

**English 382.1**  
**Spring 2007**

TThF 10-10:50am  
CCC 226

Dr. Rachael Barnett  
Office Hours: Tuesday and  
Wednesday 11am-Noon, and  
by appointment  
Office: CCC 431  
Phone: 346-4332  
email: rbarnett@uwsp.edu

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## **Ethnic Literature of the United States**

### **Course Description**

An underlying premise of this course is that the United States has *always* been a “diverse society.” In the most basic sense, all American literature is ethnic, and in this class we will look at ethnicity broadly. We’ll look at literature produced by African American, Native American, Asian American, and Latino/a writers -- those ethnicities often considered “racialized ethnicities” -- as well as writing by Jewish Americans and authors of European ethnicities. Just as the U.S. has been always diverse, so has American Literature always been diverse, although for much of our history, the evidence of this diversity has been ignored and often suppressed. Our literature, like our history, reflects our continuing struggle to understand and define what it means to be an American and how ethnicity is part of that definition. We will focus on how these writers reflect the centrality of ethnicity in their work and how crucial their voices are to an understanding of American Literature.

### **Course Goals**

This course will:

1. Provide an overview of the major concerns of Ethnic Literature in the United States.
2. Increase your familiarity with important Contemporary Ethnic American Writers
3. Provide the historical context for this literature.
4. Give you an opportunity to read and interpret a number of novels and short stories
5. Ask you to use your writing to analyze and reflect on the texts.

### **Required Materials**

*O’ Pioneers* by Willa Cather (textbook rental)

*Beloved* by Toni Morrison (textbook rental)

*Ceremony* by Leslie Marmon Silko (textbook purchase)

*Bone* by Fae Myenne Ng (textbook purchase)

*George Washington Gómez* by Américo Paredes (textbook purchase)

Short story handouts TBA (provided by me)

## Be Forewarned

Please know that we will be discussing painful and fraught issues. We must always be sensitive and self-reflective in our discussions. However, such investigations are the quintessence of a university education: thinking analytically about what is to you unfamiliar, new, or even previously rejected builds a capacity for communal understanding. Our examination of such issues never demands your endorsement of or adherence to a particular position but rather demands your intellectual engagement and respect.

## Course Requirements

### *Participation*

This class will be a mix of presentation and discussion. Presentations will provide historical background and context with suggestions for further reading. When we turn to discussion your thoughtful and consistent contribution is expected. Indeed the class will be more rewarding and lively and interesting if we throw ourselves into the material and think of our discussions as a place for discovery. If you find shyness gets the best of you, come see me (sooner rather than later) and we will see what we can do. You *will* need to participate aloud in the course. Class participation is graded on a pass/fail basis and consistent, thoughtful contributions are required to receive a passing grade. “Consistent” means every other class period; “thoughtful” (which does not mean “correct”) means contributions in which you venture an idea or interpretation. Although class participation is graded on a pass/fail basis, particularly sharp and engaged contributions could raise your final course grade if it is on a borderline. Failing the class participation requirement will lower your final grade up to one full letter.

I recognize that participation depends on your comfort and confidence in the class and with the course material. Your contribution to discussion need not be a fully formulated or “brilliant” insight by any means. If you feel shaky in your understanding of a specific text, for example, you might pose a *question* rather than an “answer.” You should come to class with questions and/or comments about every reading if you are preparing rigorously enough. As these readings are part of a tradition, there are connections among them. Commenting when you recognize such connections is a great place to start or further discussions.

### *Attendance*

Attendance is mandatory. If there is an emergency or a legitimate special circumstance that should force you to miss a class, I ask you notify me *beforehand*. This notification is a courtesy that I appreciate, but it does not necessarily excuse your absence. If you miss class, it is *your responsibility* to inform me of what is going on and to work to resolve the problem (ask me for handouts, consult classmates for notes, and make an office appointment to review what you missed if you so desire). I’ll forgive one absence over the course of the semester. *Two or more absences run the risk of a lowered final grade for the course. If you miss four classes, you cannot pass the course.* Exceptions to the attendance policy are made only in the case of grave emergencies and may require documentation.

### *Short Essays*

During the course of the semester, you will be completing three short essays of a minimum length of 2 single-spaced pages. You may choose to write on any reading we have already completed for your analysis. I will pass out specific assignment sheets as we go along. While short, these should be considered formal essays and I will grade them as such. Be sure to

save all of your work, and keep multiple copies of your essays. Completion of all papers is required to satisfactorily complete this course.

Papers must:

- Have one-inch margins on all sides.
- Be in an easily legible 10- or 12-point font (Times or Times New Roman are standard).
- Be single-spaced.
- Be stapled in the upper left-hand corner.
- Have your last name followed by the page number in the upper right-hand corner of each page.
- Have the student's name, the course name and number, the instructor's name, the assignment name or number, and the date in the upper left-hand corner. The title for the paper should appear centered at the top of the first page, below the heading. No separate title page is necessary.
- Be turned in at the beginning of class on the date due. If you are late to class when a paper is due, your paper will be counted as late and penalties will accrue.

Papers that do not meet all of these requirements will not be accepted and will cause your paper to be considered late. Late papers for any draft will cause your final grade for that paper to be lowered one grade level (i.e. from an A- to a B+) for each day (including weekends and holidays) that it is late.

### *Reading Quizzes*

There will be reading quizzes on most of the readings in this course, both short stories and novels. These quizzes will test your reading and often serve as prompts for our discussion. These quizzes will be in-class and, for the most part, fairly brief.

### *Group Presentations*

During the first week of class, I will be passing around a sign-up sheet for class presentations for the remainder of the semester. Students will work in groups of two or three and will prepare a brief presentation on historical matter relevant to the readings and/or biographical information on the author. I have suggestions for your groups should you need them and I am more than happy to work with you and your group in devising a strategy for your class presentations. These presentations provide valuable historical context for the class as a whole and as such I take them very seriously. Should you have any questions or concerns about your presentation, please feel free to talk with me during my office hours or to schedule an appointment to meet with me. In addition to providing valuable background material, students will also be responsible for beginning our discussions of the readings by making connections between their presentations and the readings or by raising questions about the readings based on their presentations. In addition, each student will turn in a typed evaluation of his or her presentation as well as his or her notes.

### *Final Essay*

You will write a final essay of 8-10 double-spaced pages that will blend reflection and analysis as you examine at least three readings from the semester. I will provide a more detailed handout midway through the semester.

## Grading

Response Papers (3)	30%	
Quizzes	15%	
Group Presentation	15%	
Final Essay	40%	
Participation/Attendance	P/F	F = Minus One Letter Grade
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Total	100%	

## Office Hours and Campus Resources for Writing

Please take advantage of my office hours to ask any questions you may have or to deal with issues you would like to discuss with me outside of class. Just come by—you don't need an appointment. If you can't make my office hours, I can always arrange to meet you at a time that will work for both of us. If you need to reach me outside of class or office hours, email is the best way to contact me.

As you are aware, the Tutoring-Learning Center (018 LRC) is a service for all UWSP students who are working on papers. Please don't hesitate to make use of the Center to assist you in your writing for this class. To make an appointment, please call x3568. Please also be advised that the center becomes especially busy at midterm and toward the end of the semester when most students are working on final assignments. Be sure to plan ahead and make an appointment well in advance.

## Statement on Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

As you well know, plagiarism, or the representation of another's work as your own, is a serious violation of university policy and is unacceptable in the academic community. When you draw upon ideas or language of other writers, you need to clearly indicate your sources. As English Majors, I assume you already understand and have made second nature the accepted procedures for giving credit to sources that are quoted, paraphrased, or summarized. If you have further questions about how to give credit to your sources, or are unsure whether or not you are plagiarizing, please contact me before the assignment is due. Please see <http://www.uwsp.edu/centers/rights/RRBOOKLET8-2005-06.pdf> for further information about your responsibilities and rights as a student.

## Special Needs

Please let me know if you need special assistance or have special considerations that need to be accommodated. I will do all that I can to help you succeed in this course. The Office of Disability Services can also assist students with special needs (x3365, voice or x3362, TDD).

## Tips for Success

- Participate early and often. Start raising questions and posing ideas today, and make yourself speak every day during the first two weeks to create a habit. If you are generally quiet in class, take advantage of the newness of the situation and try something new.
- Turn off your cell phone.
- Come to class every day, prepared, and take responsibility for making the discussion useful to you.
- Ask questions—of me, your classmates—whenever you are confused or unsure. Come by my office hours, schedule an appointment, or email me to discuss concerns about your

writing, the readings, or the class. No matter the quality of your teachers, your education at this level is what you make of it; don't be shy about seeking the help and advice you need.

- **Read carefully and take notes. Write in your books; or, in the case of text rental, take careful notes in a dedicated notebook. Be sure to keep track of page numbers. Expect to read difficult readings at least twice. Read materials again before attempting to write about them.** If you find yourself disliking a writer or a text, investigate why: Is it the writer's tone? The writing itself? The writer's assumptions? His or her argument? Readings have been selected for their range—don't expect to "like" every piece; do expect, however, to learn something from everything you read and try to figure out each work's importance.

English 382 — Spring 2007  
Subject to Change

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Week 1 (Jan 23/25/26)

Introduction to class; syllabus; sign-up for presentations (Friday)

Weeks 2/3/4 (Jan 30-Feb 16)

Discuss *O' Pioneers* and short stories TBA

**Short Essay #1 due 2/16**

Weeks 5/6/7 (Feb 20-Mar 9)

Discuss *George Washington Gómez* and short story by Ana Castillo

Classes cancelled 3/1 and 3/2 (I'll be at a Conference in Citizenship Studies)

Weeks 8/9/10 (Mar 13-April 6)

Discuss *Ceremony* and short story by Sherman Alexie

(Spring Break in here)

**Short Essay #2 due 3/30**

Weeks 11/12 (April 10-20)

Discuss *Bone* and short story by Jhumpa Lahiri

Weeks 13/14/15 (April 24-May11)

Discuss *Beloved* and short story by Ernest Gaines

**Short Essay #3 due 5/4**

**Final Essay due at scheduled Final Exam on Tuesday, May 15 10:15-12:15**