ENG 2341-21R

Introduction to Literature, Fall 2016

Class Time & Location: Tues/Thurs, 3:05 am - 4:20 pm, ARHU 303

Instructor: M. “Miriam” Herrera
Office Hours: Wed, 3:00 - 4:00 PM & by appointment
Office Number: ARHU 205-A
Office Phone: (956) 665-8771
Email: maria.herrera@utrgv.edu

Transformative Borders: The Literature of Identity

UTRGV COURSE DESCRIPTION:

ENGL 2341 is part of the Language, Philosophy, and Culture Component Area of the Texas Core Curriculum. Courses in this area focus on how ideas, values, beliefs, and other aspects of culture express and affect human experience. This course also involves the exploration of ideas that foster aesthetic and intellectual creation in order to understand the human condition across cultures. All of the assessments and learning activities in this course are directly and indirectly intended to help each student develop mastery of the Core Objectives from this component area. (For detailed CB Core and Departmental Objectives, please see the Outcomes section later in this document.)

INSTRUCTOR’S COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This is a thematic course in which we will look at artistic explorations of cultural and personal identity. We will read texts in a variety of genres: literary theory, novels, drama, memoir or creative nonfiction, short stories, and poetry. Most of these works were chosen because of their relevance to the complex identities of people of color living in the United States, including racial and ethnic minorities, and those living on the “borders” of society because of their gender identification.

As a poet, I often write about the paradoxical nature of identity and the many-layered process one must perform to reconcile the splintered parts of one's self. My personal concept of identity is that it is fluid and changing—that immersion in one culture at a time—and in the midst of its homeland, is crucial to the process of reconciliation. The topic of identity is worth exploring because cultural fusion is the natural unfoldment of our country's people, and the literature reflects and documents this cultural transformation.

In both my writing and literature classes, I encourage students to develop a flourishing writing process unique to each writer, to tap into their obsessions and write from the deepest parts of their most authentic selves, which must be discovered, uncovered, and nurtured. I often stress the organic nature of the poem, and how a writer must listen closely for guidance in unearthing what the poem wants to do in form, sound, image, and meaning. As students of literature we will explore and analyze works that accomplish this.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS:
You must purchase the following texts; the rest of the class readings will be provided online and/or in PDF format. (I have listed them here in the order in which we will study them):

- *Hunger of Memory*, Richard Rodriguez
- *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian*, Sherman Alexie

Other Required Stuff

- Daily access to a reliable computer with the internet and a word processing program
- A reliable pen and USB flash drive. Make duplicate copies of all your work and save.
- A classic composition notebook (100 sheets; wide rule is better for the writer); available just about anywhere, even at Wal-Mart for about $2.00. You will do all your in-class writing, brainstorming, and reading responses in them, and I call this your “Class Journal,” which includes your "Reading Response Logs.”
- **VERY IMPORTANT:** A Facebook account so you can join our class group, called “Eng 2341 - Fall 2016, M. Herrera, UTRGV” Go to this link and ask to join: https://www.facebook.com/groups/IntroLitFall2016/. Don’t worry about privacy because this group is starting out as private; once all class members enroll I will change the status to secret. If you don’t have a Facebook account already, you must first sign up at http://www.facebook.com/. The class calendar, syllabus, reminders about upcoming deadlines, classroom changes, cancellations, pop quizzes, group assignments, ideas for writing, resources, class links, and your comments and questions will be posted there. Please remember which email you use for your Facebook account because if you have problems joining the group I will be able to look you up via your email and invite you. NOTE: Please sign up ASAP because in a few weeks I will change our group’s access to “secret” and it will be more difficult to join.

My classes have had great success using Facebook for my classes; because we are used to being in constant contact with friends and other groups there, I have found that most students find FB accessible and thus easier to stay informed about classroom activities. Please feel free to post your questions, comments, topic ideas, suggested articles of relevant to our class projects and readings. The group also provides a good way to offer encouragement and inspiration to other students.

**NOTE: Please do not trivialize your membership—this is a firm requirement. Any student who does not comply with this requirement in a timely manner will earn an "F" for the class participation grade.** Instead of requiring you to be on Blackboard I am requiring you to be on our FB page.

- An active Google.docs or Dropbox account so you can keep track of all versions of your drafts. I encourage you to SAVE all of your drafts. Frustrated writers sometimes hastily delete something our inner critic has deemed unsatisfactory, and then later we learn we were onto some good ideas. When in doubt, SAVE it!
• Note: I am not responsible for papers left in my mailbox or at my office door; therefore, ALWAYS make a copy of EVERYTHING you turn in, just in case something gets lost. If a paper gets lost, you will be required to provide a copy, which you should have, either on your flash drive, Dropbox, or Google Drive account.


READINGS:
Besides the required texts, all of our additional readings will be posted on our FB page as PDF documents and can be found under the group’s "file" section. Please make it a habit to check our page, especially the Class Calendar, every day for helpful suggestions, reminders and tips about assignments, and deadline changes, etc.

WORK & GRADES:

☐ Weekly Online Discussions & In-class Group Discussion Recaps
☐ Reading Responses
☐ Final group project: a digital story (video)
☐ A class journal; will contain in-class freewrites, group activities, and other in-class writing assignments

GRADE DISTRIBUTION:

☐ Weekly Online Discussions/In-Class Group Recaps (20%)
☐ Reading Responses (Journal) & Culminating Essay (40%)
☐ Final Group Project: Digital Story Presentation (20%)
☐ Class and Online Participation (20%)

Notes:
Class Participation includes attendance, workshops, class, and online participation and discussion, group and peer feedback, and unannounced in-class activities.

Two Ways to Earn Extra Credit (5-10 points):

You can earn extra credit by participating in six face-to-face Critical Reading and Thinking sessions at the Writing Center. If you attend the tutoring sessions, you are required to write a log in your journal about what you learned in each session, and your attendance will be verified by the Writing Center. The Writing Center is located in the Academic Services Building (ACSB) 2.130. These tutoring sessions can be a great help in formulating and composing your reading responses.

You can also earn extra credit by attending four literary performances on campus or affiliated with the university. These can be plays, or poetry and/or fiction readings. I will post announcements about upcoming events on our class page. If you know of any sponsored events or have questions about an event, you can post them on our class page for my approval. You will be required to write a report/response on the performances you attend.
Group Work: Much of the work we do in this class will be collaborative. Early in the semester, students will choose a working group that will be responsible for conducting discussion on the readings, providing peer feedback on the reading responses, freewrites, and composing the final digital story project.

CLASS POLICIES:

Please read this these policies carefully, noting rules about absences, submission of work, and classroom expectations. What you don’t know can hurt you, so please make sure you understand the polices and penalties for violating them.

ATTENDANCE POLICY:
Because the quality of your work so largely depends on your interaction with your peers and your instructor, it’s important that you attend every scheduled class meeting. It’s been my experience that students who attend class regularly, ask questions, and eagerly participate in class and group discussions get the most from this class. In light of this, attendance is mandatory.

An attendance sheet is provided for you to sign at each class. Make sure you sign this sheet; if you forgot, you will not be able to sign the sheet afterward. Once you are absent, it is your responsibility to determine what class work and notes were missed and make arrangements to comply with all missed assignments by yourself. All assignments and classroom material are posted on our Facebook calendar.

VERY IMPORTANT: After the third unexcused absence, I will drop a student from the class, for any reason, unless otherwise approved by me. An excused absence is one that was approved by me and requires a written doctor's note. Please keep in mind that even if your excused absences total more than four, I reserve the right to drop you from the class if I feel your absences have interfered with successful completion of the course work.

Students arriving late or leaving early without prior arrangements with me may be recorded absent for the day. If there is some circumstance that prevents you from attending class, let me know and I will be happy to give you a “drop.” But if you simply disappear, you will fail.

University Attendance Policy: The student is expected to attend all classes and laboratory sessions. It is the responsibility of the student to inform each instructor of absences. When, however, in the judgment of the instructor, a student has been absent to such a degree as to impair his or her status relative to credit for the course, the instructor may drop the student from the class with a grade of 'DP' or 'DF' (HOP 5.2.4). For more information on university policies that affect you in terms of drops and such, see the chart at the end of this syllabus.

LATE WORK:
I schedule time to provide feedback on your work. Turning in late work means you will miss the scheduled commentary window. Do not email me a late assignment and expect me to (1) accept it or (2) grade it.

In addition, late papers and assignments will be docked a half-letter grade for each class session they are late. (For example, if your paper was due on Monday and the next class meets on Wednesday, your paper will be docked half a grade if turned in on Wednesday; if it is not turned in until the following
Monday it will be docked another half-grade.) However, will not accept an assignment that is more than one week late.

There are no make-up dates for quizzes and in-class assignments, including freewrites, editing and critiquing workshops, and group collaboration. Late online discussions and assignments to lead in-class discussions cannot be made up for obvious reasons.

I do realize that circumstances may arise that are beyond your control; talk with me before they interfere with your progress in this course. Keep the lines of communication open. Email or call me if you have any questions or concerns. I welcome opportunities to talk with you.

**CELL PHONES, SCREENS, AND TEXTING:**
Cell phone use, texting, and listening to music on headphones are NOT ALLOWED in class during the entire session--regardless if the class is involved in group work or lecture/discussion.

**These are the consequences for violating this policy:**
First Violation: A warning
Second Violation: Class participation grade docked half a letter grade
Third Violation: Class participation grade of “F” (59% - 0%)
*If there are more than three violations, I may drop you from the class.*

In light of this policy, remember to turn off all cell phones, tablets, mp3 players, and screens before you enter the classroom. *NOTE: The policy above applies to all use of electronics in class, including mp3 players with or without headphones, etc.*

Personal computers are also not permitted unless you have a compelling reason to use yours in class. I am happy to hear these reasons, and to make arrangements on a case-by-case basis; please see me after class or visit my office hours to discuss this.

**CLASS SESSIONS:** Once in class, a student is expected to remain in class for the duration of the class. If a student needs to leave class early, than the student needs to discuss the situation with the instructor before class begins.

**CLASSROOM CONDUCT:** During class students are expected to be courteous to the instructor and other classmates. Examples of discourteous behavior are unnecessary talking, sleeping, tardiness, leaving class while instructor is lecturing, sharpening pencils during the lecture, making nasty comments, verbal bullying, making racist or sexist remarks to the instructor or other classmates, disparaging classmates, etc.

**VIOLATIONS OF CLASSROOM CONDUCT POLICY:**

**These are the consequences for violating this policy:**
First Violation: A warning
Second Violation: Class participation grade docked a full letter grade
Third Violation: Student will be dropped from the class

**PRACTICES:**
The readings this semester will be very challenging. Never ask me or the class to define a word from the readings for you unless you have (1) previously looked up the word on dictionaryreference.com or other source, and (2) written the definition down. Be prepared to read your definition aloud to the class for discussion. I am not trying to discourage you from asking questions about terms, but it has been my experience that if you look up a word and write down its meaning first, it will stay imprinted in your memory. If you have looked up a word and are still stumped, it is likely that other class members feel the same way, so please don’t be afraid to bring it up. You can also get quick definitions by using google search and typing in “define and a colon”; for example, to find definitions for the “literacy” you would write “define: literacy” (with or without the quotation marks). This method is very helpful, because you will find definitions from various communities, professional jargon, slang, etc.

**ONLINE DISCUSSIONS:**
Please be respectful to your classmates and their points of view. Offensive comments will not be tolerated. Also, please refrain from plagiarizing your classmates’ comments on the discussion board and in your reading responses. All responses should be original.

**MATERIALS IN CLASS AND PUNCTUALITY:** Bring *everything every day*, and be on time. If we start an activity and you don’t have the necessary materials you won’t be able to constructively contribute to the work we do in class. If you walk in late when we have already begun a workshop or activity, then you interfere with your classmates’ ability to constructively contribute to each other’s work. If you are frequently late to class, these journal assignments will eventually take a toll on your overall grade.

**STUDENT-TEACHER EMAIL CORRESPONDENCE:** This policy requires all electronic communication between the University and students be conducted through University email; therefore, in keeping with this policy, please do not message me on Facebook or ask for solutions to your personal concerns. However, you may post a reminder for me on our group page telling me to read your email message. My official email is herrerame@utpa.edu.

**Email Format:** Most semesters I teach five classes of approximately 200 students, so it’s difficult to know which one you’re inquiring about unless you tell me. Therefore, when you send me an email, please make sure to tell me 1) the class and section; 2) the assignment you’re referring to, etc., and any other identifying information. This way you are more likely to get a useful response back more quickly.

**Please note:** Email should not ask questions whose answers are contained in the course syllabus, calendar, or class page on Facebook. This includes “I was absent; what did I miss?” questions. Such email will not be returned with the message “the answer to this can be found in the class syllabus or calendar.”

**Miscellanea:** We’re going to do a lot of writing this semester, including in-class writing. Sometimes I will come to class knowing exactly what I am going to ask you to write, and other times, because of what happens in class, I will design an assignment that suits our needs at the moment. In light of this, the instructor reserves the right to change the syllabus or calendar to best meet the needs of the current situation.

**ONLINE COURSE EVALUATIONS:**
Mandatory Course Evaluations period: Students are required to complete an ONLINE evaluation of this course, accessed through your UTPA account (https://my.utpa.edu/); you will be contacted through email with further instructions. The evaluation window closes at 11:59 pm on the last day of classes. Students who complete their evaluations by this time will have priority access to their grades. (UTPA Policy)

**WARNING ABOUT CLASS CONTENT:** Because literature reflects the full range of human experience, please know that this class is rated “R” for mature themes, graphic violence, sexual situations, and religious issues. If frank discussion of these themes offends you, or if you can’t deal with these topics in a mature manner, maybe this section isn’t for you.

We will be reading literature as well as viewing material that contains adult content. The readings and video presentations in this class frequently deal with mature subject matter, so a certain level of maturity and tolerance is required from every student. We may encounter violent and sexually explicit material and discuss issues of race, class, gender, and religion. Your continued enrollment in this class after reading this disclaimer implies your willingness to read, view, and discuss all classroom assignments in a mature and thoughtful manner.

Furthermore, while presenting your opinion is necessary AND encouraged in this class, please be considerate of other students’ viewpoints during discussion. Please keep in mind that because I am the instructor, at times I have to take the position of “Devil’s Advocate,” a person who expresses a controversial opinion in order to provoke debate or test the strength of the opposing arguments. This does not mean I necessarily hold that opinion, and if I do, relish opposing and I always welcome views. Opposing views are necessary to a vital academic environment because they elicit complex thought and feeling that can be explored, discussed, and hopefully forged into a beautiful work of art!

**CLASSROOM CONCERNS:**

Please feel free to discuss questions, comments, or concerns about anything that arises in class or in our online discussions with me, either informally or in writing, individually or as a group. If you have a problem or concern, I welcome any thoughtful discussion and appreciate the opportunity to speak to you to resolve the issue before unvoiced concerns interfere with the creation of a positive learning environment.

**IMPORTANT DATES:**

The UTRGV academic calendar can be found at http://my.utrgv.edu at the bottom of the screen, prior to login. Important dates for Fall 2016 include:

Dec 9 – 15, Final Exams

**NOTE:** There is not a final exam in this course. Dates to hand in final work TBA.

*This syllabus is our contract. Continued enrollment in this course indicates that you have read the syllabus and agree to its expectations. I may make changes to the syllabus or course schedule at any time to better suit the current situation. If I do so, I will promptly notify you via our class page.

**OUTCOMES SECTION:**

**THE CB Core Objectives:**
ENGL 2341 is part of the Language, Philosophy, and Culture Component Area of the Texas Core Curriculum. Courses in this area focus on how ideas, values, beliefs, and other aspects of culture express and affect human experience. This course also involves the exploration of ideas that foster aesthetic and intellectual creation in order to understand the human condition across cultures. All of the assessments and learning activities in this course are directly and indirectly intended to help each student develop mastery of the following Core Objectives from this Component Area.

CRITICAL THINKING (CT) is a habit of mind characterized by the comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion (adapted from AACU). This definition meets the THECB’s direction that critical thinking includes creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS (COM) include the development, expression, and revision of ideas through the effective use of language (writing, reading, speaking, and listening) across a variety of forums. Communication involves learning to work in many genres and styles while using different technologies, can result in mixing texts, data, and/or images, and develops through diverse experiences across the curriculum (adapted from AACU). This definition meets the THECB’s direction that communication skills include effective written, oral, and visual communication.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (SR) is a habit of mind characterized by an ethical relationship between a person and a larger society that involves intercultural competency, civic knowledge, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities. Such engagement includes individual participation in activities of personal and public concern that are both individually life enriching and socially beneficial to related communities. (adapted from AACU)

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY (PR) is a habit of mind characterized by an individual’s understanding and investment in learning as a lifelong process that involves solving problems, making decisions, and considering the consequences of alternative actions in a variety of complex social contexts. This definition meets the THECB’s direction that personal responsibility includes the ability to connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making.

**UTRGV Student Learning Outcomes**
The following four student learning outcomes will be met in this course in order to meet the Objectives of this Area.

**Critical Thinking (CT):** Students will demonstrate comprehension of a variety of written texts and other information sources by analyzing and evaluating the logic, validity, and relevance of the information in them to solve challenging problems, to arrive at well-reasoned conclusions, and to develop and explore new questions.

**Communication Skills (COM):** Students will demonstrate the ability to adapt their communications to a particular context, audience, and purpose using language, genre conventions, and sources appropriate to a specific discipline and/or communication task.

**Social Responsibility (SR):** Students will recognize and describe cultural diversity, the role of civic engagement in society, and the link between ethics and behavior.
**Personal Responsibility (PR):** Students will demonstrate an awareness of the range of human values and beliefs that they draw upon to connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making.

**Department Objectives for ENGL 2341**

In this course,

1. Students will extend their communication and critical thinking skills by developing well-reasoned, logical, and ethical arguments and by enlarging their ability to analyze texts, to synthesize ideas, and to think abstractly. (CT, COM, PR)
2. Students will be able to recognize literary texts as vehicles of value from an assortment of cultures: national, regional, ethnic, gendered, privileged, and oppressed. (CT, SR, PR)
3. Students will study a mixture of literary works from a variety of cultural backgrounds in order to advance their intercultural literacy. (SR, PR)
4. Students will gain an aesthetic understanding of the creative treatment of social and cultural debates as well as a growing awareness of their own relation to the social/cultural stakes inherent in these issues. (CT, SR, PR)
5. Students will develop thoughtful personal responses to the social issues covered in the course and will further develop an ethical sensibility to inform their own choices as ethical actors. (CT, COM, SR, PR)
6. Students will develop, evaluate, and deploy a variety of critical methodologies for understanding the human condition, including but not limited to historical, psychological, biographical, social, and feminist approaches. (CT, COM, PR, SR)
7. Students will demonstrate their ability to ethically cite from other texts in order to create a persuasive argument. (CT, COM, PR)

**UTRGV POLICY STATEMENTS**

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:**
If you have a documented disability (physical, psychological, learning, or other disability which affects your academic performance) and would like to receive academic accommodations, please inform your instructor and contact Student Accessibility Services to schedule an appointment to initiate services. It is recommended that you schedule an appointment with Student Accessibility Services before classes start. However, accommodations can be provided at any time. Brownsville Campus: Student Accessibility Services is located in Cortez Hall Room 129 and can be contacted by phone at (956) 882-7374 (Voice) or via email at accessibility@utrgv.edu. Edinburg Campus: Student Accessibility Services is located in 108 University Center and can be contacted by phone at (956) 665-7005 (Voice), (956) 665-3840 (Fax), or via email at accessibility@utrgv.edu.

**MANDATORY COURSE EVALUATION PERIOD:**
Students are required to complete an ONLINE evaluation of this course, accessed through your UTRGV account (http://my.utrgv.edu); you will be contacted through email with further instructions. Online evaluations will be available Nov. 18 – Dec. 9, 2015. Students who complete their evaluations will have priority access to their grades.

**SCHOLASTIC INTEGRITY:**
As members of a community dedicated to Honesty, Integrity and Respect, students are reminded that those who engage in scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and expulsion from the University. Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to: cheating, plagiarism, and collusion; submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person; taking an examination for another person; any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student; or the attempt to commit such acts. Since scholastic dishonesty harms the individual, all students and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced (Board of Regents Rules and Regulations and UTRGV Academic Integrity Guidelines). All scholastic dishonesty incidents will be reported to the Dean of Students.

**SEXUAL HARASSMENT, DISCRIMINATION, and VIOLENCE:**
In accordance with UT System regulations, your instructor is a “responsible employee” for reporting purposes under Title IX regulations and so must report any instance, occurring during a student's time in college, of sexual assault, stalking, dating
violence, domestic violence, or sexual harassment about which she/he becomes aware during this course through writing, discussion, or personal disclosure. More information can be found at www.utrgv.edu/equity, including confidential resources available on campus. The faculty and staff of UTRGV actively strive to provide a learning, working, and living environment that promotes personal integrity, civility, and mutual respect in an environment free from sexual misconduct and discrimination.

COURSE DROPS:
According to UTRGV policy, students may drop any class without penalty earning a grade of DR until the official drop date. Following that date, students must be assigned a letter grade and can no longer drop the class. Students considering dropping the class should be aware of the “3-peat rule” and the “6-drop” rule so they can recognize how dropped classes may affect their academic success. The 6-drop rule refers to Texas law that dictates that undergraduate students may not drop more than six courses during their undergraduate career. Courses dropped at other Texas public higher education institutions will count toward the six-course drop limit. The 3-peat rule refers to additional fees charged to students who take the same class for the third time.