

Seminar in Thematic Studies of American Literature Section 01

ENGL 255

Spring 2023 4 Unit(s) 01/25/2023 to 05/15/2023 Modified 01/27/2023

Contact Information

Instructor:	Professor Maite Urcaregui
Email:	maite.urcaregui@sjsu.edu
Office Hours:	Mondays 4-5:30 p.m. via Zoom . Wednesdays 12-1 p.m. in Faculty Offices Building (FOB) 216 *Additional times available by appointment via email.
Class Day/Time & Location:	Wednesdays 4-6:45 p.m. in Boccardo Business Center (BBC) 128

Course Description and Requisites

Focuses on development of a theme in American Literature. With prior permission of graduate advisor may be repeatable once for credit.

Prerequisite: Classified standing or instructor consent.

Note: This course satisfies graduate-level GWAR in this master's program.

Letter Graded

* Classroom Protocols

Preparation & Participation

Please come prepared to discuss the day's materials and participate in class activities. This means that you've completed the assigned reading for the day in advance of class, you have access to those readings during our class discussion (the exception to this is if you accessed the reading through our print course reserves), and you have basic materials like pen/pencil and paper.

Devices

You are welcome to read and take notes on your phone, laptop, or tablet. However, please respect me and your peers by using your devices for relevant course work only during our time together. If it appears that you are becoming distracted by or distracting others with your devices, we may need to have a discussion after class or via email.

Engaging in Scholarly Discourse & Community

Our class will require participation and collaboration and will cover complex issues, such as but not limited to race and ethnicity, colonialism and settler-colonialism, gender, sexuality, and mass incarceration. Your respectful, responsible, and self-aware engagement and dialogue will be vital to maintaining a safe and supportive learning community for all. While we will develop community expectations and discussion guidelines together in class, here are some foundational considerations:

- We can disagree and challenge each other's thinking and ideas in a civil, respectful, and productive way as long as that disagreement is not predicated on hate speech, disinformation, or exclusion.
- We will not use sexist, racist, homophobic, transphobic, ableist and other marginalizing language. If harmful language is used in class, we will address it together as a learning moment to the extent it is appropriate and safe to do so. Intentionally violent and exclusionary language (i.e., slurs of any kind), however, will not be tolerated.
- The texts we will read will sometimes use offensive language to either illustrate the realities of racist, colonialist, sexist, and queerphobic violence or to recuperate and reclaim violent language that has been directed at their community as a member of that specific community. Because our class is a diverse community and we all occupy different identities and positionalities, when a slur appears within a text, please do not reproduce it in your own writing or say it aloud. You may say "first letter of word-word" (i.e., "f-word") or simply redact it with a written (----- or f-----) or spoken pause. If you are unsure of the history or meaning of a word, please ask about it and/or use language that you know is appropriate.
- In this course, we will work together to develop an critical, intersectional approach to reading multiethnic American literature that is attentive to the way in which we all negotiate and inhabit multiple identities and varying relationships to power and privilege. This same intersectional approach that informs our reading should shape how we engage in dialogue with one another in this learning community.
- Close attention to the language that we read, write, and use is a necessary component of reading and thinking like a literary scholar, which we all are when we enter this classroom. Please be mindful of the language you use, and we will continue to work together to unpack the relationship between and among language, identity, and power.

Course Communication & Emails

Course materials such as syllabus, handouts, notes, assignment instructions, etc. can be found on [Canvas Learning Management System course login website](#). You are responsible for regularly checking both your email and the Canvas messaging system through MySJSU on [Spartan App Portal](#) to learn of any updates. For help with using Canvas see [Canvas Student Resources page](#).

Please be aware that I do not respond to emails outside of traditional business hours, M-F 9-5. If it is not a weekend and I have not responded to your email within 48 hours, please do not hesitate to follow up and send me a reminder (in fact, I would appreciate it). When you email me, please be clear, concise, and respectful. Include a specific subject that states the purpose of your email as well as a greeting and a signature that includes your name.

Course Goals

Course Description

Within the United States' history of racism and settler colonialism, race has long been (mis)understood as a stable visual signifier, something that is written on the body. Yet, artists and scholars alike have pointed out that our ways of seeing race are not only socially constructed but also rife with contradictions. In this course, we will examine how 20th and 21st-century multiethnic American literature takes up the vexed relationship between visibility and race, or what many scholars refer to as the visual politics of race. We will read works of literature by Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and Asian American authors who explore racialized experiences of (in)visibility, the refusal to properly "perform" one's race, the role of visual aesthetics in identity formation, and the ways that images might bear witness to and resist racist violence. We will read texts across forms and genres, including novels, plays, poetry, essays, and graphic novels, that not only thematically depict the visual politics of race but also creatively represent and resist them through their aesthetic form. Some of these literary works explicitly comment on racialized ways of seeing or represent and respond to visual art and others reproduce or incorporate images within their pages. All these works playfully experiment with the role of visual aesthetics within literature and the possibilities therein. Finally, we will engage with critical texts from literary studies, visual studies and art history, critical race and ethnic studies, and feminist and queer studies to build an interdisciplinary and intersectional framework through which to read the aesthetic and political strategies of multiethnic American literature.

Course Format

This course will be held in person with office hours available in person and on Zoom. I understand, however, that we are still in the midst of the ongoing and ever-changing Covid-19 pandemic. If you need to miss class due to exposure to or illness from Covid-19 or any other personal or medical emergency, please contact me in advance when possible to work out alternative ways to participate and succeed in the course. University policy recommends but does not require the use of masks indoors. My personal preference is that we all continue to mask, and I will continue to wear my mask. Masking is, of course, voluntary.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

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By reading course texts and engaging in class assignments, activities, and discussions, ENGL 255 students will learn to:

1. **Identify and discuss the diverging and intersecting historical, cultural, linguistic, and aesthetic contexts that shape the varied traditions that make up the field of multiethnic American literature.**
 - a. You will showcase your understanding of this CLO through class participation and discussion, the group teaching facilitation, and the critically engaged close reading/viewing paper.
2. **Analyze how literary and visual art emerges from and responds to power dynamics, including colonialism, racism, colorism, xenophobia and nationalism, classism, ableism, and sexism, including cis- and hetero-sexism.**
 - a. You will showcase your understanding of this CLO throughout all course assignments.
3. **Develop and practice close reading/viewing as both a way of reading and a research methodology that is unique to the discipline of literary study.**
 - a. You will showcase your understanding of this CLO through the paper proposal and annotated bibliography, the critically engaged close reading/viewing paper, and the final project.
4. **Draw on literary and cultural theory to explore the interrelation of literature and visual culture and to develop your own original interpretations of what texts mean, how they create meaning, and their larger political stakes.**
 - a. You will showcase your understanding of this CLO through the group teaching facilitation, the paper proposal and annotated bibliography, the critically engaged close reading/viewing paper, and the final project.
5. **Evaluate the role of literary and visual arts art within struggles for social justice and individual and collective constructions of identity within and across differently racialized communities. Essentially, how does art, both literary and visual, help us understand identity and power, particularly in regard to race and ethnicity?**
 - a. You will showcase your understanding of this CLO throughout all course participation and assignments.

Program Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of the MA English program, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate an appropriate level of expertise in literary history, literary theory, and rhetoric.
2. Demonstrate high-level proficiency in literary research and in the synthesis of research
3. Demonstrate critical and analytical skills in the interpretation and evaluation of literary texts.
4. 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.
5. Demonstrate a reading knowledge of at least one foreign language.

Upon successful completion of the MFA in Creative Writing, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate a high level of ability to propose and complete a publishable, full-length work of literature in a primary genre concentration (fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, or scriptwriting).
2. Demonstrate high level of proficiency to write works of literature in a secondary genre concentration (fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, or scriptwriting).
3. Demonstrate an appropriate level of knowledge of literary history, literary theory, and craft and theory of creative writing.
4. Demonstrate critical and analytical skills in the evaluation and interpretation of literary texts.
5. 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.

Department Information:

Department Name: English and Comparative Literature

Department Office: FO 102

Department Website: www.sjsu.edu/english (<https://www.sjsu.edu/english>)

Department email: english@sjsu.edu (<mailto:english@sjsu.edu>)

Department phone number: 408-924-4425

Course Materials

While you are not required to purchase these required course books, it is your responsibility to ensure that you have access to them both prior to and during class (with the exception of the two films, which we will view in class). If you would like to purchase these texts, they are available at the campus bookstore.

All other course readings will be available on Canvas.

Bad Indians: A Tribal Memoir

Author: Deborah Miranda

Publisher: Heyday Books

ISBN: 9781597142014

Availability: Campus Bookstore, Online via SJSU Library, & Course Reserve

Available online through "Library Course Materials" tab on Canvas and in print for 3-day loan on course reserve.

Passing

Author: Nella Larsen

Publisher: Penguin Random House

ISBN: 9780142437278

A free open-access version is available online through "Library Course Materials" tab on Canvas.

Passing Film

Publisher: Netflix

Availability: In-Class Viewing

Zoot Suit and Other Plays

Author: Luis Valdez

Publisher: Arte Publico Press

ISBN: 9781558850484

Availability: Campus Bookstore, Online via SJSU Library, & Course Reserve

Available online through "Library Course Materials" tab on Canvas and in print for 3-day loan on course reserve).

Zoot Suit Film

Availability: In-Class Viewing

Felon: Poems

Author: Reginald Dwayne Betts

Publisher: Norton

ISBN: 9780393542035

Availability: Campus Bookstore and SJPL

Please purchase if able, not currently at SJSU library or on course reserve. It is available via the SJPL.

I Was Their American Dream

Author: Malaka Gharib

Publisher: Penguin Random House

ISBN: 9780525575115

Availability: Campus Bookstore and SJPL

Please purchase if able, not currently at SJSU library or on course reserve. It is available via the SJPL.

☰ Course Requirements and Assignments

Class Participation (15%): I encourage you to participate in class discussion not only by sharing your thoughts and asking questions but also by actively listening and creating space for others to share. Part of graduate-level study includes participating in, contributing to, and finding one's own voice and perspective within ongoing and ever-evolving scholarly discussions. I understand, however, that we all participate and process knowledge in different ways and that our level of comfort participating in the classroom may indeed be influenced by our own relationships to power and privilege and by experiences of educational exclusion. The graded portion of your participation will not be based on how much you talk in class but will be based on a series of informal reflections, free write assignments, and small group activities done in class. These activities are "pop" style and will not be announced in advance; however, if you complete them, you will earn full credit. If you know in advance that you will be absent from class or if an emergency arises that prevents you from attending class, please email me in advance or as soon as possible to let me know and discuss options to make up participation.

Group Teaching Facilitation (20%): The group teaching facilitation is an opportunity for you to become the teachers, share your excitement about a text, and lead class discussion. Your goal is to kickstart class discussion by offering a collaborative close reading that is informed by relevant theory and 3-4 open-ended discussion questions for the class. Presentations will be collaborative, and groups will meet with me in office hours prior to presenting.

Paper Proposal & Annotated Bibliography (10%): This is an opportunity for you to begin mapping out your argument and evidence and gathering and synthesizing sources for your "Critically Engaged Close Reading/Viewing Paper." You will then get feedback on the proposal from both a peer and me to support you as you begin writing your paper.

Critically Engaged Close Reading/Viewing Paper (20%): This 5-7-page close reading paper invites you to follow your curiosity as you pursue an original argument (a thesis) about an assigned work of your choice. This paper offers a space for you to engage in sustained close reading/viewing as a methodology for exploring what literature means, how it creates meaning, and why it is important. You will support your ideas by citing relevant theory and criticism in class and developing your own original ideas that contribute to those ongoing conversations.

Mini Conference Presentation (10%): This is an opportunity for you to share your final project in progress with the class to both hold you accountable to the writing process and to give you some feedback as you continue to flesh out your ideas and finalize your writing.

Final Project (25%): In your final project, you will have the option of showcasing your learning through a format of your choice: a research-based literary analysis (8-10 pages); a course syllabus and teaching philosophy statement (6-8 pages), or an own original creative piece accompanied by a critical reflection (10-12 pages).

✓ Grading Information

ENGL 255 Grading

Class participation 15%

Group Teaching Facilitation 20

Paper Proposal & Annotated Bibliography 10%

Critically Engaged Close Reading/Viewing Paper 20%

Mini Conference Presentation 10%

Final Project 25%

Extensions & Late Work

I am very willing to work with you if you anticipate that you may need extra time to submit your best work in an assignment. However, I can only do this if you communicate with me in advance. Please email me at least 48 hours in advance if you would like to request an extension on an assignment. If an emergency or other extenuating circumstance arises that makes this impossible, please contact me as soon as possible, and we can work out a solution. If late work is submitted, it will be graded at the instructor's discretion and may receive a deduction.

Departmental Grading Policy

The following statement has been adopted by the Department of English for inclusion in all syllabi: In English Department Courses, instructors will comment on and grade the quality of student writing as well as the quality of ideas being conveyed. All student writing should be distinguished by correct grammar and punctuation, appropriate diction and syntax, and well-organized paragraphs. The Department of English reaffirms its commitment to the differential grading scale as defined in the SJSU Catalog ("The Grading System").

Grades issued must represent a full range of student performance:

- A = excellent;
- B = above average;
- C = average;
- D = below average;
- F = failure.

Within any of the letter grade ranges (e.g. B+/B/B-), the assignment of a +(plus) or -(minus) grade will reflect stronger (+) or weaker (-) completion of the goals of the assignment.

University Policies

Per [University Policy S16-9](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on [Syllabus Information web page](https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php>). Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

Course Schedule

Note that this schedule is subject to change at instructor's discretion. While I will never add more work, I may adjust readings, schedule, and assignment deadlines accordingly. All changes will be announced with fair notice via Canvas.

When	Topic	Notes
Week 1: Jan. 25	Course Introductions	<p>*Note that class meet on Zoom today.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduction to course & syllabus
Week 2: Feb. 2	What Is "Multiethnic American Literature"?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stuart Hall's "Teaching Race"• Stuart Hall's "New Ethnicities"• Bonnie TuSmith's "The Significance of the 'Multi' in 'Multiethnic Literatures of the US'"• Discuss group teaching facilitation

When	Topic	Notes
Week 3: Feb. 8	Reading Images	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ronja Bodola and Guido Isekenmeier's "Introduction: Literary Visuality Studies" Tina M. Campt's "Introduction" from <i>Listening to Images</i> Kadji Amin, Amber Jamilla Musser, and Roy Pérez's "Queer Form: Aesthetics, Race, and the Violences of the Social"
Week 4: Feb. 15	Combatting the "Visual Mythology" of the Mission in Deborah Miranda's <i>Bad Indians</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thomas King's "You're Not the Indian I Had in Mind" from <i>The Truth About Stories</i> Nichole Meyers Lim's "Educating Elementary School Children About California Missions and the Perpetuation of Genocide" Deborah Miranda's <i>Bad Indians: A Tribal Memoir</i> "Introduction"
Week 5: Feb. 22		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ariella Aisha Azoulay's "Preface" and pp. 1-13 of <i>Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism</i> Deborah Miranda's <i>Bad Indians</i> pp. 1-106
Week 6: March 1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laura M. Furlan and Lydia M. Heberling's "Reimagining Native California with Deborah Miranda's <i>Bad Indians: A Tribal Memoir</i>" Deborah Miranda's <i>Bad Indians</i> pp. 107-207 Discuss paper proposal and annotated bibliography and critically engaged close reading/viewing paper
Week 7: March 8	Theorizing the Gaze and Looking Back through/in Literature	<p>*Note that class will be held on Zoom as Professor Urcaregui is out of town for approved conference travel.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> bell hooks' "Art on My Mind" from <i>Art on My Mind: Visual Politics</i> and "The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators" from <i>Black Looks: Race and Representation</i> Nicholas Mirzoeff's "The Right to Look, or, How to Think With and Against Visuality" from <i>The Right to Look: A Counterhistory of Visuality</i> Selected poetry from Natasha Trethewey's <i>Thrall</i>
Week 8: March 15	The Visual Politics & Aesthetics of Race & Passing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gabrielle McIntire's "Toward a Narratology of Passing: Epistemology, Race, and Misrecognition in Nella Larsen's <i>Passing</i>" Nella Larsen's <i>Passing</i> <p>Paper proposal and annotated bibliography due by 11:59 p.m. Friday, March 17.</p>
Week 9: March 22		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nicole R. Fleetwood's "Her Own Spook: Colorism, Vision, and the Dark Female Body" from <i>Troubling Vision: Performance, Visuality, and Blackness</i> W.J. T. Mitchell's "Showing Seeing" In-class viewing of <i>Passing</i> film & discussion
Spring Break: March 27-31		Enjoy your break and get some rest!
Week 10: April 5	Chicano Self-Fashioning and the "Zoot Suit"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ashley Lucas' "Reinventing the 'Pachuco': The Radical Transformation from the Criminalized to the Heroic in Luis Valdez's Play <i>Zoot Suit</i>" Luis Valdez's <i>Zoot Suit</i> In-class reading and discussion of excerpt from Ralph Ellison's <i>Invisible Man</i> <p>Critically engaged close reading paper due by 11:59 p.m. Friday, April 7.</p>
Week 11: April 12	Chicana/o Self-Fashioning and the "Zoot Suit"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Catherine S. Ramírez's "Saying 'Nothin': Pachucas and the Languages of Resistance" from <i>The Woman in the Zoot Suit: Gender, Nationalism, and the Cultural Politics of Memory</i> In-class viewing of <i>Zoot Suit</i> film
Week 12: April 19	Latina Self-Fashioning in the Digital Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guest lecture & discussion by Katlin Marisol Sweeney-Romero, M.A., doctoral candidate in the Department of English at The Ohio State University Reading TBD Discuss final project and mini conference presentations

When	Topic	Notes
Week 13: April 26	Carceral Aesthetics & Prisoner Poetry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nicole R. Fleetwood "A Note on Method" and "Carceral Aesthetics: Penal Space, Time, and Matter" from <i>Marking Time: Art in the Age of Mass Incarceration</i> Reginald Dwayne Betts' <i>Felon: Poems</i>
Week 14: May 3	Drawing Belonging in Asian American Comics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Melinda Luisa de Jesús "'A Storm of a Girl Silently Gathering Force': Peminist Girlhoods in the Comics of Trinidad Escobar and Malaka Gharib" Malaka Gharib's <i>I Was Their American Dream</i> Selected comic shorts form Trinidad Escobar
Week 15: May 10	Mini Conference Presentations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mini conference presentations on final projects Reflections and course evaluations
Finals Week: May 17		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final projects due by 11:59 p.m. Wednesday, May 17, via Canvas folder