

Literatures of the American Southwest

ENGL 3390.001 Spring 2010

Tuesday and Thursday, 12:30-1:50 p.m.

English Building Room ????

Dr. Sara Spurgeon

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Office Hours: Thursday 10:00-noon

Class Webpage: <http://www.faculty.english.ttu.edu/spurgeon>

Course Overview and Purpose

Prerequisites: 6 hours of 2000 level English. This course fulfills the Multicultural requirement for TTU's Core Curriculum and *requires extensive reading and writing*. It introduces students to a variety of texts from the region currently referred to as the American Southwest. We will explore several distinctive subcultures of the United States through traditional and contemporary Native American fiction, early and recent Anglo adventure writing, Chicana short fiction, and classic Southwestern nature writing. What common threads run through these works? Where do the visions and voices of authors collide or overlap? How is the sense of this region imagined across cultures, histories, and into a globalized future? We will attempt to answer these questions through class discussions, 4 close reading papers, 2 précis, and a formal analysis essay.

Required texts:

Luci Tapahonso, *Sáanii Dahataal: The Women are Singing* (1993)

Charles Lummis, *A Tramp Across the Continent* (1892)

Mary Hunter Austin, *Stories from the Country of Lost Borders* (1903)

Cormac McCarthy, *All the Pretty Horses* (1992)

Ana Castillo, *The Guardians* (2007)

Edward Abbey, *Desert Solitaire* (1968)

Joy Harjo, *How We Became Human* (2002)

Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony* (1977)

Juan Felipe Herrera, *Border-Crosser with a Lamborghini Dream* (1999)

- All texts are available from the TTU Bookstore in the basement of the Student Union Building.

Learning Outcomes and Methods of Assessment

1. Students successfully completing this course will be able to identify leading regional authors, important texts, historical developments in the field of Southwestern American literature, and possess an awareness and knowledge of cultural differences within the many subcultures of the Southwestern US and the literatures they have produced. The primary methods of assessment for this learning outcome will be a thoroughly researched *formal Analysis Essay* (8-10 pgs, *not* including the required Annotated Bibliography page) based on the student's choice of a series of essay prompts. This essay should have a strong, concise thesis, and *no plot summary whatsoever*. Assume your audience is made

up of interested scholars familiar with the text you're examining. You must have *at least three scholarly sources* outside our class reading list in an annotated bibliography in MLA format ([How to Prepare an Annotated Bibliography](#)). You will also prepare a **formal First Draft** of this Essay which must include a thesis statement, a close reading of one scene, and a short summary of two scholarly sources. A more detailed assignment sheet for the essay will be posted on the course webpage.

2. Students successfully completing this course will be able to discuss current trends and controversies within the field of Southwestern American literature. The primary method of assessment for this learning outcome will be **two 3-5 page Précis** (a formal summary of the main points of an argument or theory) outlining a scholarly article related one of the authors or texts from the first two units of the class. A scholarly text may be an essay from an academic journal or a chapter from a book, and a more detailed assignment sheet will be posted on the course webpage.
3. Students successfully completing this course will be able to perform careful and detailed analysis of a work of literature and develop a clear and well-supported thesis. The primary method of assessment for this learning outcome will be **4 Close Reading Papers** (2-3 pages *not* including Works Cited), each focused on a specific passage or scene not already discussed in class. Each Close Reading Paper must include a Works Cited Page in MLA style.

4. Mid-Term and Final Exam

These will be cumulative, consisting mainly of identification, T/F, fill in the blank, and short answer. You will be expected to know the following basic information about each text:

- Title, author, year of publication
- Names of main characters and their relationships to each other for novels and short stories
- Major plot points
- Major themes, ideas, and arguments (especially for poetry and non-fiction)

In addition, the short answer sections may ask you to make connections between texts, draw insights from authors' lives, talk about the role of history, tradition, regionalism, etc.

***HINT**—As you read each text, make notes on the above information. Even though you won't be able to look at your notes when you take your exams, the act of writing the information down will help you remember it.

4 Close Reading Papers (5 pts. each = 20)	90-100 = A
2 Précis (5 pts. each = 10)	80-89 = B
First Draft of Analysis Essay (10 points)	70-79 = C
<u>Analysis Essay (60 pts)</u>	60-69 = D
100 possible points	<59 = F

Students graduating from TTU should be able to: demonstrate awareness and knowledge of distinctive cultures or sub-cultures – including but not limited to – ethnicity, gender, class, political systems, religions, languages, or human geography.

Class Policies

- *Attendance* - Mandatory. If you miss more than six classes, you will lose one point per absence, beginning on the first day of class.
- *Participation* - Mandatory. This class will consist of both lectures and class discussions. This will require you to have done all readings for the day *before* you come to class. I will call periodically on everyone in the class. If too many people are sitting quietly while only a few carry on class discussions, or if too many people are coming to class without doing the readings, I will switch to standard lecture format with weekly quizzes. I will post discussion questions for each reading on the class website. **You must bring the text we are discussing to class every day.** Students are expected to assist in maintaining a classroom environment that is conducive to learning. In order to assure that all students have the opportunity to gain from time spent in class, unless otherwise approved by the instructor, students are prohibited from engaging in any form of distraction. Inappropriate behavior in the classroom may result in a directive to leave class.
- *Plagiarism* - This means submitting writing as your own that was actually done by someone else. Whenever you take words directly from another text, they **MUST** be in quotations and cited, no exceptions. Even a small amount of plagiarized material in your essay will result in a zero on the assignment, possibly an F for the class, and/or expulsion from the University.
- *Due dates* - All assignments are due in class on the dates indicated. If you speak with me in advance, you may receive a one week extension without penalty on one Close Reading Paper or one Précis, but not both. If you do not speak with me in advance, grades will drop by 1 point for each weekday past the due date. **DO NOT** wait until the night before an assignment is due to write, type, or print it. **ALWAYS** save your work on a back-up disc. Excuses like “my computer crashed” or “my printer isn’t working” will be met with sympathy, but you’ll still lose 1 point per day.
- *Accommodation for disabilities* - Any student who because of a disability may require special arrangements in order to meet course requirements should contact me as soon as possible to make necessary accommodations.
- *Research* – While I can direct you to related journals, books, anthologies, etc., for help researching specific topics, please contact **Donell Callender**, *Humanities Librarian* and liaison for English, at donell.callender@ttu.edu, 742-1964.

SEMESTER OUTLINE

UNIT ONE: Defining the Region

Intro from Writing the Southwest

Luci Tapahonso, *Sáanii Dahataal: The Women are Singing* (1993)

Charles Lummis, *A Tramp Across the Continent* (1892)

Mary Hunter Austin, *Stories from the Country of Lost Borders* (1903)

UNIT TWO: Making and Breaking the Myths

Susan Kollin's "Genre and the Geographies of Violence: Cormac McCarthy and the Contemporary Western." *Contemporary Literature*, vol. 42, no. 3 (Autumn, 2001), pp. 557-588. (Available on JSTOR)
Cormac McCarthy, *All the Pretty Horses* (1992)
Ana Castillo, *The Guardians* (2007)

UNIT THREE: The Landscape of Home

N. Scott Momaday's "An American Land Ethic" from *Man Made of Words*
Edward Abbey, *Desert Solitaire* (1968)
Joy Harjo, *How We Became Human* (2002)

UNIT FOUR: Back to the future(s)

Edith Swan's "Laguna Prototypes of Manhood in *Ceremony*." MELUS, 1991-1992, Spring vol. 17, no. 1, pp. 39-61 available on EBSCOhost in full text.
Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony* (1977)
Juan Felipe Herrera, *Border-Crosser with a Lamborghini Dream* (1999)

Semester Calendar

UNIT ONE—Defining the Region

- Th 1/14 Intro to Southwestern Literature. Listen to Taphonso radio documentary. For Tu read Introduction from *Writing The Southwest* and selected poems from Luci Taphonso's *Sáanii Dahataal: The Women are Singing* (1993)
- Tu 1/19 **Reading Quiz 1.** Close Readings and Class discussion Southwestern Literature and Taphonso. For Th choose one Taphonso poem and be prepared to do a close reading in class.
- Th 1/21 Taphonso's poetry. For Tu begin reading Charles Lummis' *Tramp Across the Continent*.
- Tu 1/26 Lummis
Th 1/28 Lummis close reading in class
- Tu 2/2 Austin
Th 2/4 Austin close reading in class
- Tu 2/9 Austin
Th 2/11 **Annotated Bibliography due today**
- Tu 2/16 **SPRING BREAK**
Th 2/18 **SPRING BREAK** **Essay 1 due Tuesday**

UNIT TWO—Making and Breaking the Myths

- Tu 2/23 **Essay 1 due today.** For Th begin reading Cormac McCarthy's *All the Pretty Horses*.
- Th 2/25 McCarthy

Tu 3/3	McCarthy.	
Th 3/4	Reading Quiz 2.	Kollin and McCarthy
Tu 3/9	Free Day—no class, study for Mid-Term	
Th 3/11	MID-TERM EXAM	For Tu begin Ana Castillo's <i>The Guardians</i> .
Tu 3/16	Castillo	
Th 3/18	Castillo	
Tu 3/23	Castillo.	For Th read N. Scott Momaday's essay "An American Land Ethic."
Th 3/25	Reading Quiz 3.	Momaday. For Tu begin reading selections from Edward Abbey's memoir <i>Desert Solitaire</i> .
Tu 3/30	Abbey	
Th 4/1	Abbey	
Tu 4/6	Abbey	Close reading in class.
Th 4/8	Silko	
Tu 4/13	Silko	
Th 4/15	Reading Quiz 4	Swan and Silko
Tu 4/20	Silko	
Th 4/22	Herrera	
Tu 4/26	Herrera	
Th 4/29	Annotated Bibliography due today	
Tu 5/4	LAST DAY OF CLASSES	Essay 2 due today
Sa 5/8	10:30-1:00 p.m.	FINAL EXAM (graded Bibliography and Essay 2 returned)