**Course: ENG 271 Contemporary American Literature**

**Hours: 3 Credits: 3**

**Course description:**

This course includes a study of contemporary [U.S.] literature. Emphasis is placed on literary and cultural trends of selected texts. Upon completion, students should be able to interpret, analyze, and respond to the literature.

**Prerequisite:** Take One: ENG-112, ENG-113, or ENG-114

**Corequisites:** None

**Textbooks:**

Brown, Jericho. *The Tradition.* Copper Canyon Press, 2019.

Diaz, Natalie. *When My Brother Was an Aztec.* Copper Canyon Press, 2012.

Engel, Patricia. *Infinite Country.* Avid Reader Press, 2021.

Guerrero, Laurie Ann. *A Tongue in the Mouth of the Dying.* University of Notre Dame Press, 2013.

Gyasi, Yaa. *Transcendent Kingdom.* Vintage Books, 2021.

Hobson, Brandon. *The Removed: A Novel*. Ecco, 2021.

Kingsolver, Barbara. *Demon Copperhead.* Harper, 2022.

Mustafah, Sahar. *The Beauty of Your Face: A Novel*. W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2021.

Takei, George, et al. *They Called US Enemy*. Top Shelf Productions, 2020.

Zauner, Michelle. *Crying in H Mart*. Random House USA, 2022.

**Student Learning Outcomes**

Students will be able to:

* Recognize and discuss themes found in contemporary multicultural U.S. literature in relation to personal and cultural values.
* Develop appropriate vocabulary for interpreting and discussing multicultural literatures.
* Locate, use, and cite appropriate secondary sources in writing assignments.
* Develop a thesis statement and provide evidence to support it.

**A note about the reading:**

As this is a literature course, you should expect it to be reading heavy. It is imperative that you keep up with the course reading schedule, and preferable that you read ahead of schedule. Please be aware that these novels will sometimes deal with difficult topics such as racism, abuse, rape, and drug use. If you are not prepared to read and discuss these topics, please see me immediately for alternative readings and discussion replacement assignments.

Many people find audiobooks a great option for reading. If that is a medium you enjoy, I encourage you to use audiobooks, but to also purchase print copies to reference.

**Theme:**

While many topics will be addressed throughout this semester, our overarching theme is identity. We will explore how individuals from diverse backgrounds navigate and negotiate their sense of self within a complex and often fraught social landscape. This theme examines the ways in which race and religion intersect with other facets of identity, such as gender, class, and nationality, to shape individuals' experiences of belonging, exclusion, and cultural hybridity in the United States. Through the study of literature, students can deepen their understanding of the historical and contemporary realities of race and religion in the United States and explore the complexities and possibilities of identity formation in a diverse and dynamic society.

**Grading**

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| Discussion board posts/replies | 40% |
| Annotated bibliography | 10% |
| Literary Analysis | 20% |
| Final Paper | 30% |

**Class discussion**

As this is a face-to-face class, please be prepared to discuss our readings in each class meeting. There will also be weekly discussion board questions posted. You will need to reply to these each week no later than Sunday at 11:59pm, then reply to at least two classmates no later than Tuesday at 11:59pm. Your initial post should be a minimum of 250 words, and your combined replies should also be at least 250 words. These discussion boards are a way to ensure the whole class is participating and will frequently be the basis of classroom discussion. Discussion board posts will be worth 40% of your grade, so it is important that you participate regularly.

**Assignments**

You will have several assignments in addition to weekly discussions, including an annotated bibliography, literary analysis, and a final research paper. See below for more details.

**Annotated Bibliography**

This assignment will be due early in the semester and is designed to ensure you know how to gather appropriate resources to use in literature analysis. We will begin with a tour of the campus library and instruction provided by the librarians concerning where to find appropriate print and digital resources. They will also cover basic formatting of an annotated bibliography. Explicit instruction and guidance will be provided in class for this assignment.

For your annotated bibliography, you should choose a research question related to a theme found in one of our first readings, or otherwise related to multicultural literature. Search for peer-reviewed academic articles involving this theme. You should have a minimum of five sources that relate to your theme and could be used together in a single article. Compile the MLA citations and write a short passage for each entry summarizing the article and how you would use it in a research paper. Please include at least one direct quotation, that aids in your summary for each entry. If any of these resources apply to your final research project, you will be welcome and encouraged to use them again. This assignment will be worth 10% of your grade.

**Literary Analysis**

Write an analysis of one text we’ve read thus far this semester. Your paper should be a minimum of 1000 words, double spaced, and use 12 pt. Times New Roman font. You should include at least two secondary sources, as well as your primary source. You will either be using these sources to support your own analysis, or you may choose to argue against the criticism in the source. We will discuss this assignment further in class, and you will be given ample class time for questions, peer work, and revisions. You may preview some guidelines [here](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/teacher_and_tutor_resources/teaching_resources/writing_a_literary_analysis_presentation.html). This paper will be worth 20% of your grade.

What is a literary analysis?

“Literary analysis is the examination and evaluation of a literary work. When people analyze literature, they consider how the author used literary techniques to create meaning. Readers first critically read the text and examine elements like figurative language, syntax, diction, and structure. When looking at these elements, readers consider how the author used them to create meaning. They then make analytical claims about the text they can support by discussing specific evidence from the work” (Literary Analysis). See [here](https://www.studysmarter.us/explanations/english/research-and-composition/literary-analysis/) for more detailed information.

**Final Research Paper**

For this paper, you will compare the portrayal of a single theme found within two novels read this semester. For instance, an overarching theme we’ll examine this semester is identity. You may consider comparing how the characters in two different works reconcile (or attempt to reconcile) their identity within a diaspora.This paper should be 2000-2500 words, double spaced, and use 12pt. Times New Roman font. You should use a minimum of five academic resources to support your thesis. We will work on this paper in stages over several weeks, and you will be given ample class time for questions, discussion, peer review, and revision. This paper will be worth 30% of your grade.