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## **ENG 202 – Multi-Ethnic American Literature Spring 2005 Course Syllabus**

### **Required Texts**

- *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*, Sherman Alexi. Perennial.
- *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*, Julia Alvarez. Plume.
- *Stories of an Imaginary Childhood*, Melvin Jules Bukiet. Univ. of Wisconsin Press.
- *The Known World*, Edward P. Jones. Amistad.
- *Interpreter of Maladies*, Jhumpa Lahiri. Mariner.
- *Bones*, Fae Myenne Ng. Perennial.

### **Prerequisites**

ENG 102

### **Catalog Description**

This course is designed to give students knowledge of the ethnic diversity of American literature at the same time that they improve their skills in reading and interpreting literature and in writing. The course covers material from at least three of the following ethnic groups: Native American, African American, Hispanic American, and American Eskimo. Other ethnic groups may also be included.

### **Course Objectives**

What we will do throughout the semester is to read/view a variety of texts that highlight the American multi-ethnic experience. That is quite a large area, especially when the concept of “ethnicity” is viewed through such a broad and diverse prism. This course will not focus only on race or literatures of color; it is designed to explore the wide spectrum of American ethnicity. As such, we will look at literatures from non-European- as well as European-American authors. This semester we will closely read a series of six books—some novels, some short story collections—from various ethnic American perspectives. And since this is a 200-level course, we will also deal with many of the basic formalistic issues that one needs to approach literature effectively. The objectives of this course are to give students an introduction to the vast array of ethnic writing that makes up much of American literature; to provide the opportunity to explore the diverse nature of our literature; to help students develop a deeper understanding of the ever-evolving issues involved in defining the American canon and in the national discourses on both “race” and “ethnicity”; and to encourage the reading of literature with a fine critical understanding and aesthetic appreciation that a sophomore-level course should provide.

## Attendance

Be here! Much of your work will be done in class. Therefore, except in the most extraordinary cases, **you will be required to attend all class sessions**. If you know you have/will have an excused absence from class, please see me about this as soon as you can. You still need to make up the work you may have missed in class. And do arrive to class on time; tardiness can count as an absence. Attendance and class participation will help determine your overall course grade. **More than three unexcused absences can lower your course grade by at least one letter. Also, if you miss more than 15% of the scheduled classes you will automatically receive an F for the course.**

## Evaluation

The course grade is largely determined by performance on six major exams (each one focusing on one of the texts we read) and a group presentation.

### Grading Scale

A+=99, A=95, A-=90 B+=89, B=85, B-=80 C+=79, C=75, C-=70 D+=69, D=65, D-=60  
F=59-0

The portions are weighted as follows:

6 Exams	90%
Group Presentation	10%

Unless there is an excellent excuse, the exams cannot be made up, so please make sure you do the readings and don't miss class.

## American Disabilities Act (ADA) Statement

Students requesting accommodations for disabilities must go through the Academic Support Committee. For more information, please contact the Director of Disability Resources & Services, Halladay Student Services Building, Room 303D, 303-886-5835.

## Plagiarism and Cheating

- **Department policy:** The Department of Literature and Languages adheres to the university definition of "plagiarism" by the Council of Writing Program Administrators that can be found at <http://www.ilstu.edu/~ddhesse/wpa/positions/WPAplagiarism.pdf>:

Plagiarism occurs when a writer deliberately uses someone else's language, ideas, or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its source. [...] Ethical writers make every effort to acknowledge sources fully and appropriately in accordance with the contexts and genres of their writing. A student who attempts (even if clumsily) to identify and credit his or her source, but who misuses a specific citation format or incorrectly uses quotation marks or other forms of identifying material taken from other sources, has not plagiarized. Instead, such a student should be considered to have failed to cite and document sources appropriately.

- **Royal's addendum:** To intentionally plagiarize is to steal another's words or ideas as if they were your own. **Any student who blatantly plagiarizes (i.e., intentionally and**

**directly lifting whole or partial material from any electronic or printed material) will automatically fail the course and should expect disciplinary action by the college.**

### **Student Conduct and Responsibilities**

- **University policy:** All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment.
- **Royal's addendum:** In order for everyone to get the most out of this course, classroom conduct is of the utmost importance. Therefore, you will be required to create and maintain a productive classroom environment with little in the way of disruption. Your overall grade could be put in jeopardy if you demonstrate inappropriate classroom behaviors. This includes the habitual disruption of the class through chit-chatting and talking out of turn, doing outside work during our classroom time, and bringing in active electronic devices (such as cell phones and pagers). Every day you enter the class, please turn off your cell phones and pagers.

### **Schedule**

We will divide our schedule according to the thematic sections found in the Beaty and Hunter collection. Along the way will periodically read one of the novels or devote ourselves to one of the films. (Please note the weeks where assignments are due.)

#### **Week 1: January 17 – 21**

Course Introduction  
*How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*

#### **Week 2: January 24 – 28**

*How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents, cont.*

#### **Week 3: January 31 – February 4**

*How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents, cont.*  
**Alvarez Presentation**

#### **Week 4: February 7 – 11**

**Exam 1**  
*Stories of an Imaginary Childhood*

#### **Week 5: February 14 – 18**

*Stories of an Imaginary Childhood, cont.*

#### **Week 6: February 21 – 25**

*Stories of an Imaginary Childhood, cont.*  
**Bukiet Presentation**  
**Exam 2**

#### **Week 7: February 28 – March 4**

*The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*

#### **Week 8: March 7 – 11**

*The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven, cont.*

**Alexi Presentation**  
**Exam 3**

**Week 9: March 14 – 18**  
**SPRING BREAK**

**Week 10: March 21 – 25**  
*Bone*

**Week 11: March 28 – April 1**  
*Bone, cont.*  
**Ng Presentation**

**Week 12: April 4 – 8**  
**Exam 4**  
*Interpreter of Maladies*

**Week 13: April 11 – 15**  
*Interpreter of Maladies, cont.*  
**Lahiri Presentation**

**Week 14: April 18 – 22**  
**Exam 5**  
*The Known World*

**Week 15: April 25 – 29**  
*The Known World, cont.*

**Week 16: May 2 – 6**  
*The Known World, cont.*  
**Jones Presentation**  
Course review

**Week 17: May 9 - 13**  
**Exam 6**

## Author/Text Presentation

During the semester you will choose to present on one of the five authors and texts we are reading. This will be a group presentation with 2-3 of you working together on this assignment. There should be both an oral and a written component to your presentation, with the latter being a more formal presentation of the issues you raise in the former. In your presentation you should do the following:

- Introduce the author and give an overview of his/her career.
- Highlight what you have found to be the most significant works by your author and explore *why* these works are considered critically (or commercially) important.
- Introduce the text by that author that we are reading for class by indicating the book's place within the author's overall body or work.
- Discuss the basic literary elements of the work, e.g., theme, character, plot, setting, point of view, symbolism, irony. In other words, what are those things that characterize the book.
- Look for any interviews that the authors might have given in the past several years. NOTE: for those of you who might be more bold (and who want to show me what you're *really* made of), you could attempt to contact the author her/himself and see what happens. You never know how helpful authors might be.
- Give a brief overview of the criticism surrounding this narrative. In particular, you might want to look at:
  - how the book was originally received by reviewers when it first came out
  - what kind of controversies, if any, surrounded the book's publication
  - how the book has been read within its particular ethnic community (for instance, how did Asian Americans see *Bone* when it first came out, what was the reaction to *The Known World* from the African American community, etc.)
  - what kind of scholarly criticism might be out there
  - the way this book may (or may not) be used in the classroom
- Explore some of the problems you might see in the book—feel free to be critical in a constructive way.
- Since many of you are in education, it would be a good idea to speculate on how you would teach this book to high school or even junior high school classes. (Or, *would* you even consider teaching it to a high school or junior high school class?)

On the day of presentation, you should provide me with a 4-5 page formal essay, jointly written and edited by the group, that encapsulates the issues you bring up and discuss in class.

Remember that this is a group effort, which means that everyone in the group must participate in the class presentation as well as contribute to the writing/editing of the essay. So you'll need to assign responsibilities accordingly. (In other words, if someone's really good at doing research, that person can do a survey of the criticism. Or if one member is a good writer, she/he could write up an initial draft that can be critiqued by the others.) You will need to exchange contact information with your fellow group members and make arrangements to meet several times outside of class. Feel free to use any sort of media in your class presentation, but please keep in mind a couple of things: 1) if you choose to use visual media of any kind you *must* check with me at least a week before your presentation so that I can make arrangements with Media Services, and 2) make sure that the glitz or dazzle of any media that you use does not overshadow the content of your presentation.