

San José State University
Department of English and Comparative Literature
English 255: Seminar in Thematic Studies of American Literature
**Racial and Ethnic Identity Formation in
American Literature**
Fall 2014

Instructor:	Professor Noelle Brada-Williams
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Office Hours:	Drop-in hours are Tuesday and Thursday 3 to 4:30 PM. Additional times by appointment.
Class Days/Time:	Tuesdays 7 to 9:45 PM
Classroom:	BBC 128

This class will use CANVAS and thus you are required to ensure that both MYSJSU & CANVAS have your correct email address—an address that you check daily during the semester.

Course Description

How is identity shaped? Is it innate or culturally constructed? How do class, gender, religion, and or sexuality affect how one sees oneself or one's ethnicity? How do others see us? How have minority identities been constructed by mainstream American culture and how has the struggle to self-define these identities in turn shaped American literary culture? We will explore this topic through a mixture of canonical and lesser-read texts of Ethnic American literature.

Student Learning Outcomes and Course Goals

This course will engage four of the five learning outcomes for the MA program:

1. Students will demonstrate an appropriate level of expertise in literary history, literary theory, and rhetoric.
2. Students will demonstrate high-level proficiency in literary research and in the synthesis of research.
3. Students will demonstrate critical and analytical skills in the interpretation and evaluation of literary texts.
4. Students will demonstrate a command of written academic English, including the abilities to a) organize and present material in a cogent fashion, b) formulate and defend original arguments, c) employ effectively the language of their discipline and d) write under time constraints.

and three of the six learning outcomes for the MFA program:

3. Students will demonstrate an appropriate level of knowledge of literary history, literary theory, and craft and theory of creative writing.

4. Students will demonstrate critical and analytical skills in the evaluation and interpretation of literary texts.
5. Students will demonstrate a command of written academic English, including the abilities to: a) organize and present material in a cogent fashion; b) formulate and defend original arguments; c) employ effectively the language of their discipline; d) write under time constraints.

Course Learning Objectives for English 255:

255 CLO 1: students shall acquire a deeper (if still introductory) understanding of American ethnic literature and how it has shaped American literary culture and history as a whole. (see MA PLO 1 and MFA PLO 2)

255 CLO 2: students shall demonstrate the ability to evaluate sources and perform professional level research in support of their analyses of literary text (see MA PLO 2 & 3 and MFA PLO 3)

255 CLO 3: students will demonstrate critical and analytical skills in the evaluation and interpretation of ethnic American literary texts (see MA PLO 3 & MFA PLO 4)

255 CLO 4: students will demonstrate a command of written academic English, including the abilities to: a) organize and present material in a cogent fashion; b) formulate and defend original arguments; c) employ effectively the language of their discipline; d) write under time constraints. (Verbatim from MA PLO #4 & MFA PLO 5)

Assignments and Grading Policy:

2 presentations on a work of criticism (255 SLO 2 & 4)	Write a one to two page review of a work of criticism in order to inform our class discussion and give an oral presentation of your review (a written handout is recommended)	15% (7.5% each)
Proposal and Annotated Bibliography (255 SLO 3 & 4)	One-page proposal (for long research paper) plus min. of 10 annotated bibliographic entries	20%
Research Paper (255 SLO 1-4)	10-15 page essay	35%
Paper presentation (255 SLO 1-3)	15-20 minute presentation on a condensed/edited version of your research paper	10%
Class Participation (255 SLO 1-3)	Participation in 15 classes & a final meeting, <u>including prepared questions and comments on each week's readings.</u>	10%

CANVAS Participation	Posting of your own responses and comments on at least one other person's responses for each of the 9 books.	10%
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Grading is based on A [90-92=A-, 93-96=A, 97-100=A+] = Excellent: The "A" essay is articulate and well developed with fluid transitions and a clear and persuasive use of evidence, which is drawn from the literary text itself, lecture materials (when appropriate), and research materials. An "A" essay contains a fresh insight which teaches the reader something new about the subject matter.

B [80-82=B-, 83-86=B, 87-89=B+] Above average: The "B" essay demonstrates a good understanding of its subject, a clear and persuasive use of evidence, a certain level of ease of expression, and solid organization. However, it usually lacks the level of originality and creativity that characterizes the insight found in an "A" essay.

C [70-72=C-, 73-76=C, 77-79=C+] = Average: The "C" essay makes a good attempt at all the assignment's requirements. It has a reasonable understanding of its subject matter but its ideas are frequently simplistic or over-generalized. The writing style is also more bland and repetitive than the style shown by "A" and "B" essays and it often contains flaws in grammar, punctuation, spelling and/or word choice. It may also use textual evidence out of context.

Please note that graduate students have to have 3.0 or better in their coursework to obtain their degree.

Library Liaison

Contact Toby Matoush via email: Toby.Matoush@sjsu.edu, or phone: (408) 808-2096 if you have library research questions that have not been answered in class.

Classroom Protocol

Students are expected to arrive on time with at least one question on that day's reading written out. As it is a seminar, students will be expected to be fully engaged in class discussion. The student's role will be as a participant, not as an observer. Unless instructed otherwise, please turn cell phones and internet connections off during class. In English 255 we will be discussing some of the most tense subjects of our time. Please keep in mind the necessity of the academic classroom to be a safe, civil and comfortable space for open discussion when interacting with your classmates or the instructor.

Dropping and Adding

Students are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures about add/drop, grade forgiveness, etc. Refer to the current semester's [Catalog Policies](#) section at <http://info.sjsu.edu/static/catalog/policies.html>. Add/drop deadlines can be found on the [current academic calendar](#) web page located at http://www.sjsu.edu/academic_programs/calendars/academic_calendar/. The [Late Drop Policy](#) is available at <http://www.sjsu.edu/aars/policies/latedrops/policy/>. Students should be aware of the current deadlines and penalties for dropping classes. Information about the latest changes and news is available at the [Advising Hub](#) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/advising/>. Note that September 5, 2014 is the last day to drop without a "W." **The instructor of this course will not automatically drop you if you do not show up. Dropping is your responsibility.**

University Policies: Academic integrity

Your commitment as a student to learning is evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University. The [University's Academic Integrity policy](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/S07-2.htm), located at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/S07-2.htm>, requires you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development. The [Student Conduct and Ethical Development website](http://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/) is available at <http://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/>.

Instances of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Cheating on exams or plagiarism (presenting the work of another as your own, or the use of another person's ideas without giving proper credit) will result in a failing grade and sanctions by the University. For this class, all assignments are to be completed by the individual student unless otherwise specified. If you would like to include your assignment or any material you have submitted, or plan to submit for another class, please note that SJSU's Academic Policy S07-2 requires approval of instructors.

Campus Policy in Compliance with the American Disabilities Act

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. [Presidential Directive 97-03](http://www.sjsu.edu/president/docs/directives/PD_1997-03.pdf) at http://www.sjsu.edu/president/docs/directives/PD_1997-03.pdf requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with the [Accessible Education Center](http://www.sjsu.edu/aec) (AEC) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/aec> to establish a record of their disability.

Nine Required Texts:

- Junot Diaz, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007). ISBN: 9781594483295
- W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), Norton Critical edition. ISBN: 9780393973938
- Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (1951). ISBN: 9780679732761
- Arturo Islas, *Rain God* (1991). ISBN:
- Maxine Hong Kingston, *Tripmaster Monkey* (1987). ISBN: 9780679727897
- Chang-rae Lee, *Native Speaker* (1995). ISBN: 9781573225311
- Toni Morrison, *A Mercy* (2008). ISBN: 9780307276766
- Luis Valdez, *Zoot Suit and Other Plays* (1978 for ZS). ISBN: 1558850481
- Karen Tei Yamashita, *Tropic of Orange* (1997). ISBN: 9781566890649

Recommended Texts:

- *MLA Handbook*, 7th Edition. MLA: New York, 2009.
- Andrew Lam, *Perfume Dreams, East Eats West, or Birds of Paradise Lost*. Lam will be the Lurie chair in Spring 2015.

English 255, Fall 2014, Course Schedule

This is the tentative schedule for your reading and writing assignments this fall. If any changes need to be made, you will be notified by the previous class and by email. Be sure that both Mysjsu and Canvas has your correct email—an email which you check on a daily basis during he semester.

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
1	August 26	Introduction to the course
2	September 2	Read all of Toni Morrison’s <i>A Mercy</i> .
3	September 9	Read all of W.E.B. Du Bois’s <i>The Souls of Black Folk</i> (to 164 in the Norton Critical).
4	September 16	Read Ralph Ellison’s <i>Invisible Man</i> to page 295 (through chapter thirteen).
5	September 23	Finish Ralph Ellison, <i>Invisible Man</i> .
6	September 30	Read all of Luis Valdez, <i>Zoot Suit</i> .
7	October 7	Read all of Arturo Islas, <i>Rain God</i> .
8	October 14	Read first four chapters of Maxine Hong Kingston’s <i>Tripmaster Monkey</i> (through page 164).
9	October 21	Finish reading Maxine Hong Kingston, <i>Tripmaster Monkey</i> .
10	October 28	Read first half of Chang-rae Lee’s <i>Native Speaker</i> (through page 171).
11	November 4	Finish reading all of Chang-rae Lee’s <i>Native Speaker</i> .
12	November 11	Veteran’s Day, Campus Closed (Get started on <i>Tropic of Orange</i> .)
13	November 18	Read all of Karen Tei Yamashita’s <i>Tropic of Orange</i> .

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
14	November 25	Read Junot Diaz, <i>The Brief, Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao</i> , to page 165/through chapter 3.
15	December 2	Finish reading Junot Diaz, <i>The Brief, Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao</i> .
16	December 9	Conference Presentations
Final Exam Week Meeting	December 16	Conference Presentations Exact time TBA

Important dates for Fall 2014

Thursday	August 21	Academic Year Begins – Fall Semester Begins
Thurs– Friday	August 21-22	Orientation, Advisement, Faculty Meetings and Conferences (P)
Monday	August 25	First Day of Instruction – Classes Begin
Monday	September 1	Labor Day - Campus Closed (L)
Friday	September 5	Last Day to Drop Courses Without an Entry on Permanent Record (D)
Friday	September 12	Last Day to Add Courses & Register Late (A)
Monday	September 22	Enrollment Census Date (CD)
Tuesday	November 11	Veteran’s Day - Campus Closed (V)
Wednesday	November 26	Classes that start at 5:00 PM or later will not meet.
Thursday	November 27	Thanksgiving Holiday - Campus Closed (T)
Friday	November 28	Rescheduled Holiday - Campus Closed (RH)
Wednesday	December 10	Last Day of Instruction - Last Day of Classes
Thursday	December 11	Study/Conference Day (no classes or exams) (SC)
Friday	December 12	Final Examinations (exams)
Mon-Thursday	December 15-18	Final Examinations (exams)
Friday	December 19	Final Examinations Make-Up Day (MU)
Monday	December 22	Grade Evaluation Day (E)
Tuesday	December 23	Grades Due From Faculty - End of Fall Semester (G)