This course will focus on Ethnic Literature--or more specifically, literature written by individuals from African American, Chinese American, Mexican American, and Native American backgrounds. Particular attention will be paid to how these texts are not only multicultural (i.e., reflecting the multiple ethnic and racial cultures these individuals draw upon) but also multilingual (how these texts reflect and shape the complex linguistic heritage of the United States). Debates over "Ebonics" and "English Only" policies illustrate how complicated issues of multilingualism are. We live in a multilingual country and many of us came from multilingual backgrounds at some point. Yet often we fail to acknowledge the linguistic diversity that is contained within the language we speak, the language we call "English." These writers make us aware of our multicultural and multilingual heritage--of how English is a language composed of other languages and cultures, a language that is not and has never been "pure."

Particular attention will also be paid to how linguistically diverse texts (texts that in explicit or implicit ways draw upon more than one language or dialect) connect to various formulations of identity. We will investigate linguistic practices such as code-switching, translation, "Ebonics," use of vernaculars, and radical bilingualism. Can such innovative linguistic practices be correlated with innovative formulations of Ethnic Identity? In other words, we will test the assumption that texts that point to the multiple languages or dialects contained within English move towards new formulations of Ethnic identity. When a person or text blends languages (rather than attempting to keep them separate) does this reflect an attempt to create a blended (or perhaps hybridized) identity? If so, then multilingual texts give us a way of moving beyond a binary conception of the relationship between "the Ethnic" and "the American" to understand how these categories can enrich, interanimate, and finally recreate each other.

I. Readings

A) Books (Available for Purchase as the Bookstore)
- Maxine Hong Kingston, The Woman Warrior
- Ruth Ozeki, My Year of Meats
- N. Scott Momaday, House Made of Dawn
- Leslie Marmon Silko, Ceremony
- Sherman Alexie, Indian Killer
- A.J. Verdelle, The Good Negress
- Cherríe Moraga, Loving in the War Years
- Toni Morrison, Beloved
- Richard Rodriguez, Days of Obligation
- Sandra Cisneros, The House on Mango Street

B) Other Readings (Available on Electronic Reserves from the Library)
- Cutter, Martha J. "Translation as Transmigration." A World of Words: Translation and Multilingual Identities in Ethnic American Literature.


II. Course Schedule

Unit One: Translating Across the Borders: Chinese American Identities
Aug. 27: Introduction to the Course; Course Policies and Requirements
Aug. 29: Translation in Ethnic American Literature:
Reading: Martha J. Cutter, “Translation as Transmigration” (handout);
Reading: David Wong Louie, “Pangs of Love” (handout).
Sept. 3: The Perils of Translation: The Woman Warrior
Reading: Maxine Hong Kingston, The Woman Warrior (1-109).
Sept 5: Questions of cultural and linguistic (I)dentity in The Woman Warrior
Reading: Maxine Hong Kingston, The Woman Warrior (111-209)
Sept 10: Writerly and Readerly Translations in The Woman Warrior
Sept. 12: Cross Cultural Feminism and the Question of Voice: My Year of Meats
Reading: Ozeki, My Year of Meats (pp. 1-121)
Sept. 17: Translation and Feminine Identity in My Year of Meats
Reading: Ozeki, My Year of Meats (pp. 121-245)
Sept. 19: Politics, Art, and Performance in My Year of Meats
Reading: Ozeki, My Year of Meats (pp. 245-366)

Unit Two: Radical Bilingualism and "Pure Language" in Native American Literature
Sept. 24 Pure Language and Linguistic Authenticity in House Made of Dawn
N. Scott Momaday, House Made of Dawn (1-86 or all);
Sept. 26: Multilingualism in House Made of Dawn
Reading: N. Scott Momaday, House Made of Dawn (89-136 or all).
Reading: N. Scott Momaday, House Made of Dawn (137-212);
Leslie Marmon Silko, Ceremony (1-63).
Oct 3: Tayo’s Search for the Language and the Ceremony
Reading: Leslie Marmon Silko, Ceremony (64-153 or all).
Oct 8: Bétonie and Tayo as Translators in Ceremony
Reading: Leslie Marmon Silko, Ceremony (153-262);
Oct 10: Violence and Silence: What happens when the language is Lost?
Oct 15: Legal and Literary Violence in Indian Killer: The Role of the Law as Language
Reading: Sherman Alexie, Indian Killer (1-165 or all).

Oct. 17: Finding Voice from Beyond the Grave: Will the Real Indian Killer Please Stand Up?
Reading: Sherman Alexie, Indian Killer (318-420).

Unit Three: Silence, Voice, and Ebonics in African American Literature
Oct. 22: The Silenced and the Spoken in Beloved
Reading:

Oct. 24: Oral Traditions in Beloved

Oct. 29 Re-Solution? Conclusion to Beloved
Oct. 31: "Learnin' to Speak the King's English": The Language of Mastery in The Good Negress
Reading: A.J. Verdelle, The Good Negress (pp. 1-125 or all);

Nov 5: Code-Switching and Hybrid Languages in The Good Negress
Reading: A.J. Verdelle, The Good Negress (pp. 126-225 or all);

Nov. 7: New Forms of Identity in The Good Negress
Reading: A.J. Verdelle, The Good Negress (pp. 226-299).

Unit Four: The Reader as Translator in Mexican American Literature
Nov. 12: Refusing to Translate: The Politics of Language in Hunger of Memory
Reading: Richard Rodriguez, Hunger of Memory (pp. 1-40, 113-139);

Nov. 18: Sherman Alexie Reading—The Kiva, KSU (7:30?)
Nov 14: Bilingualism and Ethnic Identity in Hunger of Memory
Reading: Rodriguez, Hunger of Memory (pp.143-195).

Nov. 19 Hybrid Forms: Loving in the War Years
Reading: Cherrie Moraga, Loving in the War Years (pp.i-88).
Nov. 21 Bicultural and Multicultural Identity in Loving in the War Years
III. Course Policies and Requirements:

A) Class Participation (10%). This class will be centered on discussion of texts by students, and as such necessitates that all students participate on a regular basis. Class participation is a requirement for successful completion of this course.

B) Short Response Papers (30%).

Each week students will write a short response paper (1-2 pages, single or double-spaced) commenting on secondary or primary texts. Some weeks I will assign the topic and other weeks the topic will be open. These papers can be somewhat informal and will be graded only with a check, check plus, or check minus. However, these papers must be typed or word-processed. If appropriate I may xerox some of these papers for class discussion.

Generally these papers will be due in class every Thursday. (Please note: no papers are due the first and last weeks of the semester, as well as on the Thursday during Thanksgiving week). However, you may skip two weeks during the semester. Choose these weeks carefully, as I will accept any late response papers. I may also switch the assignment to Tuesday once in awhile works out better with our reading schedule.

C) A Seminar Paper (15-20 pages) (60%). This paper can evolve out of one of your short papers or it can be on an entirely new subject. You will be given freedom to choose your own topic, but you will make use of some of the work on language, translation, multilingualism, and multicultural that we have we have studied. I will be collecting drafts of these papers on Nov. 28 and the final version will be due Dec. 13. I will probably set up conferences to discuss first drafts of the seminar paper so it is imperative that you get your first draft in on time. Also, I will be difficult for me to give useful feedback on papers that are still in the very earliest stages of development (i.e., no argument, poorly organized, no textual support, etc.). Therefore, please do make every attempt hand in a draft that reflects your “best effort” and that is actually ready for commentary and feedback. And feel free to show me drafts of your paper or discuss the topic with me prior to the Nov. 28 date. (I have e-mail at home and will be happy to comment on paper topics that way. However, please do not send me drafts as attachments.)
D) Attendance is mandatory in this class. Frequent absences will harm your final grade.