The Canon in Mexican-American Literature

Professor Arcé
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Reading list

Jose Villarreal, Pocho (1959)
Tomas Rivera, Y no se lo Trago la Tierra: And the Earth did not Devour Him (1987)
Gloria Anzaldua, Borderlands/ La Frontera
John Phillip Santos, Places Left Unfinished at the time of Creation (1999)

Course Themes and Objectives:

This course will give us the opportunity to study in-depth some of the literary and cinematic texts crucial to an understanding of the development of the Chicano/a canon. Key to our course is understanding why the text we are going to read have been selected as representative of the Mexican American community during a particular time and space. We will also study the critical scholarship that has grown around these texts as a way for us to understand better the critical relationship between texts and the debates that are central to the development of Chicano/a literary studies. The texts will allow us to interrogate the complex and shifting issues of identity, nation, gender and sexuality that have informed them, and that drive the critical perspectives of Chicano/a literary scholarship.

Course Objectives:

1. To introduce key frameworks, concepts and questions in the study of Mexican American/Chicano literature by focusing on the “border” as a metaphor in U.S. literature.
2. To provide historical and theoretical context for the literature (and film) we analyze, in order to promote a complex understanding of the way politics informs literature.
3. To improve students skills in close reading and in researching and writing academic essays.
4. To provide students with the opportunity to undertake an independent project that will contribute to class discussion.

Student Learning Outcomes:

1. After taking this course students will have an informed understanding of key frameworks, concepts, arguments, topics, questions, and history informing Mexican American/Chicano lit.
2. After taking this course students should be able to respond critically to all course material, using analysis, close reading, comparison and evaluation.
3. After taking this course students should be able to analyze Mexican American/Chicano Lit (and film) by drawing upon the many cultural, theoretical, and gendered analysis covered in this class.
4. After taking this course a student will improved his/her ability to express ideas in clear and logical ways -- both in written and oral forms.

Attendance and Participation

Your active participation is crucial to the success of the course. Prepare for each class period by doing the reading in an inquisitive manner. This means you should read the text paying careful attention to “why” things happen. Come to class with commentary ready to share. This is part of your “participation” grade so make sure you actively participate in class discussions. Everyone gets four absences, on a T/Th course that amounts to two weeks. Use the absences intelligently. You only get four so use them wisely. If you miss more than five classes, I will lower your course grade and if you miss six, I have the option of failing you. There will be NO “excused” absences--you have four absences to use at your discretion.

Because this is an morning class I will grant everyone one “pass” to use on one absence or one paper turned in late (24 hrs or less). When you need to use the “pass” write pass on a sheet of paper with the date of the absence, or attach a sheet of paper with the word pass to the late paper.

Policies

Turn OFF all cell phones and other electronic devices! You may NOT use laptops in class. If you are fiddling with electronic devices I will ask you to put them away. If you do not put them away I will ask you to leave the class. Treat your classmates with respect, avoid electronic devices that create distractions.

Arrive to class prepared--- make sure keep up with the readings. We will occasionally work in small groups in which you discuss issues from the readings, if you do not do the readings you will not be able to participate in the discussion. If you do not participate in the discussion you are hindering your classmates ability to learn from you.

My teaching style includes both lecture and discussion, this means that the quality of the course depends on the quality of the participation.
**Plagiarism**
Plagiarism is the unacknowledged and inappropriate use of the ideas or wording of another writer. This type of behavior undermines the values of an intellectual community. Please make sure all of your sources are cited properly. Plagiarism will not be tolerated.

**Evaluation**
Letter grades will only be given to finished work since this class focuses on the final written product, not the writing process. Grade distribution is as follows:

- Midterm 25%
- Final Exam 25%
- Essay 1 15%
- Essay 2 15%
- Class Participation 5%
- Quizzes 15%
# Course Outline

## PART ONE: Early Americans on Foreign Land

### Week One
- **Tue Jan 19**: Introduction to course. Syllabus and course overview
- **Th Jan 21**: DUE: Special Feature: The Evolution of Chicano Literature
  - Raymund A. Paredes
  - [READ UP TO PAGE 88]

### Week Two
- **Tue Jan 26**: DUE: The Squatter and the Don (3-106)
- **Th Jan 28**: DUE: The Squatter and the Don (106-130)

### Week Three
- **Tue Feb 2**: DUE: The Squatter and the Don (130-234)
- **Th Feb 4**: DUE: The Squatter and the Don (234-254)
  - *** IN CLASS QUIZ***

### Week Four
- **Tue Feb 9**: DUE: The Squatter and the Don (254-352)
- **Th Feb 11**: DUE: The Squatter and the Don (352-375)

### Week Five
- **Tue Feb 16**: Due: Americo Paredes (Handouts)
- **Th Feb 18**: Due: Pocho (1-40)

**INTRODUCE ESSAY TOPIC #1**
**Week Six**

Tue  Feb 23  Due: *Pocho* (40-150)

Th  Feb 25  Due: *Pocho* (150-187)

*Two Page Draft of Essay (Bring to class for credit)*

**Week Seven**

Tue Mar 2  Due: *Earth* (83-117)

*3 ½ Page Draft of Essay (Bring to class for credit)*

Th  Mar 4  Due: *Earth* (117-140)

**Week Eight**

Tue Mar 9  Due: *Earth* (140-152)

**ESSAY ONE DUE**

Study Guide and Review

Th  Mar 11  **MIDTERM EXAM**

**Week Nine**

Tue Mar 16  **SPRING BREAK** (No Readings Enjoy the Break)

Th  Mar 18  **SPRING BREAK** (No Readings Enjoy the Break)