Multicultural U.S. Literature

The history of the United States is intertwined with the scientific understanding of culture and its relationship to race. We will be thinking about how (or if) culture split away from the concept of race, and how the legacy of that early pairing has persisted.

This context offers an exciting opportunity for the study of literature. First of all, fiction often hinges upon character; an understanding of the race/culture debate will help us to read literature in its proper perspective. Secondly, since multicultural authors are responding to the pressures of scientific quantification and societal prejudice, we will consider how literary form can be used to bring about tolerance and understanding between races. Finally, given the deployment of literary realism for nationalistic purposes, we will have to consider the politics of writing in one’s own voice and the move to less mimetic forms in the 20th century.

The reading assignments for this class are demanding. During the semester, we will read several famous works from the multicultural canon in full. Through a series of assignments, I will ask you to develop your own position on multiculturalism. What is its importance? What should be done about it in the classroom? You will address these questions in three response papers and in a five-minute bibliographic presentation (with a handout) about a multicultural text you would teach in one of your classes.

Course Grade

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes and spot checks</td>
<td>20% (total)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Response papers</td>
<td>60% (20% each)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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Missed quizzes, late papers, or an absence on presentation day earn a grade of zero.

Required Texts

We will read the following books. The remaining assignments are excerpts or short stories. Please bring the reading assignment to class with you; I will conduct graded spot checks.

- Baldwin, James. *Another Country*.
- Hopkins, Pauline. *Of One Blood*.
- Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*.
- Silko, Leslie Marmon. *Ceremony*.
- Stowe, Harriet Beecher. *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*.
- Wong, Jade Snow. *Fifth Chinese Daughter*.

Course Standards

In order for this classroom community to function, all members must adhere to these rules:

- **Attendance** – On-time attendance is a strict requirement of the course. Students with more than two absences automatically fail. There is no such thing as “excused absences” and doctor’s notes are not necessary. Students who miss less than 20 minutes of class (arrive late, take a break, or leave early) are recorded as late, the equivalent of one-third of an absence. Missing more than 20 minutes counts as an absence.

- **Decorum** – Please limit your comments and questions to the material at hand, helping to progress the discussion without distracting the class from it. You should not hold side conversations. All electronic devices must be turned off (silenced is not sufficient); this includes phones, pagers, games, laptops, handhelds, players or recorders. You must pay attention; eating and sleeping are not permitted. Visitors need advance approval.

- **Honesty** – Cheating and plagiarism are not tolerated and may result in punishment that includes failure of the course. By handing in assignments, quizzes, or exams, you attest that they are your own original work. You may not use notes or other materials during quizzes or exams. Please be advised that a person who allows someone to cheat (by allowing someone to see a test paper or communicating test questions, for instance) is just as guilty as the person who does the cheating and will be equally punished.

- **Originality** – By handing in work for this class (assignments, quizzes, exams, or other projects) you attest that they are your own original effort. The work you hand in must never have been handed in to fulfill the requirements of another class.

- **Plagiarism** – Plagiarism is a serious offense that at the least will be punished by failure of the course. To best combat plagiarism, you should close all source materials when writing. In addition, you must cite all
sources outside of your own experience, even when you use your own words. You must never use someone else’s exact words in your own document unless you use quote marks and an appropriate citation system.

**Tentative Assignment Schedule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tr>
<td>10/21</td>
<td>Introduction and Harriet Beecher Stowe, <em>Uncle Tom’s Cabin</em>.</td>
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| 10/28 | Stowe, continued.  
Select presentation topics on Oct. 29. |
Response paper 1 due Nov. 11. |
| 11/18 | Hopkins, Chapters 8-end.  
Response paper 2 due Dec. 9. |
| 11/25 | James Baldwin, *Another Country*, Book 1 (i.e., Chapters 1-3).  
Response paper 2 due Dec. 9. |
| 12/2  | Baldwin, Book 2.  
Response paper 3 due Jan. 27. |
| 12/9  | Baldwin, Book 3.  
Response paper 3 due Jan. 27. |
Response paper 3 due Jan. 27. |
| 1/6   | Wong, Chapters 14-end.  
Response paper 3 due Jan. 27. |
| 1/20  | Silko, pp. 132-end.  
Response paper 3 due Jan. 27. |
Response paper 3 due Jan. 27. |
| 2/3   | Morrison, pp. 68-174. |
| 2/10  | Morrison, pp. 178-end. |