ENGLISH 219
The Literature of American Ethnic Groups
Spring Semester 2016
West Los Angeles College
Section #8066

Dr. Katherine Boutry
Instructor Email: boutryk@wlac.edu (not for submitting assignments). It is better to private message me through our Etudes site. Be sure to mark your message "High Priority."

This is an accelerated 3-unit transferable class, UC: CSU.
Prerequisite: English 101 with a grade of "C" or better. You may be asked to show proof of having passed English 101.

Course Overview

Nobel laureate and African-American novelist Toni Morrison, writes that when teaching African-American literature, we search

among students – black students, white students—for a way to talk about these things, a vocabulary that allows them to talk about race in a manner that is not diminishing, demeaning, reductive, or ad hominem. Race is a very difficult thing to talk about, because the conversation frequently ends up being patronizing, guilt-ridden, hostile, or resentful. But for those interested in the study of literature and the writing of literature, it is something you have to confront and think about.

I would suggest we add “gender” and “ethnicity” to Morrison’s statement of the dancing around that goes on in the classroom when people talk about ethnicity, race, and/or gender. Because the lecture hall (even one online) is a public space in which we strive to present our “logical” and “unbiased” selves, I would like to encourage you to do some thinking about your own responses to the writers we read, and what aspects of your own backgrounds cause your intuitive reactions. For this unique experience we will share, we will have to be very upfront about “where we are coming from” and explore, rather than avoid, the politically-charged nature of the discussions.

We will not be satisfied with simply observing our unfiltered responses, however. I will continually challenge you to engage in “close readings” of texts to support your arguments. During this course you will develop and sharpen your ability to think, read, and write critically. Together, we will observe formal qualities in the works alongside of their historical context. No literature develops in a vacuum, nor is it read in one. The fact that we are studying “Native-American Literature,” “Latino
Literature, “African-American Literature” and “Asian-American Literature” as separate groupings of American texts indicates that we recognize shared characteristics and context among the writers. I’d like for us to question that most basic assumption and return to it throughout the course.

REQUIRED TEXTS:
(any editions of the following texts is fine):

Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*

Maxine Hong Kingston, *Woman Warrior*

Alexie Sherman, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*

Sandra Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street*


Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" (see *The West Guide*) or download for free online by title.

POETRY:
Langston Hughes, Alexie Sherman, Trethewey, Herrera, Silko, and additional poetry and readings posted on our Etudes shell.

Recommended, but not required:
Boutry, Hofmann, Norris, *The West Guide to Writing* (available in the bookstore or online at kendallhunt.com)

Our site is set up to generate interactive responses in the form of notes, marginalia, budding interpretations, and personal connections that can be polished into more analytical essays. Its object is to guide students to develop their different readings of a text, to move beyond subjective and experiential readings to create stronger, more communal "texts." Adding the collaborative element helps students become more aware of their own reading strategies and the personal and cultural agendas they bring to their reading, as well as develop new and more productive strategies of interpretation. Even on a strictly independent level, there is value in each student working at his/her individual pace and style (within reasonable limits), responding to text materials, Web links, and discussions.

Student Learning Outcomes

Part of responding thoughtfully to articles and to your peers is being culturally literate, aware and tolerant of differences, and willing to consider respectfully to viewpoints that differ from your own.

We will also develop your written communication skill set through writing papers,
quizzes, and essay exams. During the semester we will focus on paper writing strategies including structuring essays, introductions, thesis statements, use of evidence, and conclusion writing.

To make your writing persuasive, we will work on your research skills. Often the difference between a good argument and a weak one is the quality of evidence and research used.

Research
You will be asked to collect and organize research data. We will have a research orientation that will cover the university databases as well as how to evaluate sources and their reliability. During that module, you will find three sources from Proquest and Gale LRC for a research paper. We will also cover documenting those sources according to MLA style so that your sources are properly credited.

SLO’s in Practice:
At the end of the course, the successful student will be able to:
1. Discuss in writing how a writer’s cultural identity informs his or her writing.
2. Utilize the pertinent literary terminology to analyze and interpret soundly the techniques artists employ to convey the themes of their writings.

English 103 SLOs we will continue to practice in English 219:
Communicate thought in a clear, well-organized manner to persuade, inform and convey ideas;
Demonstrate continued development in writing college-level English prose; use appropriate MLA citations/works cited;
Respectfully engage with other cultures in an effort to understand them.
Read a variety of viewpoints on culturally relevant issues.

Technical Competence
Please carefully review the ETUDES system requirements located at: https://etudes-ng.fhda.edu/portal/site!/gateway/page/4243c7b4-9b68-45fc-0016-148ad08653aa. Make sure you have configured your computer correctly before the course starts.

Assignments will be word-processed.
Research for your essays will rely on Internet-based research.

Course Policies
**Any more than one week’s "absence" from logging-in to the course will have a significant impact on your final grade.

Dropping the Course and Exclusions
According to college policy, you may be excluded for not logging in the first week of school or for not following the Standards of Student Conduct (printed in the Schedule of Classes). If you drop the course, be sure to do so at the Admissions and Business Offices. Otherwise, the grade drops to a "D" or "F". Pay attention to drop dates in the Schedule of Classes.

Assignment Due Dates
Pay close attention to due dates for assignments. On due dates for essays, essays must be turned in online on our etudes site. I do not accept essays e-mailed to me, or left in my mailbox. I will not accept late assignments. There are no make-up quizzes or exams given, and assignments will not be reopened for any reason once an assignment is closed.
On a more positive note, throughout the semester, I encourage you to contact me with any questions you might have. Please use the Writing Lab tutors available on the first floor of the library or online or any other tutorial services available on campus (such as EOP&S, DSPS, etc.) when you are working on drafts of your essays. Tutors expect you to come with some writing done. On-line resources for working on and improving your writing include http://owl.english.purdue.edu. Your instructor does not CORRECT essays. English 219 students should be able to find their own errors. This means that students are responsible for proofreading their own papers. Unacceptable papers (for this level course) will be returned without a grade. Your instructor "evaluates" essays and makes suggestions for improvements in organization, use of evidence, critical thinking, and style. **Plagiarism is unacceptable and will result in a failing grade for the assignment and a permanent notation in your college file.**

Never commit plagiarism - you can also refer to this website re. plagiarism: http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/wts/plagiarism.html. **You must turn in your own, new work** (not a "modified" paper submitted for another class) and cite your sources appropriately, using MLA Style. You are expected to refer to The West Guide for details relating to in-text citations and Works Cited if you are not familiar with them. The West Guide provides tips for improving your writing and reviewing important rules such as grammar, punctuation, research, active and passive voice, tone, etc. Use as needed :)  

**Final Grade** is based on my evaluation of all written work (quizzes, essays, exams), as well as meaningful participation in the site discussion boards. Each essay assignment through the semester earns increasingly more points, based on the assumption that, over the semester and with practice, your writing/thinking/research will sharpen and improve. Research from credible sources and in-text citations, with correct MLA Style, are required of several writing assignments. Please note that I do not allow extra credit work. **All points count**, No student will pass this course who does not hand in all writing assignments.  

**Learning Disabilities:** If you have specific and documented physical, psychiatric, sensory, or learning disability(ies) and would benefit from accommodations, please let me know early in the semester so that we can maximize your learning experience in this course. You will need to provide written documentation from the DSPS Office about your learning disability(ies). Then, I will be legally able (and pleased!) to accommodate your needs.  

**Course Requirements and Expectations**

"Attendance" Online

There are no set times that you need to log in online, as long as all your work is completed and submitted by the due dates. Check the due dates very carefully, as sometimes the distinction between 11:59 on a Sunday night and 12:01 on a Monday morning can be confusing. There is no time that you have to be on campus; this is an online class. I expect you to read your syllabus and complete your assigned homework and reading without my having to remind you. Online participation, especially in
discussion, is worth 10% of your grade. In order to get the 10%, you must post to the discussion topic every week and also respond to one classmate’s post.

**Guidelines for Discussion**
Complete discussion forum entries usually consist of a well-rounded paragraph of at least five sentences. Discussion forum entries (including responses) should include at least one piece of evidence taken from the reading or another classmate’s post. Examples might include a quotation from another classmate’s post or a summary of the passage in the text. Please feel free to disagree with each other, but base those disagreements on the argument presented and the evidence at hand. Racist, sexist, or other hate language is not appropriate, no matter what someone says to you. If you attack someone in this forum, your posting will be deleted by the professor and you will be reprimanded. When in doubt about whether or not something is appropriate, don’t write it. If something you read here makes you angry, message the professor about it. If you need to write an angry response to something, write it offline and let it sit for a day or so while you cool down; then edit it to appropriate posting content and post. Please feel free to write your discussion forum entries in word and paste them in this forum so they can be grammar and spellchecked. As this is an English course, all discussion postings should be mostly free from grammar and spelling errors. Please check the forum once or twice a week.

**Essay Format**
All essays must be typed. Format is standard MLA: 12 point Times New Roman double-spaced, 1 inch margins. Other fonts will not be accepted. Your four essays will be submitted online. Essays without a Works Cited page (except Essay 1) will automatically have 10 points subtracted.

**Instructor Response Policy**
You can expect me to respond to your emails and Private Messages within 48 hours (it usually takes less than 24). It’s easier for me if you send your messages through the Private Messaging tool than if you email me.

**WEEKLY SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS**
Steady effort through the semester will help you succeed in this course.

**Weeks 1 and 2**
2/10-2/21

**CLOSE READING: THE BLUEST EYE, Part One (1-131)**

Or Toni Morrison’s BELOVED 1-156 (if you have already read The Bluest Eye with me in another class).
Go over Syllabus thoroughly.
Introduce yourself in the Discussion Board.
Read and watch Module: Week 1
Read Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*, 1-131

**Quiz #1 due online by 2/21.**

Please make a reading vocabulary list to be submitted every week for 20/100 or 1/5 points on quiz. Submission occurs online in the quiz.
Please watch video lecture #1 on *The Bluest Eye.*
Read Module: Week 2 including “Dick and Jane.”
Post on the Discussion Board about Morrison’s references to *Dick and Jane* in the novel. Why do you think she uses that for her chapter headings? (Please look it up if you have never heard of *Dick and Jane* children’s books.)

**Weeks 3 and 4**

**ANALYSIS: THE BLUEST EYE, Part Two.**

REQUIRED: Watch (available at Netflix or online-- see links in Modules):

"Imitation of Life" Claudette Colbert 1934. (ONLY the 1934 version is acceptable).

"The Littlest Rebel" clip with Shirley Temple and Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, 1935

Please watch video lecture #2 and #3 on *The Bluest Eye.*


Post on the Discussion Board about Shirley Temple. What is her significance to Morrison’s novel?

Please watch the **Clark Doll Experiment** and the **Kiri Davis video** in the module.

**Quiz #2 due online by March 6.**

**Weeks 5/6**

**LATINO LITERATURE**

Read: Sandra Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street*  
Latin Poerty in Module including Cisneros, Alvarez, Herrera

Post on the Discussion Board: Cisneros’ *The House on Mango Street*: How do children make sense of a world in which they have not yet learned the “rules”? How is it particularly effective to have a child’s perspective on culture? What advantages are gained for the reader in seeing events through a child’s eyes?  

OR:
Post on one of Juan Felipe Herrera’s beautiful and difficult poems like “Exiles” or “Blood on the Wheel.” What is your interpretation? Choose a passage that speaks to you and analyze it.

**Quiz #3 due 3/20**

**PAPER #1 due 3/20**

**Weeks 7/8**

**3/21 - 4/3**

**NATIVE-AMERICAN LITERATURE**

Read: Sherman Alexie, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian*

Esther Belin, “Bluesing the Brown Vibe”
“Rising Voices” Native-American poetry selections

Post on the Discussion Board. What recurrent themes do you see developing in Native American literature? How does a Young Adult perspective give you insights you might not get from an adult narrator?

**Quiz #4 due 4/3**

Optional assignment: Watch film “Smoke Signals” based on one of Sherman Alexie’s novels.

**Week 9**

**4/4 - 4/10**

Spring Break (nothing due online, but midterm exam opens)

**Week 10**

**4/11 - 4/17**

Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from a Birmingham Jail”
Langston Hughes and other Poetry

**MIDTERM EXAM due 4/17**

**Weeks 11/12**

**4/18 - 5/1**

Read Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior* and watch the Disney movie *Mulan* rent for $3.99 from Amazon:

[http://www.amazon.com/Mulan-Ming-Na/dp/B003QSMCK0/ref=sr_1_1?s=instant-video&ie=UTF8&qid=1455908107&sr=1-1&keywords=mulan](http://www.amazon.com/Mulan-Ming-Na/dp/B003QSMCK0/ref=sr_1_1?s=instant-video&ie=UTF8&qid=1455908107&sr=1-1&keywords=mulan)

Read the material under Modules.

**Quiz #5 due 5/1**
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