

SYLLABUS

AMERICAN ETHNIC LITERATURE

Instructor: Dr. Michael Beilfuss
Email:

Office:
Office Hours:

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Catalog Description: American Ethnic Literature: multi-ethnic study of American literature; the writings of Black Americans, American Indians, Mexican-Americans, Jewish Americans, as well as Euro-American ethnic groups; representative authors include Douglass, Toomer, Wright, Hurston, Morrison, Anaya, Cisneros, Momaday and Kingston.

In *The Souls of Black Folk* W.E.B. Du Bois introduces the idea of “double consciousness” and “the veil,” where he argues that African Americans struggle with a dual identity. Du Bois explains that “the Negro is [...] born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world,—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness,—an American, a Negro; two warring souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder” (8).

We will explore Du Bois’s idea of “double consciousness” as it relates not only to African Americans, but also to Native Americans, immigrant communities, and Americans of various ethnicities. For example, two questions we will pursue are: What does it mean to be an American as well as a member of another culture?, and to what extent is assimilation into the dominant culture desired and/or resisted? Another underlying theme that we will explore throughout the semester is how various ethnicities imagine and communicate human relationships with the land, place, nature, and the environment. Along those lines we will be asking how multi-cultural perspectives on the environment compare, inform, and perhaps influence the dominant culture’s perspective, and vice versa.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

In this class, you will:

- Read, analyze, and interpret literary texts in various genres, by various authors
- Respond critically to a work of scholarship
- Participate in an in-class scholarly dialogue
- Practice writing as an activity for inquiry, reflection, and learning
- Engage with themes and ideas found in ethnic literature through a research paper
- Recognize, critically analyze, evaluate, synthesize, and document primary and secondary sources, including print and electronic sources
- Properly acknowledge the use of other writers’ words and ideas
- Demonstrate integrity by practicing scholastic honesty
- Demonstrate competency in grammar, diction, and usage

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- Prerequisite: 3 credits of literature at 200-level or above.
- Attendance is required.
- Research Paper 6-8 pages employing print and electronic sources.

- Reading assignments require critical reading. You also need to read your own work with a critical eye.
- Participate in collaborative activities and class discussion.

REQUIRED TEXTS AND MATERIALS

- *The Souls of Black Folk* W. E. B. Du Bois
- *Kentucky* I. J. Schwartz
- *House Made of Dawn* N. Scott Momaday
- *Picture Bride* Cathy Song
- *The Woman Warrior* Maxine Hong Kingston
- *The Rain God* Arturo Islas
- Course Packet

GRADE DETERMINATION

Reading Quizzes	20%
Group Presentation	20%
Midterm	20%
Research Paper	20%
Final Exam	20%

READING SCHEDULE (SUBJECT TO CHANGE SLIGHTLY):

TUESDAY:

Class Introduction/Syllabus Overview

WEDNESDAY:

W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*: "The Forethought," & Chapters 1 - 3

THURSDAY:

Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*: Chapters 4 - 6

FRIDAY:

Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*: Chapters 7 - 8

MONDAY:

Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*: Chapters 9 - 10, 14, & "The Afterthought"
Presentation

TUESDAY:

"Native Americans: Contact and Conflict" &
"Native Americans: Removal and Resistance"

WEDNESDAY:

Black Elk and John G. Neihardt, from *Black Elk Speaks*
"The Ghost Dance and Wounded Knee"
Presentation

THURSDAY:

I. J. Schwartz, *Kentucky*: 21 - 75

FRIDAY:

Schwartz: 76 - 109
Presentation

MONDAY:

Schwartz: 110 - 202

Presentation

TUESDAY:

Schwartz: 203 - 234

WEDNESDAY:

Midterm Exam

THURSDAY:

N. Scott Momaday, *House Made of Dawn*: 1 - 49

FRIDAY:

Momaday: 50 - 76

Presentation

MONDAY:

Momaday: 77 - 166

Presentation

TUESDAY:

Momaday: 169 - 185

WEDNESDAY:

Cathy Song, *Picture Bride*: 1 - 50

Presentation

THURSDAY:

Song: 51 - 82

FRIDAY:

Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior*: 1 - 54

Presentation

MONDAY:

Kingston: 55 - 160

Presentation

TUESDAY:

Kingston: 161 - 209

WEDNESDAY:

Arturo Islas, *The Rain God*: 1 - 50

Presentation

THURSDAY:

Islas: 51 - 110

FRIDAY:

Islas: 111 - 180

Presentation

MONDAY:

Final Exam