

Latina/o Literature: Through Time and Across Borders
English and World Literature 108A
Non-Citizens in Wartime America:
A Periclean Course in Civic Understanding, a Pilot Course

Professor E. Vásquez
office phone 607-2633; cell (310) 940-6698
office hours: Tues. 1-3 and by appt.

edith_vasquez@pitzer.edu
classroom: BH 208
course meets: M 2:45-5:30

DESCRIPTION

A literary and cultural studies course examining texts, issues, and movements over the course of the development of Latina/o literature. Critical topics for this course include: gender, citizenship, globalization, war, civil rights, and the aesthetics and politics of critical engagement and social change.

COURSE FOCUS

This course in critical citizenship will examine the categories of “citizen” and “non-citizen” and seek to illuminate how race, class, and immigration status bear the signs of a wartime society in the present day U.S. Undocumented soldiers, for example, have been awarded citizenship posthumously after dying in military engagements. What does war tell us about who is American and what does it say about democracy’s forced implantation in other regions of the world? Often in the past, America’s racial record has been highlighted by enemy nations, and China has recently produced a biting human rights report on the U.S. and its racialized social institutions. More and more, “black and brown” tensions are reported in the news media. Interracial strife has led to increasing violence and hate crimes among non-white youth living in poverty. Clearly, racial equity and citizenship are the pillars of a democratic society. Yet, when at war, race and citizenship have tended to become dramatically more salient vectors of social complexity and strife. This course will foreground race and citizenship within the context of wartime America to understand democratic values in particular and focused critical junctures.

This course will undertake analytical discussions on contemporary civic institutions and discourses. We will pose ethical questions of democratic social processes and political governance in the Post 911 world wherein civil liberties have been limited and tested. Civic engagement is needed now more than ever as students enter the global age and face the challenges of their generation in addressing socioeconomic disparities and ecological degradation. In political and nonpolitical discourses, students will understand their individual and social character as constitutive of civic life as well as civic impulses.

To understand the complexities of race and citizenship in wartime America; to appreciate the role of immigration in interdependent global political economies; to engage in critical discourse on race relations; to understand the historical present and its political dimensions; to read multiracial literature of the U.S.; to familiarize the student with the immigrant experience; students will come to understand the need for civic leadership in political and humanistic areas of engagement in the U.S. .

TEXTS

Augenbaum, Harold and Fernández-Olmos, Margarite, *The Latino Reader: An American Literary Tradition, 1542 to the Present* Mariner Book, 1997.

Cervantes, Lorna Dee, *From the Cables of Genocide*, Arte Publico Press, 1991

Davis and Chacon Mike *No One is Illegal: Fighting Racism and Violence on the U.S./Mexico Border*, Haymarket Books, 2006.

Díaz, Junot *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, Penguin, 2007

Fernandez, Deepa, *Targeted: Homeland Security and the Business of Immigration*, Seven Stories Press, 2007

Tobar, Hector, *Translation Nation: Defining a New American Identity in the Spanish-Speaking United States*, Penguin Riverhead Books, 2005.

SAKAI COURSE READINGS

ARTICLES available at sakai.claremont.edu

Amaya, Hector, *Dying American or the Violence of Citizenship: Latinos in Iraq*

Balibar, Etienne, "Strangers as Enemies: Further Reflections on the Asporias of Transnational Citizenship"

National Immigration Forum

REQUIREMENTS

Reading analysis and In-class discussion. 75% of final grade. Each week, a reading analysis is due. The reading analysis should incorporate concepts presented in lecture and readings and not merely summarize the text or express general opinions. In other words, work to synthesize historical and cultural perspectives with the literary works.

Individual or Group Presentation. 20%

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Attendance is required. This is a weekly course which simply cannot tolerate the absence of course members.

COURSE READING SCHEDULE: See Sakai Course Discussions for Detailed Information

January:

1/21 Observance of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

1/28 Introduction

February:

2/4 Read (pp.137-307) from Part III of *The Latino Reader* and article "Dying American in Iraq"

2/18 Modernist readings from *The Latino Reader*; pp. 141-210

2/25 Readings in Mid Century to Movement Period; *The Latino Reader* pp.248-307; and read Part I and III of *No One is Illegal*

March

3/3 Read excerpts from Valdez, Esteves, Cervantes, Moraga, Anzaldua, Cisneros and Ortiz, Cofer in *The Latino Reader*; and read Part IV and V of *No One is Illegal*

3/10 Read *From the Cables of Genocide: Poems on Love and Hunger*

3/24 No Class

3/31 Read *Targeted: Homeland Security and the Business of Immigration*

April

4/7 *Translation Nation*

4/14 *Translation Nation*

4/21 Film

4/28 Presentations

May

5/5 *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*

5/12 *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*