

# LITERATURES AND CULTURES OF THE UNITED STATES

Spring 2010

ENGL2220, CRN 12707

4 credit hours

MW 12:00 – 1:50

Brown 3030

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. . . and by appointment

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## READINGS:

*Flight*, by Sherman Alexie

*Bless Me, Ultima*, by Rudolfo Anaya

*The Woman Warrior*, by Maxine Hong Kingston

*Devil in a Blue Dress*, by Walter Mosley

*No-No Boy*, by John Okada

*Ceremony*, by Leslie Marmon Silko

*Twilight--Los Angeles, 1992*, by Anna Deavere Smith

*La Maravilla*, Alfredo V́ea, Jr.

## CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

Through study of literary works (and, when possible, other artistic achievements or cultural artifacts) by members of the varied cultures which comprise the United States of America, this course considers the perspectives and sustaining values of these cultural groups and considers the challenges, problems, and opportunities of a pluralistic American society. This course satisfies one (1) General Education requirement in Area III: The United States: Cultures And Issues

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS & GRADING:

**Short response papers (at least 2 full pages, typed) to each novel we read** **20%**

Due on the first day of discussion for each novel.

**Interpretive paper (4 pp) on one of the films or novels covered in class** **25%**

**Pop Quizzes, Preparedness, and Participation** **15%**

There will be five (5) unscheduled quizzes given over the course of the semester. They will examine you on both the readings and the lectures. Quizzes cannot be made up.

**Discussion Facilitation (everybody must do at least one)** **10%**

You will come to class on your assigned day prepared to lead off discussion by 1) providing a bit of historical context for the text in question, 2) setting forth your own initial interpretation of a section of the reading, and 3) engaging the rest of us with some questions for us to chew over, discuss, and use as the basis for further exploration. No one is exempt from this requirement.

**Final Exam** **30%**

## THE FINE PRINT:

Regular attendance is expected at every class session, since there will be fascinating and informative interpretations available nowhere else (i.e., no “lecture notes” beyond those you take yourself). Exam questions will also derive chiefly from the lectures, screenings, and discussions. It should be clear that the more you show up, the more you will “get” out of this class. Each absence beyond 3 will result in the lowering of one’s final grade by 3 points. All written work for this course must be typed or word processed, and I won’t be accepting papers in any other form. They must be double-spaced, printed in 12 pt. Times-Roman or similar typeface, with one-inch

margins and a snappy, makes-me-want-to-read-more title. Papers will lose 3 points for every calendar day late. You need to complete all assigned work in order to receive a passing grade.

All work submitted in this course must be your own and must be written exclusively for this course. The use of sources needs to be properly documented, using the standard MLA format. You are responsible for making yourself aware of and understanding the policies and procedures in the Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs that pertain to Academic Honesty. These policies include cheating, fabrication, falsification and forgery, multiple submission, plagiarism, complicity and computer misuse. [The policies can be found at [www.wmich.edu/catalog](http://www.wmich.edu/catalog) under Academic Policies, Student Rights and Responsibilities.] If there is reason to believe you have been involved in academic dishonesty, you will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. You will be given the opportunity to review the charge(s). If you believe you are not responsible, you will have the opportunity for a hearing. You should consult with me if you are uncertain about an issue of academic honesty prior to the submission of an assignment or test.

Note: the only email address that should be used for communication between WMU students and WMU faculty and staff is the email address associated with a BroncoNet ID. This email address typically takes the form <firstname.middleinitial.lastname@wmich.edu>. You can access this email account or get instructions for obtaining a BroncoNet ID at [GoWMU.wmich.edu](http://GoWMU.wmich.edu).

### READING ASSIGNMENTS & DUE DATES

|               |      |  |
|---------------|------|--|
| Week 1        | 1/12 | <b>INTRODUCTIONS</b>   |
|               | 1/14 | <b>LECTURE/DISCUSSION:</b> “What it means to be in and of the American West, and why”  |
| Week 2        | 1/19 | Anaya, <i>Bless Me, Ultima</i>   |
|               | 1/21 | Anaya, <i>Bless Me, Ultima</i> (cont’d)  |
| Week 3        | 1/26 | Mosley, <i>Devil in a Blue Dress</i>   |
|               | 1/28 | <b>No Class -- research day</b>  |
| Week 4        | 2/2  | Film: “El Norte”   |
|               | 2/4  | Film: “El Norte” (cont’d); discussion  |
| Week 5        | 2/9  | Silko, <i>Ceremony</i>   |
|               | 2/11 | Silko, <i>Ceremony</i> (cont’d)  |
| Week 6        | 2/16 | Anaya, Mosley, Silko / catch-up day  |
|               | 2/18 | Okada, <i>No-No Boy</i> .  |
| Week 7        | 2/23 | Okada, <i>No-No Boy</i> (cont’d)   |
|               | 2/25 | TBA  |
| Spring Recess |      |  |
| Week 8        | 3/9  | Film: “The Joy-Luck Club”  |
|               | 3/11 | Film: “The Joy-Luck Club” (cont’d); discussion   |
| Week 9        | 3/16 | Kingston, <i>The Woman Warrior</i>   |
|               | 3/18 | Kingston, <i>The Woman Warrior</i> (cont’d)  |
| Week 10       | 3/23 | Film: “Lone Star”  |
|               | 3/25 | Film: “Lone Star” (cont’d); discussion   |
| Week 11       | 3/30 | Véa, <i>La Maravilla</i>   |
|               | 4/1  | Véa, <i>La Maravilla</i> (cont’d)  |
| Week 12       | 4/6  | Film: “Incident at Oglala”   |
|               | 4/8  | Film: “Incident at Oglala” (cont’d); discussion  |
| Week 13       | 4/13 | Alexie, <i>Flight</i>  |
|               | 4/15 | Alexie, <i>Flight</i> (cont’d)   |
| Week 14       | 4/20 | Smith, <i>Twilight--Los Angeles, 1992</i>  |
|               | 4/22 | Smith, <i>Twilight--Los Angeles, 1992</i> (cont’d); conclusions  |
|               | 4/19 | <b>FINAL EXAM:</b> This will be an electronic final exam, which I will distribute either via email or e-Learning--details to follow. It will be due <b>no later than 4:45 p.m. on Wednesday, 4/28.</b> |