Latino Literature
LHCS 595:267.01 / 050:240:02 / 195:295:01

Instructor: Prof. Carolina González
Department of Latino and Hispanic Caribbean Studies
Class Meets: T 10:20-1:20 pm, A256 Lucy Stone Hall, Livingston Campus
Office Hours: Tuesdays 2:00-3:00 pm and by appointment
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Course description
Yunior, one of the narrators in Junot Diaz’s novel *The Brief and Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, asks, “What is more sci-fi than Santo Domingo? What more fantasy than the Antilles?” Although the U.S. publishing, movie and media industries continue to box Latinos into narratives of immigrant earnestness and thug realism, many Latino artists have refused to tell simple, straightforward stories about themselves and their experiences. Sometimes, the “unreal” is the best way to get to an experiential and emotional truth. This class will explore the works of 20th and 21st C U.S.-based Latino narrators who choose the more experimental path to individual and collective expression. This including modes such as satire/parody/absurd, baroque excess and kitsch, surrealism, science fiction and invented histories. We will read novels and graphic novels, as well as examining performance work, film and video by Chicanos, Nuyoricans, Dominicans, Cubans and members of other national origin groups that departs from “realistic” modes of storytelling.

Course structure & objectives
This class is organized thematically, and focuses on work made after 1965, an important turning point for U.S. Latinos due to immigration law changes that increased both the number and the diversity of the Latino population in the U.S. Coursework includes reading primary material (novels, graphic novels and performance texts) by U.S.-born/based Latino writers and secondary material (scholarly articles and author interviews), as well as screenings of videos and films. Because class meets only once a week, the reading load for each class may seem heavy, and should average 100-150 pages per week. Plan accordingly. There will be brief lectures for cultural and critical background and context, but the bulk of class time will be spent on discussion.

Students in this course will learn how to appreciate, think critically about, analyze and discuss literary works made by U.S.-based authors of Latin American descent. Students will understand the historical, social, political and cultural context for the creation, consumption and dissemination of Latino literature in the 20th and early 21st Centuries, as well as how these works fit into scholarly studies of literature, nationalism and identity in Latin America, the Caribbean and the U.S. Students will also learn to analyze Latino literature through the prisms of geographic setting, language, race/ethnicity, gender, sexual identity, literary genre, class, migration and popular culture. In addition, students will become familiar with literary studies and theories of satire, the absurd, parody, science fiction, graphic novels, multimedia, intertextuality and discourse analysis.

Required readings
Please acquire the following books, as we will be reading them in their entirety. I have placed an order for these at the Rutgers bookstore, but you are free to secure copies however you see fit (short of stealing!)

The remainder of required readings will be available through sakai.

**Course requirements & evaluation**
30% Attendance/participation
10% class presentation
30% written assignments
30% Final exam

**Attendance and participation** – Although part of class will be spent on lecture, most of our time will involve discussion of the readings. You are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the readings. Not participating in class discussion will negatively impact this portion of your grade. Unexcused absences will negatively impact this portion of your grade. Being more than 10 minutes late to class counts as a lateness. Habitual lateness will negatively impact this portion of your grade. Any other attendance issues should be discussed with the instructor as soon as possible.

**Class presentation** – At some point in the semester, each student will be scheduled for a short (10- to 15-min.) presentation exploring one question related to one class reading. Students will receive more detailed instructions on what’s expected in these presentations within the first two weeks of class.

**Written assignments** – You will write three short (2-3 pp.) reaction papers throughout the semester. Each paper will examine one aspect of a narrative or poem we study. You are responsible for choosing your theme, but you will receive more detailed guidelines during class. Written assignments will be handed in electronically through sakai as Word documents. Assignments filed any other way will not be accepted (unless we make prior arrangements). Late assignments will not be accepted.

**Final Exam** – There will be a take-home essay exam distributed the last day of class and due on the day of the scheduled class final.

The LHCS Department grade scale is as follows: A = 93–100; B+ = 89–92; B = 81–88; C+ = 77 – 80; C = 70 – 76; D = 65 – 69; F= 64 and below.

**Class policies**
- **Please arrive on time and prepared.** Class participation is an important part of your grade, and if you are not in the classroom, you are unable to participate. You will periodically be called upon. Sometimes we’ll go over important information – assignments or changes to the class schedule – at the start of class. If you are late or absent, you are responsible for finding out if you’ve missed anything.
- **Cell phone use is prohibited in class.** Find out where the “power off” and “silence” buttons are, and *use them*. Whatever call or message is coming in during class can wait until our class break or the end of class. Texting is not allowed, and neither is the use of PDAs, mp3 players or any portable electronic devices. Laptops may be used for note-taking alone.
- **Take deadlines seriously.** All major assignments and deadlines are laid out in the class schedule so you can plan around them. Being crunched by several deadlines at once is no excuse for late assignments. You are responsible for filing assignments on time (by the start of class time the day it is due) even if you are absent.
- **Please take advantage of office hours.** Office hours are for your benefit: it is when we can assess how you’re doing in class, or go over questions and issues with class materials and assignments. I am accessible via email – I promise to respond within 48 hours M-Th, and by class time for messages received Friday-Sunday – immediately before and after class, and by appointment.
Changes to course schedule: The instructor reserves the right to adjust the course schedule or readings to provide the best learning experience possible.

Policy on Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the presentation of someone else’s ideas, words, or artistic, scientific, or technical work as one’s own creation. Using the ideas or work of another is permissible only when the original author is identified. Paraphrasing and summarizing, as well as direct quotations, require citations to the original source. Plagiarism may be intentional or unintentional. Lack of dishonest intent does not necessarily absolve a student of responsibility for plagiarism. It is the student’s responsibility to recognize the difference between statements that are common knowledge (which do not require documentation) and restatements of the ideas of others. Paraphrase, summary, and direct quotation are acceptable forms of restatement, as long as the source is cited. Students who are unsure how and when to provide documentation and are advised to consult with their instructors. Any student found to be plagiarizing his/her work will receive an F for the course and referred immediately to the appropriate academic dean for censure. Students are encouraged to read the full policy on academic integrity at the following website: http://cat.rutgers.edu/integrity/policy.html.

Course outline

WEEK 1: INTRODUCTION: UN-REALISM AND ITS ANTECEDENTS
Jan. 17

What is Latino literature? “The real,” “realness,” realism and representation
Miguel de Cervantes, Don Quixote (selections)
François Rabelais, Gargantua and Pantagruel (selections)
Jorge Luis Borges, “Funes, the Memorius,” Ficciones
Italo Calvino, “All at one point,” Cosmicomics

WEEK 2: CORRIDOS, LIES AND VIDEOTAPE
Jan. 24

Film: Come and Take It Day (2002, 60 min.)

WEEKS 3-5: LA CUCARACHA: SATIRE AS COUNTER-HISTORY
Jan. 31

Oscar Zeta Acosta, Revolt of the Cockroach People

Assignment #1 due

Feb. 7

Cockroach People, cont.

Feb. 14

Carmelita Tropicana, With What Ass Does a Cockroach Sit?

WEEK 6-8: APOCALYPTIC UTOPIAC TROPICALIZED CITY
Feb. 21

Giannina Braschi, United States of Banana
Feb. 28  
*Banana*, cont.

*Assignment #2 due*

March 6  Ed Vega, *The Lamentable Journey of Omaha Bigelow Into The Impenetrable Loisaida Jungle* (selections)

Mar 13  **NO CLASS SPRING BREAK**

**WEEKS 9-10: TOWER OF BABBLE: LANGUAGE GAMES**
March 20  John Leguizamo, *Mambo Mouth, Spic-o-Rama* and *Freak* (selections)

March 27  Josefina Báez, *Dominicanish*

**WEEKS 11-14: FUKÚ AMERICANUS AND GRAPHIC REALISM**
April 3  Jaime Hernández, *Maggie the Mechanic*

April 10  Junot Díaz, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*

April 17  *Oscar Wao*, cont.
Monica Hanna, “‘Reassembling the Fragments': Battling Historiographies, Caribbean Discourse, and Nerd Genres in Junot Díaz's The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao,” *Callaloo* 33:2 (Spring 2010), 498-520

*Assignment #3 due*

April 24  *Last day of class*
Film: Alex Rivera, *Sleep Dealer* (2008, 90 min.)

**Final exam**  **TBA**