

# Rhodes College Digital Archives - DLynx

## ENGL 265-02, Special Topics: What is Ethnic Literature?, Fall 2014

Item Type	Syllabus
Authors	Dykema, Amanda
Publisher	Memphis, Tenn. : Rhodes College
Rights	Rhodes College owns the rights to the archival digital images in this collection. Objects are made available for educational use only and may not be used for any non-educational or commercial purpose. Approved educational uses include private research and scholarship, teaching, and student projects. Original copies of the programs are stored in the Rhodes College Archives. In all instances of use, acknowledgement must be given to Rhodes College Archives Digital Repository, Memphis, TN. For information regarding permission to use this image, please email the Archives at <a href="mailto:archives@rhodes.edu">archives@rhodes.edu</a>
Download date	2026-04-16 17:19:37
Link to Item	<a href="http://hdl.handle.net/10267/24339">http://hdl.handle.net/10267/24339</a>

## **ENGL265-02—Special Topics in Literature: What Is Ethnic Literature?**

**Professor Amanda Dykema**

**Fall 2014 – TR 9:30-10:45am—Clough 300**

**E-mail: [dykema@rhodes.edu](mailto:dykema@rhodes.edu)**

**Office: Palmer Hall 309B**

**Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday, 2-3pm; Thursday, 11am-12pm; & by appointment**

### **Required Texts & Materials:**

The following texts have been ordered at the Rhodes Bookstore and are also available online. Please purchase the editions ordered. Please also note that there will be additional important readings, all available to be downloaded at the Moodle site for this course ([elms.umd.edu](http://elms.umd.edu)).

Alexie, Sherman. *Flight* (2007). Grove/Black Cat. ISBN: 978-0802170378

Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987). Aunt Lute. ISBN: 978-1879960855.

Díaz, Junot. *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007). Riverhead. ISBN: 978-1594483295

Kingston, Maxine Hong. *Woman Warrior* (1975). Vintage. ISBN: 978-0679721888

Lahiri, Jhumpa. *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008). Vintage. ISBN: 978-0307278258

Silko, Leslie Marmon. *Ceremony* (1977). Penguin. ISBN: 978-0143104919

### **Course Objectives & Learning Outcomes**

This course will study the emergence of the category of “ethnic literature” in the United States—a vital, shifting, contested, incomplete, political, artistic site from which conceptions of literary expression are expanded and interrogated. To ask “What is ethnic literature?” presumes other questions: what is literature? What do we mean by the term “ethnic”? In this class, we will do our best to be mindful of these questions, analyzing these works for how they represent the cultures about which and within which they were written but also being careful not to assume that these works tell the entire story about a culture or ethnic experience in the United States.

Ultimately, this course will not attempt to cover the history of ethnic literature in the United States – this would be impossible in fifteen weeks. Instead, we will begin with the rise of ethnic literature as an object of study in the U.S. academy. Tracing the canon debates of the 1980s and 1990s and the creation of ethnic literature anthologies, we will examine the political and cultural contexts out of which Latino/a, Asian American, African American, and Native American texts were incorporated into the study of American Literature. We will analyze several exemplary early ethnic literary works, including Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera* and Maxine Hong Kingston’s *Woman Warrior*, to consider the formal and political qualities that made them so attractive for ethnic literary study. We will investigate why literary canons matter—how they index not only questions of taste and value, but of power—and consider the stakes of including or excluding a given text from a canon. Finally, we will read 21<sup>st</sup> century works like Jhumpa Lahiri’s *Unaccustomed Earth* and Junot Díaz’s *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, considering how contemporary writers formally and politically negotiate the canons of American literature and ethnic literature in light of the legacies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Under the Rhodes College Foundations curriculum, this course satisfies the F2 and F4 requirements. This means that our official learning outcomes include reading and interpreting literary texts and developing excellence in written communication. Thus, in more concrete terms, this course is designed to facilitate your practice of critical thinking, writing and reading to interpret texts, your skill in making arguments supported by textual evidence, and your familiarity with both the political histories that contextualize ethnic literature and various literary strategies U.S. ethnic writers employ in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

### **Course Policies & Requirements**

A college course is more than simply a set of assignments; it is an intellectual process, one which requires active engagement from beginning to end in order to achieve its intended results. The policies and expectations described below are formulated with this in mind.

*Papers.* The essays in this course are designed to allow you to develop your own readings of our texts and to practice close reading – the careful analysis of the how the details of a text’s language and form shape its meaning. You will write one shorter paper (approx. 3-4 pages), a close reading of a single passage, and one longer paper (approx. 6-7 pages), a literary analysis of a novel. For each essay, I will provide specific assignment sheets to explain the essays in greater detail. **All documents are due at the beginning of class on the date listed on the syllabus.** Unless alternate arrangements are made with me before the due date, late papers will lose one grade increment (ex. B to B- or C+ to C) per day.

*Revision Opportunities.* My teaching philosophy values revision opportunities – I prefer to offer comments on your writing during the writing process, while they can still be helpful to you, rather than after a final grade has been earned. Therefore, for each major assignment in this course, **papers will be due in two stages.** Both due dates are listed on the course calendar, and both versions are considered “final” drafts, in the sense that they must be finished and fulfill the requirements of the assignment. On the first version, you will receive thorough comments geared toward revision but no grade. The second, revised version will receive only a grade, no comments. Please note: the original version with my comments is required to be turned in along with the second version, so take care to keep track of it.

*Submitting work.* All out of class work for this course should be typed and submitted in **hard-copy form** (not email) unless you are otherwise instructed. Formal essays must use correct MLA format (title, page numbers, 1-inch margins, 11 or 12 point Times New Roman or Calibri font, etc.). All major assignments are integral to the goals of the course. Failure to complete any paper or test will result in a grade of F for the course.

*Grade Distribution.* Your grade in this course will be determined out of 1000 possible points.

Participation	100
Quizzes & Homework	100
Midterm	100
Paper 1 – Close Reading	200
Paper 2 – Literary Analysis	300
<u>Final Exam</u>	<u>200</u>
<b>Total:</b>	<b>1000</b>

(A: 930-1000, A-: 900-929, B+: 880-899, B: 830-879, B-: 800-829, C+: 780-799, C: 730-779, C-: 700-729, D+: 680-699, D: 630-679, D-: 600-629, F: 500 or below)

*Class Participation.* You are expected to come to class prepared for discussion, which means reading the assigned text carefully and marking significant pages/paragraphs before class so you can contribute to the discussion using specific textual evidence (quotes, references to specific page numbers, etc.). Please **bring your copy of the assigned text** to every class. If there is a reading assigned from Moodle, you should print it and bring it to class as well. In-class discussion may often include your general reaction to a text – always a good way to begin – but is ultimately meant to lead you to the ability to construct literary arguments that reflect the complexity of each assigned text. Participating and listening carefully to your classmates on a regular basis should help you strengthen your ability to develop and support an argument about a literary text, skills you will need to succeed on the papers and exams.

*Discussion Questions.* Twice during the semester, you will submit a discussion question that responds to the assigned reading. A thoughtful, well-crafted discussion question has no clear right answer and cannot be answered by basic factual or plot information. Discussion questions should aim to generate conversation and will generally require several sentences of setup. You should present the parameters of your question (give a sentence or so of context), ask the question, and point out one or two moments in the text that could inform discussion. In total, your prompt should be the length of a short paragraph. Remember to think thematically; in other words, avoid plot questions (“what will happen?”).

*Courtesy.* Please be respectful of everyone's opinions, presence, and person in this course. A primary purpose of this class is to give you the opportunity to practice developing interpretations of the texts, and while you are encouraged to offer differing ideas, you should do so in a thoughtful manner. Further, I am committed to creating an academic climate that is safe, respectful, and appreciative of all people, regardless of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic background, ability, religion, or any other aspect of one's identity. A climate of mutual respect allows us to ask difficult questions and to participate in honest discussions, even in the context of strong disagreement. Creating this kind of open, honest, and respectful climate is our mutual responsibility.

*Quizzes.* I will often give short quizzes as incentive for staying current on the reading. Most of these quizzes will be in class, but I may administer certain quizzes via Moodle. If so, these will be announced ahead of time and will go live at 5 p.m. the day before class.

*Attendance.* Please come to class on time. Regular attendance and class participation are essential for this course. In general, I do not differentiate between excused and unexcused absences. Each absence after the third class missed will lower your final course grade by 50 points (half a letter grade). Students with college-sanctioned extracurricular activities (athletics, mock trial, etc.) or religious observances that will require them to miss one or more classes during the semester should talk to me in advance of their anticipated absence. All such absences that are not approved in advance will adversely affect your grade.

*Technology.* **Turn off cell phones** and other electronic devices before class. I expect that computers will be used only for class-related work. Get in the habit of regularly checking your email, as I will send out announcements and assignments this way. Email is also the best way to contact me (though please give me up to 24 hours to respond). Depending on your question, I may recommend that we discuss it in person. Please also regularly consult our course space on Moodle at [www.moodle.rhodes.edu](http://www.moodle.rhodes.edu). Moodle will enable you to view the syllabus, access assignments and other course materials, and communicate with me and your classmates.

*Intellectual Honesty.* All work turned in for this course is to be completed in accordance with Rhodes' Honor Code; it must be your own work, produced exclusively for this course. Plagiarism is a violation of the integrity of the occupation of learning and a serious act of disrespect toward me as professor and toward your fellow students. "Plagiarism" means directly copying someone else's work, paraphrasing someone else's words or ideas without giving them credit, or having someone else do your work for you. (Because of this, students are advised against posting their work on the internet and advised to maintain drafts of their work to verify its originality.) Cases of suspected plagiarism will be referred to the Honor Council, and the student if convicted will receive a grade of F in the course in addition to sanctions assigned by the Council. Clear evidence of plagiarism (failure to use quotation marks around copied language, failure to adequately paraphrase, failure to cite the source of quoted/paraphrased/borrowed text and ideas) may likewise result in failure of the course, regardless of the Council hearing outcome. Carelessness in documenting sources, even if not intentional plagiarism, will be penalized as I deem appropriate. If you have any concerns that your actions might violate this course's academic integrity policies, speak with me early in the assignment for help and clarification.

*Special needs.* If you have a registered disability that will require accommodations, please see me within the first two weeks of class so we can arrange for the resources you need. If you have a disability and have not yet registered with the Office of Student Disability Services, you should do so immediately (901-843-3885, <http://www.rhodes.edu/disabilityservices/>)

## Course Calendar

Readings should be completed by the day on which they are listed. This calendar may be subject to change during the course; all changes will be announced in class and via Moodle. Readings marked (M) can be accessed on Moodle at moodle.rhodes.edu.

### AUGUST

**Thurs 28** Class Introduction/Syllabus Overview  
What is “canonical”?

### SEPTEMBER

**Tues 2** **Literary Study—What, Why, How**  
Lahiri, “Unaccustomed Earth” pp. 3-59 (M)

**Thurs 4** “Unaccustomed Earth” continued  
Writing assignment due

**Tues 9** **Canons and Canonicity**  
Bloom, *Closing of the American Mind* excerpt (M)  
Lauter, “Reconstructing American Literature” (M)

**Thurs 11** Lorde, “The Master’s Tools” (M)  
Gates, pp. 101-105 of “The Master’s Pieces” (M)  
Moraga, Preface to *This Bridge Called My Back* (M)

**Tues 16** Bona & Maini—“Multiethnic Literature and the Canon Debates” (M)

**Thurs 18** **Asian American Literature**  
Hong Kingston, *Woman Warrior*, “No Name Woman” pp. 3-16  
Chin, *Aiiieeee!* Preface pp. xi-xxii (M)

**Tues 23** *Woman Warrior*, “Shaman” pp. 57-109  
Yamada, “Invisibility is an Unnatural Disaster” and “Asian Pacific American Women and Feminism” from *This Bridge* (M)

**Thurs 25** *Woman Warrior*, “A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe” pp. 164-209

**Tues 30** **Native American Literature**  
Silko, *Ceremony* pp. 1-45  
Cameron, “Gee, You Don’t Seem...” from *This Bridge* (M)

### OCTOBER

**Thurs 2** *Ceremony* pp. 45-104

**Tues 7** *Ceremony* pp. 104-198

**Thurs 9** **Close Reading Paper Due Date 1**  
*Ceremony* discussion continued

**Tues 14** *Ceremony* 199-244

**Thurs 16** **Midterm Exam**

- Tues 21**     **FALL BREAK – No Class**
- Thurs 23**     **Close Reading Paper Due Date 2**  
**Chicano/a/Latino/a American Literature**  
 Moraga, *This Bridge* intros and “La Guerra” (M)
- Tues 28**     Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera* pp. 17-35
- Thurs 30**     *Borderlands/La Frontera* pp. 75-86, 99-113

**NOVEMBER**

- Tues 4**     **Contemporary Ethnic Literature – Pasts, Presents, Futures**  
 Revisit “Unaccustomed Earth”
- Thurs 6**     Lahiri “Once in a Lifetime,” “Year’s End,” “Going Ashore” pp. 223-333
- Tues 11**     Díaz, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* pp. 1-75
- Thurs 13**     *Oscar Wao* pp. 77-210
- Tues 18**     *Oscar Wao* pp. 211-307
- Thurs 20**     *Oscar Wao* pp. 311-335  
 Homework: Two-page draft of Literary Analysis due in office hours conference
- Tues 25**     **Literary Analysis Paper Due Date #1**  
*Oscar Wao* discussion
- Thurs 27**     **THANKSGIVING BREAK – No Class**

**DECEMBER**

- Tues 2**     Alexie, *Flight* pp. 1-106
- Thurs 4**     Alexie, *Flight* pp. 107-181
- Tues 9**     **Literary Analysis Paper Due Date #2**  
*Flight* discussion

**FINAL EXAM: 8:30a.m. Friday, December 12**