

**Bergen Community College**  
**Division of Arts & Humanities/Department of English**

LIT 223: Contemporary Latin American Literature

*“No history is mute. No matter how much they own it, break it, and lie about it, human history refuses to shut its mouth. Despite deafness and ignorance, the time that was continues to tick inside the time that is”—Eduardo Galeano*

**Course Description**

This course includes representative Latin American literature—poetry, essays, short prose, and novels—from several Latin American nations including (but not limited to) Colombia, Peru, Cuba, Argentina, Mexico, Brazil, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, and Chile. Representative texts examine images of Latin America from various critical perspectives.

LIT223 is a three-credit Humanities course that satisfies the Diversity requirement. Successful completion of WRT101 is a prerequisite for this course.

**Student Learning Objectives:**

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

1. Identify the nations that comprise the political designation “Latin America,” and be able to recognize and discuss the major literary works, genres, movements, and ideological components of this category.
2. Recognize and discuss major themes of Latin American literature; and identify major tropes used by representative authors.
3. Identify the major periods of Latin American literary history—from the precolonial to the postmodern to the transnational—and discuss the role of the author in shaping various historic moments.
4. Apply appropriate and culturally relevant critical lenses to respond to, evaluate, analyze, and understand major works of Latin American literature.
5. Produce a properly formatted written evaluation of selected works of Latin American literature; and demonstrate competency in both research methodologies and literary analysis.

**Required Texts:**

Alarcon, Daniel. *City of Clowns*. New York: Riverhead, 2015. ISBN: 978-1594633331

Azuela, Mariano. *The Underdogs: A Novel of the Mexican Revolution*. Trans. Sergio Weisman. London: Penguin, 2008. ISBN: 978-0-14-310527-5.

Bolaño, Roberto. *Amulet*. Trans. Chris Andrews. New York: New Directions, 2008. 978-0811217460.

Diaz, Junot. *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*. New York: Riverhead, 2008. ISBN: 978-1594483295.

Garcia Marquez, Gabriel. *Collected Stories*. Trans. Gregory Rabassa. New York: Harper, 2008. ISBN: 978-0060932688

McNees, Pat. *Contemporary Latin American Short Stories*. Ballantine, 1996. ISBN: 978-0449912263.

***\*Please also note that additional materials, announcements and relevant discussion questions will be posted on our Moodle site.***

## **Course Policies**

### **Evaluation:**

#### **Critical Essays: 40%**

You will write two short (2-3 page) response papers that will be both analytical—in terms of text and sociopolitical context—and critical. Questions are listed below; alternative suggestions welcome.

#### **Midterm Examination: 25%**

The midterm examination consists of a series of essays that you will write at home. Questions will be made available two weeks prior to the due date.

#### **Term Paper/Final Project: 25%**

Each student will prepare a traditional literary term paper. We will discuss potential topics/ideas throughout the term. Alternative project ideas are welcome, but must be academically rigorous and reflect our work together as a class.

#### **Class participation, including informal written assignments and quizzes: 10%**

Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss *all* assigned readings.

### **Formatting written assignments:**

*Written assignments must be formatted according to MLA standards. You will find citation guides on our library's website ([www.bergen.edu/library](http://www.bergen.edu/library)). 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.*

***A note on deadlines: no late papers will be accepted excepting documented emergencies; and papers may not be submitted electronically—via email.***

***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 your manual. If you do plagiarize, you will receive an F for the assignment under review. If you plagiarize more than once, you will fail the course and may be reported to the college's judiciary committee.***

**Attendance/Lateness Policy:**

BCC Attendance Policy: “All students are expected to attend punctually every scheduled meeting of each course in which they are registered. Attendance and lateness policies and sanctions are to be determined by the instructor for each section of each course. These will be established in writing on the individual course outline. Attendance will be kept by the instructor for administrative and counseling purposes.”

\*You are allowed *four* absences. Additional absences will negatively affect your grade. Likewise, *two* instances of missing significant class time (of ten minutes or more) will result in one absence.

**ADA Policy:**

Students with documented disabilities who require accommodations by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) can request support services from the Office of Specialized Services of Bergen Community College located in room L 115 of the Pitkin Learning Center. <http://www.bergen.edu/pages1/Pages/5175.aspx>

**Class schedule: (Class schedule is subject to change depending upon class progress.)****Week 1: From Macondo to McOndo...**

Pablo Neruda “United Fruit” (handout)  
Martin Espada “Sing Zapatista” (handout)  
Cesar Vallejo “The Stones” (handout)  
Jorge Luis Borges “Ars Poetica” (handout)  
Eduardo Galeano “The History that Might Have Been” (handout)

**Weeks 2, 3 & 4:****Mexico**

Carlos Fuentes “The Doll Queen” (McNees)  
Octavio Paz “Hymn Among the Ruins” (Moodle)  
Mariano Azuela *The Underdogs: A Novel of the Mexican Revolution*  
Subcomandante Marcos “Five Hundred Years of Indigenous Resistance” (handout)  
Rosario Castellanos, selected poems (handout)  
Coral Bracho, selected poems (handout)

**Week 5:****Cuba & Agrarian Reform**

Alejo Carpienter *Prologue: The Kingdom of This World* (handout)  
Jorge Mañach Robato “America’s Quixotic Character” (handout)  
Guillermo Cabrera Infante “Scenes of a World Without Columbus” (handout)  
Jose Marti, “Two Countries” (handout) & “Our America” (handout)  
Ernesto “Che” Guevara “Song to Fidel” (handout)  
Dulce Maria Loynaz, collected poems (handout)  
**\*Response paper due 2/18: 2-3 page essay in which you analyze Neruda’s “United Fruit” and Paz’ “Hymn Among the Ruins.”**

**Week 6:**

**Central America & the Caribbean: “America’s Delicate Waist”**

Martín Espada, selected poems (handout)

Ana Istarú, selected poems (handout)

Alaide Foppa, selected poems (handout)

Claribel Alegría, selected poems (handout)

Roberto Sosa, selected poems (handout)

**Weeks 7 & 8:**

**Dominican Republic**

Junot Díaz *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*

\*Additional readings by Díaz and Julia Alvarez are available on our Moodle site.

\**MIDTERM EXAMINATION*; the midterm examination will consist of a series of essays that you will complete at home. The exam will be handed in after the spring break.

**Week 9: (3/15 & 3/17) SPRING BREAK**

\*Consider visiting *El Museo del Barrio* for their Biennial! See [elmuso.org](http://elmuso.org) for details.

**Week 10:**

**Colombia: Shifting conceptions of magic...**

Gabriel Garcia Marquez, selected stories TBD

--*One Hundred Years of Solitude* (excerpt, handout)

\*Midterm examination is due on Thursday 3/24.

**Week 11:**

Gabriel Garcia Marquez

**Tuesday (3/29):** “Dialogue with the Mirror,” “Monologue of Isabel Watching it Rain in Macondo,” and “Balthazar’s Marvelous Afternoon”

**Thursday (3/31):** “A Very Old Man With Enormous Wings,” “The Sea of Lost Time,” and “The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World”

**Week 12:**

**Peru & The New Imperialism**

Daniel Alarcon *War by Candlelight*

William Finnegan “Tears of the Sun” (see Moodle)

Amitav Ghosh, “The Great Derangement” (lecture screening in class Thursday 4/7)

**\*On Tuesday 4/5, the college is closed for a college-wide conference. No classes will be held.**

**Week 13:**

**Fiction & Climate Change**

Introduction to Ecocriticism: Alarcón & Ghosh

**Weeks 14 & 15:**

**Chile, Nostalgia, and Dictatorship**

Roberto Bolaño *Amulet*

Pablo Neruda, selected poems (handout)  
Isabel Allende “An Act of Vengeance” (handout)  
Marjorie Agosin, selected poems (handout)

**\*Response Paper #2 due: 2-3 page analysis of primary texts for research paper.  
(Due Thursday 4/21)**

**\*Term Paper: 7-10 page formal analysis of 2-3 works of fiction, which you support with 2-3 approved critical articles. You are to pose an original argument (i.e., what you think about the literary works—their aesthetic qualities, etc.), and you are to support your reading of the works with your critical sources.**

**\*Some examples:**

1) Comparative analysis of Junot Díaz’s *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* and Julia Alvarez’s *In the Time of the Butterflies*, which are both characterized as “dictator novels,” but which use very different narrative/aesthetic approaches.

2) Ecocritical analysis of Daniel Alarcon’s *City of Clowns* in which you look at the actual literature of the Cerro de Pasco mine. Here you will discuss how Alarcon’s work serves a social/political function.

3) Comparative analysis of such naturalist works as Mariano Azuela’s *The Underdogs* and the poetry of Cesar Vallejo in which you attend specifically to the imagery in the works.

4) Discussion of representative magical realist texts in which you emphasize the power of this particular artistic strategy. Here you may use Marquez as one of your sources.

**Week 16:**

**Brazil & the Neoliberal Dream**

Jorge Amado “Sweat” (McNees)

Clarice Lispector “The Imitation of the Rose” (McNees)

\*Vik Muniz’s *Waste Land*: screening TBA

**Week 16:**

**Argentina**

Jorge Luis Borges “Death and the Compass” (McNees) & “Argumentum Ornithologicum” (see Moodle)

**\*Term papers due.**