

CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY
University Honors Program
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COURSE SYLLABUS

HON 309
American Storytellers

Spring 2009

Catalog Description: *Prerequisite: acceptance to the University Honors Program, or consent of the instructor.* This course explores U.S. narrative fiction after WWII, examining an increasingly interethnic imagination and hybrid literary heritage of American writers. Those writers may include Vladimir Nabokov, Ralph Ellison, Louise Erdrich, Jamaica Kincaid, Toni Morrison, Karen Tei Yamashita, and Junot Díaz. (Offered as needed.) 3 credits.

Restrictions: Acceptance to the University Honors Program, or consent of instructor.

Essential Equipment and Facilities: Seminar-style classroom with computer equipment.

Course Goals, Objectives and Learning Outcomes:

This is a reading intensive class, which also places a considerable emphasis on building an intellectual community. It is designed to offer students ways of understanding basic key concepts in literary studies and developing skills of critical textual analysis. On the one hand, the class discussion is envisioned as an important site that allows for a collaboration to engage with the wealth of material at hand, to explore further the questions and conversations which may arise, and to provide a space for making discoveries and rediscoveries together, each as an active and helpful participant. At the same time, the course seeks to cultivate the process of critical thinking involved in the search itself, honing the skills needed to be a careful reader and an assertive writer.

Content

In approaching major American writers after World War II, we will engage with the shaping of an increasingly interethnic imagination and the heterogeneity of contemporary American culture and with its hybrid literary heritage. We will consider cross-ethnic meeting not as a marginal concern, but as a constitutive element of ethnic identities, histories, and narratives, and also think about how this dynamic might be contextualized within the transnational historical moment of globalization. How does the encounter with ethnic/racial otherness shape the ethnic text's social and political vision, its reworking of

literary and cultural forms and traditions, its handling of language(s), its representations of gendered identities and sexualities, and its engagement with traumatic histories? Students are expected to be active class participants; to write two short papers and a long seminar paper. Drawing from cultural theory in order to think through race, ethnicity, and culture in the twentieth- and twenty-first century, we will take up visions of contemporary American novelists from widely diverse cultural background which includes Native American, but also Russian-, African-, Asian-, Dominican-American: Vladimir Nabokov, Ralph Ellison, Louise Erdrich, Jamaica Kincaid, Toni Morrison, Karen Tei Yamashita, and Junot Díaz.

Current Required Texts:

Vladimir Nabokov, <i>Lolita</i>	ISBN: 679723161
Ralph Ellison, <i>Invisible Man</i>	ISBN: 0679732764
Jamaica Kincaid, <i>A Small Place</i>	ISBN: 0374527075
Louise Erdrich, <i>Love Medicine</i>	ISBN: 0060786469
Toni Morrison, <i>Tar Baby</i>	ISBN: 9781400033447
Karen Tei Yamashita, <i>Tropic of Orange</i>	ISBN: 1566890640
Junot Diaz, <i>Brief and Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao</i>	ISBN: 1594483299

Instructional Strategies:

The class will rely on class discussion and group work if needed. Discussion questions may be circulated beforehand or appear as reading quizzes. The class will be provided with visual and auditory materials, and pertinent handouts on cultural theory, interviews, and existing scholarship will be distributed in class in order to generate and promote discussion.

Methods of Evaluation:

General Policies: Keeping up with the reading and attending class regularly are bare minimum requirements expected of you, and it will be very important to contribute to classroom discussions. Please come to class having made your own notes for yourself (this may include questions you have about characters or events, images or passages which are striking to you, or any difficulty you might have) and be committed to presenting your views to others, as well as making this easier by trying to respond to others in discussing important themes, conflict, or similarity between texts. Be encouraged or forewarned that your development in becoming useful to others in providing active participation and positive engagement with discussion will count towards a significant part of the final grade.

You will be allowed three absences throughout the semester, for which you are responsible for timely notification. Each day missed beyond your excused absences will

be reflected in your final grade (1/3 of a letter grade per class missed), as with frequent lateness (1/3 of a letter grade).

If you would like to discuss your ideas about texts and assignments, or if you have other concerns during the course of the semester, you are always welcome to make use of my office hours (T/TH 4-5:30) for consultation.

Written Assignments: In fairness to others in class, late papers will not be accepted unless an extension is granted beforehand for special circumstances. Plagiarism will cost you your entire credit. Please refer to the following definition: “Plagiarism is presenting another person’s work as your own. Examples of plagiarism include copying another person’s paper, restating ideas from a book or article without citing the articles as a source, or copying more than seven words from a book or article without quotation marks and a citation of the source of the quotation. These examples do not exhaust the possibilities. Any example of presenting another person’s work as your own is plagiarism.”

Final Grade Breakdown: The final grade will consist of midterm and final papers (50%), in-class presentation of formal and comparative analysis (15 %), a group interpretive/creative project for the final day of class (15%), your useful contribution to class, active participation, and positive engagement with discussions (20%). Quizzes may be administered during the semester and may count towards your final grade.

Chapman University Academic Integrity Policy:

The course syllabus should include the following statement:

Chapman University is a community of scholars which emphasizes the mutual responsibility of all members to seek knowledge honestly and in good faith. Students are responsible for doing their own work, and academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated anywhere in the university

Students with Disabilities Policy:

The course syllabus should include the following statement:

In compliance with ADA guidelines, students who have any condition, either permanent or temporary, that might affect their ability to perform in this class are encouraged to inform the instructor at the beginning of the term. The University, through the Center for Academic Success, will work with the appropriate faculty member who is asked to provide the accommodations for a student in determining what accommodations are suitable based on the documentation and the individual student needs. The granting of any accommodation will not be retroactive and cannot jeopardize the academic standards or integrity of the course.

Bibliography (optional):

PreparEd by:

Rei Magosaki, Spring 2009

Last revised:

Rei Magosaki, Spring 2009