

Ethnic Literature: American Me
(Introduction to Composition: Writing from Sources)
ENGL 10803.011
Fall 2007
Meeting: MWF 9:00-9:50 in Reed 117

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Course Description

Ethnic literature is often read as autobiographical, even when making no such claims. First-person narrators and central characters alike are often associated with their authors. The association seems even more pronounced for authors and texts perceived as, in some way, ethnic. Can a text be gender- and ethnically- neutral? Or be deemed ethnically authentic or inauthentic? This course will look at ethnic (and gendered) selves and characters in American literature, considering similarities and dissimilarities between them. Through reading, discussing, and writing about texts that run the gamut from avowedly autobiographical to patently not so, we will address issues of ethnicity, autobiography, and creative freedom.

This writing seminar will help you develop critical thinking, reading, and writing skills indispensable to the rest of your college career and beyond. We will explore the notion of “what you say” (content) versus “how you say it” (style), as well as the claim that “how you say it IS what you have to say.” What you have to say is so inextricably intertwined with how you say it that you can’t have one without the other. In writing there is no content (great ideas) without the medium (the vehicle of written language). Similarly, it is often said that there are no true synonyms: every synonym has its own nuances of meaning. On the clause, sentence, paragraph, and essay levels the phenomenon is magnified. Even ostensibly minor revisions of diction, punctuation, and sentence structure deliver a different constellation of meaning to the reader.

Compelling narrative and eloquence of prose are the common denominators of the texts, both fiction and nonfiction, that we will read in this course. In addition to situating texts in their relevant social, historical, political, and other critical contexts, we will pay particular attention to rhetorical and stylistic choices made at the prose level. You will notice that though this is a writing seminar rather than a formal debate class the slogans in the above paragraph use the word *say* instead of *write*. “How you *write* it” would have been more specific but would have less rhetorical effect due to the connotative power of the phrase “how you say it.” Noticing such writing choices is an example of the close attention that we will give to reading and writing in this course.

This course will involve close reading, literary analysis, vigorous participation in class discussions, and the major revision of earlier versions of papers.

Course Requirements

5 essays (20 pages total):

Paper 1: Book Review (2 pages)

Paper 2: Position Paper on *Woman Warrior* (4 pages)

Paper 3: Literary Analysis of *Beloved* (6 pages) (peer edited)

Paper 4: Film Review of *House of Sand and Fog* (2 pages)

Paper 5: Literary Analysis on text and topic of your choice (6 pages) (peer edited)

Course Objectives

In this course you will learn to:

Read texts closely, including as the toughest reader of your own writing.

Freewrite and brainstorm.

Develop a clear, precise, and well-defined thesis statement.

Develop and support your thesis with fitting examples and persuasive reasoning.

Keep paragraph unity and keep only the paragraphs that relate to your thesis.

Structure your paragraphs optimally with clear and smooth transitions.

Appreciate nuances of diction.

Mind the mechanics and grammar of formal written English.

Revise as re-vision—writing as a process of discovery and critical thinking.

Consider the sociohistorical context that texts are imbedded in.

Pay close attention to the language of the texts themselves.

Disrupt monolithic expectations about ethnic literature, embracing the diversity of ethnic authors and experience.

Grading

Papers 1, 2, and 4	20%
Paper 3	20%
Paper 5	40%
Class participation, pop quizzes, and attendance	20%

Required Texts (Available at the campus bookstore.)

ENGL 10803 Course Packet (Fall 2007). Instructor, Michael Garcia

The Elements of Style by Strunk and White

The Woman Warrior by Maxine Hong Kingston

Beloved by Toni Morrison

House of Sand and Fog by Andres Dubus III

The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven by Sherman Alexie

House on Mango Street by Sandra Cisneros

Optional Texts

A Writer's Reference by Diana Hacker

Films

House of Sand and Fog

Books on Course Reserve

I have placed the following texts on Course Reserve at Mary Couets Burnett Library. Some of the titles on this reserve list are for another course, and not necessarily relevant to this course. The most relevant and useful titles for this course should stand out, while the rest may open your eyes to something new and unexpected. The reserve list is shelved under the course ENGL 20913:

Munson, Ronald, David Conway, and Andrew Black. *The Elements of Reasoning*. 2004.

BC175 .W45 2005 Whyte, Jamie. *Crimes Against Logic*.

PE1408 .C5886 1999 Corbett, Edward P.J. and Robert J. Connors. *Style and Statement*. 1998.

PE1409.5 .E5 1998 Elbow, Peter. *Writing without Teachers*. 1998.

[Available at Information Commons: PE1408 .G6294 1998] Gorrell, Donna. *A Writer's Handbook from A to Z*. 1998.

[On Order] Marius, Richard. *A Writer's Companion*. 1998.

Trimble, John R. *Writing with Style: Conversations on the Art of Writing*. 2000.

Williams, Joseph M. *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace*. 2006.

U33 .H66 1991 Hanson, Victor Davis. *Hoplites: The Classical Greek Battle Experience*. 1991

DF229 .H36 2005 Hanson, Victor Davis. *A War like no Other: How the Athenians and Spartans Fought the Peloponnesian War*. 2005

U33 .H36 2000 Hanson, Victor Davis. *The Western Way of War: Infantry Battles in Classical Greece*. 2000.

DF229 .K34 2003 Kagan, Donald. *The Peloponnesian War*. 2003.

PQ6439 .F75 1965 Vega, Lope de. *Fuente Ovejuna*. Ed. F. García Pavón. Taurus. 1965 [Spanish edition.]

U33 .W37 1980. Warry, John. *Warfare in the Classical World*.

E98.P99 D45 1998 Deloria, Philip. *Playing Indian*. 1998.

E185 .F8266 2000 Franklin, John Hope. *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African-Americans*. 2000.

PS173.N4 M67 1992 Morrison, Toni. *Playing in the Dark*. 1992.

E184.A1 T335 1993 Takaki, Ronald. *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America*. 1993.

E184.O6 T35 1989 Takaki, Ronald. *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian-Americans*. 1989.

E184 .S75 T63 2005 Tobar, Hectór. *Translation Nation*. 2005

Electronic Course Reserves

Over the course of the semester I may place materials on electronic course reserve through the campus library. These materials will be required reading.

Course Website

No course website is available at this time. If one is made available later in the semester, you will be given instructions on how to enroll in the site.

Writing Assignments

You will write five papers, totaling a minimum of 20 double-spaced pages. For two of these papers (papers 3 and 5) you will make substantial revisions. There will also be occasional informal writing assignments during class.

Paper Formatting

All assignments handed in are to be in 12 point font, double-spaced, and paginated. In the upper left-hand corner should appear, single-spaced, your name, the date, and the course number (e.g., ENGL 10803). Each paper should have a title. Centering the title will set it off so that it stands out better.

Use MLA style citation: (<http://www.wrt.tcu.edu/MLA%20Style%20Sheet.html>)

Assignments must be handed in *in class* on the day that they are due. Late assignments lose one letter grade for each day that they are late. Keep copies of all your work.

Expect papers to be shared with other class members for peer editing, group projects, and class discussion. Student papers might also be shown to other instructors, writing advisors, and the like. I will ask your permission first if using your work as a model paper to show students in other courses.

Class Participation

This is a reading, writing, and discussion seminar, not a lecture course. Come to class prepared to talk about the text. Read the text closely, engaging in mock dialogue with the text as you read. Asking questions of the text as you go through it will bring you to class with many questions, observations, and arguments about the reading to share with the community of literary critics, readers, and writers that the class will provide.

I may occasionally require that you write 150-200 word pre-discussion notes to hand in before class. Or I may ask you to bring to class one or two discussion questions about the reading. In-class writing might also be assigned.

Pop quizzes may be given at any time. As long as you have read the text the quiz will be easy. Any detailed questions that I may ask will be readily answerable if you have carefully read the text, but not something that could be cribbed from Cliff's Notes, a website summary, the film version of the book, or having someone else tell you the plot.

As a discussion course, attendance is critical. The first two absences will not be counted against you but all subsequent absences will negatively impact your grade in the course. The two free absences should easily cover medical, family, or other emergencies in most cases, so there is no need to present the instructor with "sick notes," or to make excuses for absences after the fact, though I may inquire about the nature of prolonged absences.

Citing and Plagiarism

For any questions about Academic Misconduct and what it consists of, particularly in regard to plagiarism, cheating, or collusion, I refer you to the TCU

Undergraduate Studies Bulletin. A definition of plagiarism bears repeating in any class that involves writing, and I quote:

Plagiarism: the appropriation, theft, purchase or obtaining by any means another's work, and the unacknowledged submission or incorporation of that work as one's own offered for credit. Appropriation includes the quoting or paraphrasing of another's work without giving credit. (TCU "Academic Conduct Policy," Section I, Paragraph B, 1995).

Cite your sources. That is the simplest advice I can give you. Though there are gray areas as to when one should cite and when a paraphrase is adequate, we all recognize blatant plagiarism when we see it. In such cases the paper will receive an immediate grade of F and the student will be referred to the office of the Academic Dean.

As for the gray areas:

We all stand on the shoulders of giants; we all benefit from the ideas of others. Many of our best ideas are common knowledge, societally and globally shared. It is hard to imagine an idea that does not owe something to someone else's brilliant thoughts too. A class like this is partly about finding your own voice. When you write down the great ideas that others have undoubtedly thought before you, you should do so in your unique voice. If your great idea (or your agreement with a great idea, or the realization that somebody else has stolen your idea before you even thought of it) was inspired by a passage in a book you just read five minutes ago you will have to be more mindful of your wording. Your thinking and writing should be your own: make sure it hasn't been supplanted by the thought and phrasing of the book's author. **When in doubt, cite.** If your paraphrase is not clearly in your own words and voice—perhaps because the kernel of truth you wish to glean gets lost as you deviate from the original wording—then cite your source.

Student Conferences

I will hold conferences with each student at least once this semester. I will hand out sign-up sheets a week or so prior to the conferencing period. Everyone must sign up for a time slot. Failure to attend the time you have signed up for will decrease your participation grade.

Writing Center and Writing Resources

The William L. Adams Center for Writing is an academic support service available to all TCU students. In addition to a library of helpful writing books, the writing center offers one-on-one assistance with writing. Writing specialists and peer tutors are available from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. in room 244 of the Rickel Building. Additional evening hours are available from 6 to 9 p.m. Sunday through Thursday in the Library Annex. The writing center encourages students to make online appointments, but drop-ins are also welcome. Students may also make an appointment by calling 257-7721.

Even if you do not visit the writing center, I encourage you to take advantage of the extensive writing resources available on their website: <http://www.wrt.tcu.edu/>

Another indispensable resource is the Mary Couets Burnett Library (<http://lib.tcu.edu/www/>). In addition to print resources, many literary resources are available online, such as those links found at http://lib.tcu.edu/www/eref/virtual_reference_collection.asp#literature

ADA

TCU complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 regarding students with disabilities. Eligible students seeking accommodations should contact the Coordinator for Students with Disabilities in the Center for Academic Services located in 11 Sadler Hall, 257-7486. Each eligible student is responsible for presenting relevant, verifiable, professional documentation and/or assessment reports to the Coordinator for Students with Disabilities.

Course Schedule

The date that an item appears on the syllabus is the date that it is **due in class**. Email submissions are not accepted without the prior approval of the instructor, which will only be granted in extenuating circumstances. Reading assignments are usually listed first on each day. "CP" designates readings in the Course Packet. Readings are sometimes referred to by their title, and sometimes just by author name.

You will be expected to be familiar with the texts in their entirety on the first day that they appear on the syllabus. Lengthier readings will be spread out over several days but informed class discussion requires familiarity with the entire text. The syllabus announces when we will be focusing class discussion on a particular section of text, and I may periodically announce in class a chapter or section to pay particular attention to for the next class. Staying ahead of the readings is much more productive and less stressful than falling behind on them.

Week 1

- 8/20 Course Intro; (CP): Student Questionnaire
 8/22 Library Tour. Meet in 219 Mary Coats Burnett Library.
 (CP): "Writing and Critical Thinking," Grossenbacher, [Dunbar-Odom].
 (Online): John Lye, "Critical Reading: A Guide":
 <<http://www.brocku.ca/english/jlye/criticalreading.html>>
Paper 1 (Book review, book of your choice. 2 pp.)
 8/24 *Woman Warrior*; (CP): Greene, McNally.

Week 2

- 8/27 *Woman Warrior*
 8/29 *Woman Warrior*
 Sign Up for a time slot for student conferences in instructor's office.
 8/31 *Woman Warrior*
Thesis Paragraph (200-300 words) for Paper 2 (Does *Woman Warrior* ring true as a memoir? Is this fiction or historical truth? Should it be one or the other? Are the protagonist and the author the same person?)
 **Conference with Instructor

Week 3

- 9/3 Labor Day. No class.
 9/5 *Woman Warrior*; (CP): Baker, [Marius].
Draft of Paper 2

9/7 *Woman Warrior*
 (CP): “Instructor’s Symbols and Abbreviations on Essays,” “Academic Standards for Analytical and Evaluative Writing,” “Symbols for Common Errors” (Baker).

Week 4

9/10 *Woman Warrior*

9/12 *Beloved*

Paper 2 (Final draft due, 4 pp.) (Turn in with completed copy of McNally’s “Self-Evaluation Sheet” in CP.)

9/14 *Beloved*; (CP): Bogel, [Corbett], Sowards.

Week 5

9/17 *Beloved*

9/19 *Beloved*

9/21 *Beloved*; (CP): Anonymous (both selections), Heidt, Scott.

Week 6

9/24 (CP): Lanham, Trimble.

Draft of Paper 3 (Paper type: literary criticism of *Beloved*.) (Bring **3 copies** for peer-editing in class).

9/26 *Beloved*

9/28 *Beloved*

Paper 3 (6 pp.)

Week 7

10/1 *House of Sand and Fog*

10/3 Fall Break. No Class.

10/5 Fall Break. No Class.

Week 8

10/8 *House of Sand and Fog*

10/10 *House of Sand and Fog*

10/12 *House of Sand and Fog*; (CP): “Mid-Semester Check-Up.”

Week 9

10/15 *House of Sand and Fog*

10/17 *House of Sand and Fog*

10/19 *House of Sand and Fog*; (CP): Barnet.

Week 10

10/22 Film: *House of Sand and Fog*

10/24 Film: *House of Sand and Fog*

10/25 **Paper 4** (Film review of *House of Sand and Fog*, 2 pp.)

Week 11

- 10/29 *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*
 10/31 *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*
 11/2 *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*

Week 12

- 11/5 (CP):: (Writing Sequence): “Generating a Paper Topic.”
The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven
 11/7 (CP):: (Writing Sequence): “Narrowing Down Early Paper Topics,” “Composing
 a Working Thesis,” “Writing as Discovery.”
The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven
 11/9 (CP):: (Writing Sequence): “Thesis Statements,” “Topic Sentence Trees,” “Titles
 and Epigraphs,” “Peer Editing at the Conceptual Level.”
The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven
Draft of Paper 5 (Paper Type: Literary Criticism on text and topic of your
 choice.) (Bring **3 copies** for peer-editing in class.)

Week 13

- 11/12 (CP):: (Writing Sequence): Final Peer Editing: Style”; Williams, “Ten Keys to a
 Clear and Graceful Style.”
The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven
Revised Draft of Paper 5 (Bring **2 copies** for peer-editing for style.)
 11/14 *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*
 11/16 *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*

Week 14

- 11/19 *House on Mango Street*
 11/21 Thanksgiving. No Class.
 11/23 Thanksgiving. No Class.

Week 15

- 11/26 *House on Mango Street*
 11/28 *House on Mango Street*
 11/29 *House on Mango Street*

Week 16

- 12/3 *House on Mango Street*
 12/5 Last Day of Classes

Final Exam Date:

Paper 5 (Due on the day and at the scheduled hour of the final exam. Paper 5 serves as a “take home final exam” but you may hand it in early if you wish. Otherwise, check the Registrar’s schedule for final exam date and time.)