

Bergen Community College
Division of English/Department of Composition and Literature
Professor's Name:
Phone:
E-mail:
Office Hours:

LIT218: American Ethnic Fiction
Wednesday & Friday 11:00am – 12:20pm L149

In this course we will explore the fiction, poetry, drama, and personal narratives of various immigrant populations including the Jewish communities (*shtetls*) of the lower east side, Latino/a communities (barrios) of the southwestern and northeastern U.S., the Harlem Renaissance, Middle Eastern communities living in exile in areas including Paterson, NJ, and the Native American narratives of the Pacific northwest. We will focus on issues of displacement, assimilation, and adaptation as they apply both specifically and generally to each representative text. We will also discuss the cultural, economic, and social contributions of each ethnic group to the American landscape. We will begin with Walt Whitman's preface to *Leaves of Grass*, which we will use as a lens through which to consider each immigrant community as an integral component of the "great unrhymed poem" of the U.S. This course fulfills requirements of both a General Education and a Diversity Course. Prerequisite: WRT101.

Student Learning Objectives:

The students who successfully complete the requirements of this course will be able to:

1. Identify major works and themes of Ethnic American literature.
2. Recognize the historical contributions of various ethnic groups to American culture, and how an appreciation of this diversity can enrich our common life.
3. Gain a greater sense of what it means, in the words of J. Hector St. Jean de Crevecoeur, to be an "American."
4. Recognize the historical contributions of various ethnic groups to American culture, and how an appreciation of this diversity can enrich our common life.
5. Apply appropriate theoretical lenses to critically and analytically read works of American literature.
6. Produce a properly formatted written evaluation of selected works of American literature; and demonstrate competency in both research methodologies and literary analysis.

Course Requirements:

Students will be required to do the following:

1. Analyze works of literature using a variety of approaches.
2. Participate in class activities such as discussion, writing, and presentations.
3. Write 15-20 pages or 3750-5000 words for the course. This may include the following: journals, quizzes, papers, exams, research papers, class presentation, summaries, and responses.

Sample Required Texts

Alexie, Sherman. *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*. New York: Grove, 2005.
ISBN: 0-8021-4167-6

Baldwin, James. *Going to Meet the Man: Stories*. New York: Vintage, 1995. ISBN: 0679761799
Cahan, Abraham. *Yekly and the Imported Bridegroom and Other Stories of Yiddish New York*.
New York: Dover, 1970. ISBN: 0-486-22427-9
Kaldas, Pauline & Mattawa, Khaled Eds. *Dinarzad's Children: An Anthology of Contemporary Arab American Fiction*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2004. ISBN: 1-55728-781-3
Morrison, Toni. *The Bluest Eye*. New York: Plume, 1994. ISBN: 0-452-28219-5
Quinonez, Ernesto. *Bodega Dreams*. New York, Vintage: 2000. ISBN: 0-375-70589-9
Roth, Philip. *Goodbye, Columbus and Five Short Stories*. New York: Vintage, 1993. ISBN: 0-679-74826-1
Viramontes, Helena Maria. *Under the Feet of Jesus*. New York, Plume, 1996. ISBN: 0452273870

Evaluation

You will write several short (1-2 page) response papers that will be both analytical—in terms of text and sociopolitical context—and critical. You will also give a short presentation on one of the texts for which you will give the class a series of discussion questions; and there will be a term paper of approximately 5-7 pages.

Response papers: 50%
Class presentation: 25%
Term Paper: 25%

Attendance Policy

Your presence is vital to our classroom community, so regular attendance is required. You will be permitted *four absences* after which your grade will be negatively affected. You are expected to come to class every day prepared to discuss assigned texts and to produce written responses both in class and at home.

A note on plagiarism: please give credit where credit is due! Honesty is expected of you. It is expected that the work you hand in will always be your own, and that you will never copy sentences, phrases, paragraphs, or whole essays from any other person's work, for that is plagiarism. If you are ever unclear about how to cite another person or author's ideas, come see me or consult the staff in the writing center.

Written assignments must be formatted according to MLA standards. You will find citation guides on our library's website. Please note that you will also be expected to produce a documented term paper with secondary sources; and you may find appropriate—relevant—resources in our library. You are encouraged to schedule an appointment with one of our reference librarians if you did not attend an instructional seminar in your writing class.

BCC's Writing Center is located in L125, and you are encouraged to work with our faculty and professional writing tutors. Please note that the center is indeed a tutoring center—you are not to drop off your paper for proofreading as this is not a function of the center.

**Sample Class Schedule/Reading List (Subject to change depending upon class progress):
Week 1: 9/6**

Introductions...

Week 2: 9/13 & 9/15

Unit 1: Context

Walt Whitman *Leaves of Grass, Preface*

Alan Ginsberg "A Supermarket in California" (handout)

Suheir Hammad "First Writing Since" (handout)

Response Paper #1

Unit 2: The Jewish Diaspora

"The trouble with us is that the ghetto of the middle ages and the children of the twentieth century have to live under one roof." Anzia Yezierska

"Everybody ought to have a lower east side in their life." Irving Berlin

Week 3: 9/20 & 9/22

Cahan *Yekly and the Imported Bridegroom and Other Stories of Yiddish New York*

Week 4: 9/27 & 9/29

Roth *Goodbye, Columbus and Five Short Stories*

Response Paper #2

Unit 3: Shahrazad's Stories...Tales of Arab America

Week 5: 10/4 & 10/6

Dinarzad's Children: An Anthology of Contemporary Arab American Fiction

Week 6: 10/11 & 10/13

Dinarzad's Children

Israeli & Palestinian immigrant poetry (handout)

Response Paper #3

Unit 4: The Campasino's Lament...Chicano Literature

Week 7: 10/18 & 10/20

Viramontes *Under the Feet of Jesus*

Week 8: 10/25 & 10/27 (Latino Heritage Week!)

Under the Feet of Jesus

Gloria Anzaldua "To Live in the Borderlands means..." (handout)

Week 9: 11/1 & 11/3

Quinonez *Bodega Dreams*

Week 10: 11/8 & 11/10

Bodega Dreams

Martin Espada "Imagine the Angels of Bread" & "Alabanza" (handouts)

Response Paper #4

Unit 5: Voices of Black America

Week 11: 11/15 & 11/17

Morrison *The Bluest Eye*

Week 12: 11/22 (No class on Friday...Thanksgiving)

The Bluest Eye

Toni Morrison "Recitatif" (handout)

Week 13: 11/29 & 12/1 (December is Interfaith Month!)

Baldwin *Going to Meet the Man: Stories*

Langston Hughes "Let America be America Again" (handout)

Tupac Shakur "Untitled" (handout)

Response Paper #5

Unit 6: Native America...Reservation Tales

Week 14: 12/6 & 12/8

Alexie *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*

Week 15: 12/13 & 12/15

The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven

Leslie Marmon Silko & Louise Erdrich: Native American Women's poetry (handout)

Response Paper #6

Week 16: 12/20 & 12/22

Term Papers Due. This will be a comparative analysis of at least two different units—5-7 pages in length.