

Fall 2019 Course Descriptions

Instructor: Regina Marie Mills

Course: ENGL 362

Title: Latina/o Literature

Description: Theme: Diversity in Latina/o/x Literature

In this course, we will look at the diversity of US Latina/o/x literature. After discussing the variety of labels associated with Latina/o/x communities and the key terms of Latina/o/x studies as well as a brief boot camp on close reading, we will begin with a substantial unit on Tejana/o authors. By reading recovered literary works (a historical romance and coming-of-age novel), we will examine marginalized perspectives on Texas-Mexican history, such as the lasting impact of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo and the persecution of Mexican Americans by the Texas Rangers. These works also challenge the general portrayal of Mexican American and Chicano writing as politically homogenous.

In the second unit, we will look to the Caribbean, first focusing on “sketches” by Jesús Colón. Through his work, we will discuss the history of US colonial control of Puerto Rico, issues of citizenship and nationalism as portrayed by Puerto Rican writers, and the intersection of blackness and Latinidad. Then we will turn to lesbian Cuban American writer, Achy Obejas. Through her stories, we will examine the political diversity of Latinx communities, particularly the conservatism of Cuban exiles in the US and the conflicts between newer and older generations of Cubans, especially in the current “thawing” period of US-Cuba relations. In addition, these stories explore issues of gender and sexuality (as do most of our readings).

In the third unit, we will look at Hispaniola and the relationship of Haiti and the Dominican Republic to Latina/o/x literature through Haitian writer, Edwidge Danticat’s *The Farming of the Bones*. We will ask such questions as, “If the Dominican Republic is Latin American, then is Haiti? How has the Haitian Revolution impacted conceptions of blackness, mestizaje, and Latinidad in Latin America and the US?” In addition, this book provides an avenue for talking about anti-blackness, US imperial interventions and US support of dictatorships, themes that continue in our last unit. This unit focuses on Central American Latinas/os/xs, focusing on the civil war period from the 1960s to late 90s. We will read Héctor Tobar’s *The Tattooed Soldier* and end the semester by thinking about how this novel speaks to the current discussion about immigration, asylum seekers, and refugees.

Throughout the course, we will consider how one defines Latina/o/x literature, how Latinidades travel across borders, and where this category of literature fits in the realm of American Literature more broadly.

The course meets the University’s Core Objectives in International and Cultural Diversity: the majority of texts are by U.S. Latinas/os/xs who draw from the literary currents of the Americas;

the course addresses issues of international import, such as immigration, transnationalism, and colonialism and imperialism.

Proposed Readings: Required Texts:

1. Jovita González and Eve Raleigh. *Caballero: A Historical Novel*. (1996, originally 1930s and 40s)
2. Américo Paredes. *George Washington Gómez: A Mexicotexan Novel*. (1990, originally 1930s)
3. Jesús Colón. *A Puerto Rican in New York and Other Sketches*. (1961)
4. Edwidge Danticat. *The Farming of Bones*. (1998)
5. Héctor Tobar. *The Tattooed Soldier*. (1998)

Additional readings (hard copies will be provided) may include, but are not limited to:

- Excerpts from Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987)
- Selections from *Sudden Fiction: Latino Short-Short Stories from the United States and Latin America* (2010)
- Sketches from Jesús Colón's *The Way It Was and Other Writings* (1993)
- Stories from Achy Obejas's *We Came All the Way from Cuba So You Could Dress Like This?* (1994)
- Excerpts from Francisco Cantú's *The Line Becomes a River* (2018)
- Current articles such as, "As A Haitian-American Woman, I Know I'm Afro-Latina But It's Time For You To Acknowledge It, Too." Mitú.

<https://fierce.wearemitu.com/identities/why-i-haitian-woman-identify-as-afro-latina-and-my-sister-s-should-too/>