

Course Syllabus - Spring 2000  
**ENGLISH 5307:1**  
**Seminar - Studies and Research Techniques in American Literature:  
Southwestern Literature**

Dr. Barney Nelson  
Morelock 112  
915-837-8154  
9-12, 1-3  
bnelson@sulross.edu

Office:

Office Hours: TTh: 9-11, 1:30-3:30; W:

Or by Appointment

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**Required Texts:**

Dunaway, David King, ed. **WRITING THE SOUTHWEST** (Plume, 1995)  
McCarthy, Cormac. **THE CROSSING** (Vintage, 1995)  
Ellis, Reuben J. **BEYOND BORDERS: THE SELECTED ESSAYS OF MARY AUSTIN**  
(U of S. Illinois UP, 1996)  
Nabhan, Gary. **GATHERING THE DESERT** (U of Arizona P, 1997)  
Silko, Leslie Marmon. **STORYTELLER** (Arcade, 1981)  
Martin, Allana. **DEATH OF A HEALING WOMAN** (St. Martins, 1996)  
Abbey, Edward. **THE JOURNEY HOME: SOME WORDS IN DEFENSE OF THE  
AMERICAN WEST** (Dutton, 1991)  
Cabeza de Baca, Fabiola. **WE FED THEM CACTUS** (U of New Mexico P, 1994)  
\*Plus one book selected from a list provided.

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**Course Objectives:**

- # become familiar with the work of Southwestern writers
- # become familiar with literary theory and criticism which is especially illuminating to Southwestern Literature: regionalism, ecocriticism, marxist criticism, Orientalism, etc.
- # become familiar with various genres of Southwestern Literature: divided narrative, ethnography, historical novel, natural history, biography, autobiography, autoethnography, folklore, storytelling.
- # become familiar with the various literary schools which have influenced Southwestern Literature: Regionalism, Local Color School, New Historicism, New West Writers, etc.
- # become familiar with various political issues connected to and influenced by Southwestern writers

**Assignments and Grading**

**30% Genre Paper** - (Due 4-15) From a list provided, students will choose a Southwestern book which exemplifies one of the more unique Southwestern genres. Using the book as an example they will do further research on that genre, producing a research paper which illuminates both the genre and the book as Southwestern literature. Paper should be 10 pages, typed, with MLA style documentation.

**30% Structured Response Papers** - (eight due as noted) In lieu of exams, students will respond

to the following questions after reading each assigned book. Response papers should consist of proper MLA bibliographic information at the top, two pages, typed, double-spaced. Papers should be constructed in formal essay style with well-developed paragraphs.

- \$ **Austin (1-22):** Discuss the various important characteristics of Southwestern Literature which Austin lists in the assigned and on reserve essays (see assignment handout).
- \$ **de Baca (1-23):** Some critics like to denigrate writers who romanticize their history and location. What are your feelings about romanticizing history and place? Do you feel de Baca is romanticizing the Hispanic ranchers of the Llano Estacado? Justify your answer with examples from the text.
- \$ **Silko (2-12):** Bill Kittredge and Wallace Stegner have encouraged western writers to seek the diverse Atruth@ about the West (like New Historicism). Although Silko is attempting to define storytelling and its importance to her own culture, she is also reinventing it to suit modern listeners/readers. Discuss some of the ways Silko Abreaks the rules@ of traditional Native American storytellingBor at least as those rules have been defined by Hollywood and writers or scholars from outside the culture.
- \$ **Nabhan (2-12):** Sometimes anthropologists and writers are criticized for their condescension or patronization of Aother@ cultures when they Astudy@ or Arepresent@ them to the rest of Aus.@ What is your opinion about this? Also, do you feel that Nabhan is guilty of Orientalizing the people he uses as sources in his ethnobotany? Justify your answer with examples from the text.
- \$ **Abbey (2-13):** (Also read p. 1-15 in the Anthology) One new genre which Southwestern literature may be inventing, and was probably influenced by the oral storytellers, is the linked story or braided narrative or divided narrative. This genre seems at first glance to be a collection of loosely related or unrelated essays, but on closer inspection seems to have a larger, over-arching cohesive meaning. Does Abbey=s book fit this genre? Justify your answer with examples from the text.
- \$ **McCarthy (3-25):** The theme of home vs. journey or Alighting out for the last frontier@ seems to add important tension to this novel. Discuss the various viewpoints that McCarthy=s characters seem to have about home. Use at least three characters.
- \$ **Martin (3-25):** Would you define Martin=s novel as from the Alocal color school@ or as Aregional literature@? Use examples from the text to support your answer.
- \$ **Anthology (3-26):** Pick one writer who exemplifies the best of Southwestern writing and explain why. Then pick one writer who exemplifies the worst of Southwestern writing and explain why.

**25% Oral Presentation** - (Due 4-16 or date changed to 4-22?) Students will prepare a PowerPoint assisted oral presentation over their research topic to share with the class. Presentations should be 15-20 minutes in length.

**15% Class Participation** - Students will be expected to participate in class discussions, contribute short assignments, film responses, and attend classes regularly and on time.

### **Tentative Schedule - Week-end Graduate Southwestern Literature Class**

- 1-15 - 1:00-1:20 - Dispersal of syllabus (pick genre, change April date?)
- 1-22 - 9:00 **Austin response paper due**, characteristics of SW lit, symbolism  
 9:30 local color/regionalism, sense of place, vernacular, ecocriticism, c/c photos,  
 10:00 Austin film & response, TTW reading & response  
 10:30 (break), SW drama  
 11:00 group work on *The Moors*  
 11:30 SW poetry, write a SW poem  
 1:00 Austin library assignment (meet in library after lunch)  
 3:00 (return to classroom) discuss findings  
 3:30 Desert is No Lady VRT 2334  
 4:00 discuss film, share poems  
 4:30 discuss characteristics of SW poetry
- 1-23 - 8:00 **Cabeza de Baca response due**, discuss SW memoir  
 8:30 romanticism, women=s art, marxist criticism  
     9:00 ethnography, autoethnography, braided/linked/divided narrative (+ Alexie)  
 9:30 dialect, Hispanic stereotypes in lit  
 10:00 Cross Cultural Communication film VRT 1720  
 10:30 (break)  
 11:00 rural schools, VRT 610 AOne Room School@  
 11:30 New Historicism and New West, breaking rules, telling the truth
- 2-12 - 9:00 **Silko and Nabhan response due**, discuss New West/Historicism, breaking rules  
     9:30 Silko film, tape on mixed bloods,  
 10:00 write down old family story, recipe, fairy tale as poetry, discuss Silko=s poems  
 10:30 (break)  
 11:00 nonlinear, nonhierarchy, NA culture film VRT 1803 and response  
 1:00 discuss Nabhan and ethnobotany  
 1:30 discuss Orientalism, wild/domestic, savage/noble savage, cultural appropriation,  
     intellectual property rights  
 2:00 Nabhan film and response  
 2:30 workshop tape  
 3:00 Using handouts from field guides, compose an Aethnobotanic@ SW poem  
 3:30 (break)  
 4:00 share poetry
- 2-13 - 8:00 **Abbey response due** (also read pages 1-15 in Anthology), discuss Abbey  
 8:30 discuss braided narrative  
     9:00 SW humor, coyote, desert rat, taped reading  
 10:00 Abbey film and response  
 11:00 border crossing as symbol, journey, travel/adventure/home
- 3-25 - 9:00 **McCarthy and Martin response due**  
 9:30 maps, border symbolism, jeremiad, clip from *All the Pretty Horses* tape SRC166#9  
 10:00 wolf film and response, lighting out for the territories/home, violence

- 10:30 Brad Pitt reading wolf section and response, existentialism, nihilism  
11:00 Archives project scheduled (depending on renovation?)  
1:00 share archives projects  
2:00 discuss Martin  
2:30 discuss Afoil@ character development  
3:00 Martin visit? Or phone call?  
3:30 film AEI Polvo@?
- 3-26 - 8:00 **Anthology response due**, discuss favorites  
8:30 Contemporary NA poets, dysfunctional families  
9:00 music and rhythm in SW lit, Harjo clip  
9:30 Hispanic and African American: Anaya tape and film clip, Chavez, tape, Rios, and McMillan  
10:00 Nichols (clip from Milagro Bean Field War, irrigation, and tape)  
10:30 Steiner and Kingsolver, mediators for ethnographic societies?  
11:00 Hillerman, video clip, detective novels and sense of place  
11:30 Waters, tape
- 4-15 - 9:00 **genre paper due**, general discussion  
9:30 oral presentations
- 4-16 - 8:00 oral presentations