloaded, or cut and pasted from the Internet; 4. that fails to properly acknowledge its sources through standard citations.

Extra credit

The College of Liberal Arts does not permit students to submit extra work in an attempt to raise their grade unless the instructor has specified at the outset of the course that such opportunities are afforded to all students. There will be no extra credit opportunities for this class.

Student writing support

Students can get one-to-one-consultations on any course paper or writing project at Student Writing Support. Student Writing Support has several campus locations, including the main location in 15 Nicholson Hall. See <http://writing.umn.edu/sws/index.htm> for details about locations, appointments, and online consultations.

.....

Schedule of readings and major assignments (more detail will be provided as the course progresses, and this schedule is subject to change)

Note: (C) indicates that the reading can be found in the custom course packet

Jun 15 – Introductions

Jun 17 – Harriet Beecher Stowe, from *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (handout); James Baldwin,

“Everybody’s Protest Novel” (C)

Jun 19 – Gabriel García-Márquez, “A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings” (C); Toni Morrison, *Sula*

Jun 23 – *Sula*

Jun 25 – *Sula*

Jun 26 – Susan Sontag, “Simone Weil” (C); Maria Irene Fornes, *Fefu and Her Friends*

Jun 30 – *Fefu and Her Friends*
**DUE: Close reading 1

Jul 1 – *Fefu and Her Friends*

Jul 2 – Jaime Hernandez, *Maggie the Mechanic*

Jul 6 – *Maggie the Mechanic*; Douglas Wolk, “Jaime Hernandez: Mad Love” (C)

Jul 8 – *Maggie the Mechanic*; Gloria Anzaldúa, “La Conciencia de la Mestiza: Towards a New Consciousness” (C)
**DUE: Essay 1

Jul 9 – Maxine Hong Kingston, from *The Woman Warrior* (C); Frank Chin, “The Most Popular Book in China” (C)

Jul 13 – Edward W. Said, from *Orientalism* (C)

Jul 15 – David Henry Hwang, *M. Butterfly*

Jul 16 – *M. Butterfly*

Jul 20 – Screening and discussion of the film *M. Butterfly*

Jul 22 – Salman Rushdie, “Step Across This Line” (C); Jhumpa Lahiri, *Interpreter of Maladies*
**DUE: Presentations

Jul 23 – *Interpreter of Maladies*
**DUE: Presentations

Jul 27 – *Interpreter of Maladies*; Wajahat Ali, “Ramadan Blues” (C)
**DUE: Presentations

Jul 29 – Leslie Marmon Silko, “Yellow Woman” (C); David Treuer, *The Translation of Dr Apelles*

Jul 30 – Vladimir Nabokov, “Signs and Symbols” (C); *The Translation of Dr Apelles*
**DUE: Close reading 2

Aug 3 – *The Translation of Dr Apelles*

Aug 5 – *The Translation of Dr Apelles*; David Treuer, from *Native American Fiction: A User’s Manual* (C)

Aug 6 – Final exam
**DUE: Essay 2 & Essay 1 revision

.....

Note on readings and discussions: A proverb says that we should never talk about divisive matters such as sex, politics or religion in polite company. However, since great literature is usually about what publicly concerns and privately obsesses us, most of it seems to be about sex, politics and religion. If you are offended by frank portrayals of these topics, another course might be for you. When discussing the portrayals of these topics in the classroom, we will strive to be a polite company by refraining from attacks on the beliefs of individuals or groups and by not using rude, dismissive or hateful language while expressing our own beliefs. Finally, if a specific author’s treatment of these or any other issues offends you, keep in mind that the writing skills you will learn in this course will enable you to make clear, logical and eloquent arguments against the position that you reject.

Estimated enrollment: 25

Title: Interepter of Maladies
Author: Lahiri, Jhumpa
Publisher: Houghton Mifflin Company
ISBN: 039592720X
Copies: 1

Title: Sula
Author: Morrison, Toni
Publisher: Knopf Publishing Group
ISBN: 1400033438
Copies: 1

Title: Translation of Dr Apelles
Author: Treuer, David
Publisher: Knopf Publishing Group
ISBN: 0307386627
Copies: 1

Title: Fefu and Her Friends
Author: Fornes, Maria Irene
Publisher: P A J Publications
ISBN: 155554052X
Copies: 1

Title: M. Butterfly
Author: Hwang, David Henry
Publisher: Plume
ISBN: 0452272599
Copies: 1

Title: Maggie the Mechanic
Author: Hernandez, Jaime
Publisher: Fantagraphics Books
ISBN: 1560977841
Copies: 1