

**English 245**  
**Introduction to Latina/o Literature**  
**Fall 2009**

Professor: Dr. David J. Vázquez  
Phone: 346-1051  
Email: [vazquez@uoregon.edu](mailto:vazquez@uoregon.edu)

Office: 263 PLC  
Office Hours: M 9 – 11:00 am  
W 9:00 – 10:00 am

**Course Description:**

Latina/os have lived and worked in what is now the United States since before the founding of the country. During our time here, Chicana/os and Latina/os have produced a number of literary texts and critical works designed to document our experiences as racialized subjects. In this course we will read a variety of literary and critical texts that seek to answer the following questions: Who are Chicana/os (Mexican Americans)? What does it mean to be a Latina/o in the United States at this time? What are the differences between Chicana/os and Latina/os? What are the similarities? What historical trajectories shape(d) our lives? How do Chicana/os and Latina/os continue to evolve and change as groups in the U.S.?

**Course Goals:**

In this course you'll be required to perform lots of analysis and close reading. In other words, you'll be doing more than simply restating "WHAT" the text says. Rather, you'll be attempting to unpack the text by examining specific words, phrases, images, symbols, characters, etc. Your analysis and close readings will help you to understand and explain the more complicated interwoven meanings that lie beneath the surface. You'll also be required to place texts into dialog with one another, and to begin to make connections between abstract ideas and their representations.

**Required Texts**

All texts available at the U of O Bookstore, unless otherwise noted  
Julia Alvarez, *In the Time of the Butterflies*  
Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La frontera*  
Sandra Cisneros, *Caramelo*  
Judith Ortiz Cofer, *The Line of the Sun*  
Helena María Viramontes, *Under the Feet of Jesus*  
Various readings available via Blackboard

**Requirements**

1. **Read, Read, Read!** My main requirement is that you read. The reading for this course is both engaging and intensive. However, falling behind in the reading will spoil the endings of these novels, and put you at a disadvantage during class discussions. If I feel that people are falling behind in the reading, I reserve the right to give reading quizzes. I would prefer to spend our time in class discussing these interesting and provocative texts. However, I will not hesitate to give reading quizzes.
2. **Paper:** There is one paper required in this course. It will be a 3-5 page response paper due at the beginning of class on Friday, December 3. Your task in the paper will be to provide an analysis of a theme related to the course in one or more of the texts. You may also choose to write a paper that performs a close reading on one or more of the texts. See me during office hours for more paper ideas.
3. **Two Exams:** One Mid-term and one Final. The Mid-term will take place on Friday, October 23 during our regular class meeting. The final will take place on Monday, December 7 at 10:15 am.

4. **Discussion Questions:** All students will sign up for **TWO** discussion questions during the quarter. Students will introduce their discussion questions with a 3-5 minute presentation. While it should be brief, you should be prepared for a formal presentation. This means that you should be ready to get up in front of the class to explain your ideas and provide supporting cues for our discussion. Please feel free to use the chalkboard, PowerPoint, or any other A/V or visual aids that you like. While your participation grade is not solely dependent on a discussion question, you cannot receive full credit for participation if you do not present a question. If you are not in attendance to present your discussion question, you will not receive credit. All discussion questions **MUST** be posted to the discussion forum on Blackboard 24 hours **prior** to the next class meeting. Please plan your reading accordingly

Those NOT presenting on a given day are responsible for reading the discussion question prior to our class meeting. Please make sure to check the discussion question forum on Blackboard before you come to class.

## Grading

Mid-Term: 30 percent

Final: 30 percent

Paper: 30 percent

Participation: 10 percent

## Policies

- Attendance and Participation: In order to receive full credit for participation, you must come to class prepared. This means **ALWAYS** bring the text(s) with which we are currently working, always bring any other necessary writing materials, always bring your questions about the reading, and always bring a respectful and positive attitude. **Participation includes oral participation**, completing in-class assignments, coming to class prepared (and on time), AND presenting your discussion question.
  - There is one caveat to this attendance policy. The university has informed us that there is a high likelihood of an outbreak of the H1N1 flu virus (a.k.a. swine flu) this year. Should a serious outbreak of swine flu occur among a significant portion of the class, we will discuss options for alternative class meetings—most likely on Blackboard. In other words, if too many of us (including me) are sick with the flu, we will likely conduct our meetings on Blackboard until the epidemic subsides.
- Tardiness: It is imperative that you get to class on time. I will also respect this aspect of our time together. We all have tight schedules. Please respect me, your classmates, and most of all yourself by getting to class on time.
- All written work must be typed, stapled, and double-spaced with one-inch margins on all sides. Fonts should be no larger than 12 points, and no smaller than 10 points. All written work must include your name, the course, the instructor's name, and the name of the assignment in the upper left corner. Handwritten work will not be accepted. Make sure to number your pages. Please document citations using the MLA format. You can get the MLA style guidelines online at <http://www.liu.edu/cwis/cwp/Library/workshop/citmla.htm> or you can check the reference desk at the library.
- You are responsible for keeping a backup copy of all of your work. Backups may take the form of computer copies, hard copies, or both. In any event, make sure that you have a readily accessible copy of ALL of your work. Your computer crashing is not a valid excuse for missing an assignment.
- **Please turn your off your cell phone.**
- **No laptops, PDAs, or other electronic devices will be allowed.** The only exception to this rule will be in the case of a documented accommodation.
- Bring the assigned text to class.
- Since we meet in the morning, please feel free to bring coffee or any other nourishment that you need. However, make sure to clean up after yourself.

- How to address me: Please feel free to call me Professor Vázquez or Dr. Vázquez. Calling me by my first name is not acceptable. I don't care for Mr. Vázquez (Mr. Vázquez is my father). My preference is for Professor Vázquez.

## About Making Life Easier for Each Other

This course is not designed to be competitive. In fact, a competitive atmosphere will work against the activities of the class. Many of the activities are interactive, and each individual deserves the full cooperation of everyone else. **The one rule that is sacred in this classroom is to respect everyone**—each other, me, and the authors. Disagreements will happen and ideas will be challenged, but they must be controlled and expressed *academically*—which means in a civil, well-considered, and intelligent manner. Please note that we WILL be discussing the political ramifications of these texts. These may include discussions that may at first *seem* unrelated to the material at hand. My hope is that you will begin to understand that NO text emerges in a political or aesthetic vacuum. In fact, as we will soon see, these texts have important political and social implications for our everyday lives. For this reason, please bring an open mind and a patient attitude. It is much easier to learn from each other, about each other, and about ourselves when we are listening.

## Timeline

*This syllabus is primarily a reading guide. As such, it may be subject to revision.*

<u>Week 1</u>	<u>Read by This Date:</u>
Wednesday 9/30	Introduction
Friday 10/2	George Lipsitz, “The Possessive Investment in Whiteness” (Blackboard),
<u>Week 2</u>	
Monday 10/5	Juan Gonzalez, from <i>Harvest of Empire</i> (Blackboard)
Wednesday 10/7	Suzanne Oboler, “Hispanics in the United States: ‘We All Sing a Different Song’ (Blackboard), Frances Aparico, “Reading the Latino in Latino Studies” (Blackboard)
Friday 10/9	George Lipsitz, “Cruising Around the Historical Bloc” (Blackboard)
<u>Week 3</u>	
Monday 10/12	Gloria Anzaldúa, <i>Borderlands/La frontera</i> 1-39
Wednesday 10/14	<i>Borderlands</i> 40-75
Friday 10/16	<i>Borderlands</i> 77-98
<u>Week 4</u>	
Monday 10/19	<i>Borderlands</i> 98-end
Wednesday 10/21	Mid-term review
Friday 10/23	<b>Mid-term</b>
<u>Week 5</u>	
Monday 10/26	Judith Ortiz Cofer, <i>The Line of the Sun</i> 1-131
Wednesday 10/28	<i>The Line of the Sun</i> 132-189
Friday 10/30	<i>The Line of the Sun</i> 190-end

Week 6

Monday 11/2 Helena María Viramontes, *Under the Feet of Jesus*  
1-90

Wednesday 11/4 *Jesus* 91-130

Friday 11/6 *Jesus* 130-end

Week 7

Monday 11/9 Julia Alvarez *In the Time of the Butterflies* 1-117

Wednesday 11/11 *Butterflies* 118-199

Friday 11/13 *Butterflies* 200-256

Week 8

Monday 11/16 *Butterflies* 257-end

Wednesday 11/18 Sandra Cisneros, *Caramelo* 1-49

Friday 11/20 *Caramelo* 50-90

Week 9

Monday 11/23 *Caramelo* 91-236

Wednesday 11/25 *Caramelo* 237-285

Friday 11/27 No Class, Thanksgiving Holiday

Week 10

Monday 11/30 *Caramelo* 286-395

Wednesday 12/2 *Caramelo* 395-end

Friday 12/3 **Term Paper Due**, Final Exam Review