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ENG 3705-001: Multicultural American Literature

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Multicultural American Literature
English 3705—Spring, 2005

Instructor: Tim Engles
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Office: Coleman 3831
 Course listserv: 3705spg@eiu.edu
 Office hours: 3:30-4:30 Tues/Thurs,
 and by appointment

Required texts:

Gordon M. Sayre, *American Captivity Narratives*, (2000)
 Ronald Takaki, *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* (1994)
 Nella Larsen, *Passing* (1929) [in *The Complete Fiction of Nella Larson*]
 P. S. Rothenberg, *White Privilege: Essential Readings on the Other Side of Racism* (2002)
 David Henry Hwang, *M. Butterfly* (1986)
 Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987)
 Li-young Lee, *Rose* (1986)
 Sherman Alexie, *Indian Killer* (1995)
 Plus: a course packet (available soon at Copy Express in the student union)

COURSE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

**(read the following carefully; these words constitute our contract,
 and I will request your written agreement to them)**

One of the saddest lessons of history is this: If we've been bamboozled long enough, we tend to reject any evidence of the bamboozle. We're no longer interested in finding out the truth. The bamboozle has captured us. It is simply too painful to acknowledge—even to ourselves—that we've been so credulous.
 (Carl Sagan)

"Bad faith" is self-deception, a lie to the self. . . . the intent of bad faith is precisely to deceive oneself while also denying that intention. The person who practices bad faith is hiding a displeasing truth or presenting as truth a pleasing untruth. In bad faith it is from myself that I am hiding the truth.
 (Robert E. Birt)

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Here is EIU's official description: "A study of American Multicultural literatures from approximately 1700 to the present, featuring African-American, Asian-American, Native American, and Latino/a writers, with emphasis on race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality." We will take an historical, roughly chronological approach to this material, and we will also cover material that has recently arisen as significant in scholarly approaches to multiculturalism, including critical race theories, critical whiteness studies, and Arab American literature. It will become clear as we go along that no single perspective can fully represent or explain the American literary experience. Instead, there are many stories and many histories told from many different points of view. Most of us have been educated in only

one or two of those histories and literatures, so in this course we will explore more of the recorded, interpreted experiences that make up our multiethnic, polyvocal society. Much of the material in this course will be difficult at first to grasp and to discuss, so you must be prepared for each class meeting by reading the material carefully beforehand in order to participate fully in our discussions.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- To gain insight into forms of American literature written from unfamiliar perspectives, and to understand better the historical and cultural contexts from which such works were written
- To encourage consideration of the notion of “race” as a socially constructed fiction; of how deep and subtle the power of preconceptions of “Others” tend to be; and of how cultural factors intersect with others, including race, class, gender, sexuality, and religious preference
- To understand the impact on American literary studies of the opening of “the canon” to new literatures, and to explore the historical and theoretical relationships among canonical and non-canonical texts in American literature
- To practice articulating your well-considered responses to the issues raised by the course

GRADES: Your final course grade will be determined in the following way:

Exam 1	15%
Final exam	25%
1 st Formal essay (4-5 pages)	15%
2 nd Formal essay (6-8 pages)	25%
Participation/quizzes/attendance	20%

MISSED QUIZZES AND EXAMS, LATE PAPERS: 1) Again, because the answers to unannounced quizzes come up in class after they are taken, quizzes cannot be made up (even if you come to class late). These quizzes are one way to reward those who attend class regularly and on time. 2) There will also be no makeup exams in this course; if a student misses an exam, the makeup assignment will be a formal, eight-page essay on a topic chosen by the professor. 3) Papers are due at the beginning of class on the due date whether the student is in class or not. Late papers will be penalized fifteen points each day they are late. You may turn in the two essays before their due dates if you know you must miss class that day.

REGARDING READING: Since one skill you will be developing in this class is the art of textual analysis, you must give the readings more than a quick skimming over. Instead of wolfing them down right before class, set aside enough time to read carefully—take notes as you read, then decide for yourself, before coming to class, what each author is trying to describe and bring to light. Also, to ensure that your final grade reflects your reading effort, I will occasionally give “pop” quizzes at the beginning of class on required readings. These quizzes will be unannounced beforehand and they cannot be made up. I recognize that some students must be absent at times; accordingly, when I compile your quiz grades at the end of the semester into an average score, I will drop the lowest one—if you miss a quiz, that will be your one

dropped quiz. If you don't miss any quizzes, I will still drop your lowest score from your quiz average.

REGARDING WRITING: When the final formal essay is turned in, it **MUST** be accompanied in a folder by all notes and drafts written towards it, with the final copy of the essay on top of these materials. I will use these materials to gauge and offer comments on your writing process. I **WILL NOT GRADE** a final essay that is not accompanied by material that clearly demonstrates several earlier stages leading up to the final draft, so be sure to save all such materials (if you do most or all of your writing on a computer, print out occasional drafts to include with your final copy). Essays unaccompanied by materials that clearly demonstrate several stages of development toward the final copy will receive an automatic ZERO. Note that this requirement only applies to the final essay, not the first one.

INFORMAL PRESENTATIONS: During the first week of class, you will sign up for a particular reading on the "Daily Schedule." For the day that we'll discuss that reading, you will formulate two critical questions (and answers) that engage with the readings and that you will present to your fellow classmates. You will also turn in a 1-2 page summary of own answers to your questions. You will be given a letter grade for this portion of your participation grade.

E-MAIL ACTIVITY: Enrollment in this class requires an e-mail account, and you must check it frequently, preferably every day, for messages pertaining to the course. You already have a free EIU e-mail account, which I would prefer that you use. You can use a commercial account for this course, but you MAY NOT use a free web-based account (such as Hotmail or Yahoo) because they often cause problems with listserv subscriptions. Our class discussions will carry over onto the e-mail listserv, and I will occasionally send messages to the entire class. E-mail is also the quickest, easiest way to reach me if I am not in my office; I welcome any and all questions and comments. Getting an e-mail account AND CHECKING IT REGULARLY is crucial for this course—if you do not send me an e-mail message at the above address by Friday, January 14 at 5:00 p.m. to confirm that you have established an account, I will assume that you have chosen against fully participating in the course, and I will therefore drop you. In your message, describe yourself in whatever way you choose (including your major), and also write a statement to the effect that you have read and agree with these course policies and procedures.

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT: In class, I expect all of you to participate in discussions (class participation will be figured into your final grade). The best way to demonstrate that you are an active, engaged, and interested reader is by contributing regularly to class discussions, and by paying close, respectful attention to what everyone else has to say. I do not plan to lecture in this class; I want us to contribute together to a positive, challenging, interesting learning environment. Also, be aware that many sensitive issues tend to arise within a course on multicultural material, so we must respect the opinions of others—try to respond to ideas, rather than to the person stating them. If you have questions, no matter how simple or complicated, go ahead and ask me, either in class or via e-mail—chances are that other people have the same question.

ATTENDANCE POLICY: I will take attendance, and I expect you to attend class every day, on time, and prepared to discuss the material listed for that day on the "daily schedule." More

than three missed classes will lower your final grade by one letter grade for each subsequent absence (i.e., if you miss four classes, you can't get an "A" in this course). Missing class frequently will also harm your grade on the reading quizzes. In addition, note that coming to class "prepared" means coming to class with that day's assigned reading—anyone who does not have the day's assigned reading with them will be considered absent. Regarding tardiness: this is a small class, so late arrivals are disruptive—if for some bizarre reason you wish to get on my bad side, you can easily do so by developing the habit of arriving late for class. If you will not be able to arrive for this class on time because of other commitments, drop it and take another section. Finally, you are responsible for all assignments, whether you attend class or not. Get the telephone number of one or two other students in class, or get a hold of me, so you can find out about missed assignments *before* you come to class.

ACADEMIC HONESTY: I expect you to act honestly and do your own work in this class, and so does Eastern Illinois University. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the English Department's policy on plagiarism: "Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism—'The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one's original work' (*Random House Dictionary of the English Language*)—has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office."

ENGLISH 3705: DAILY SCHEDULE
(this schedule may be subject to change;
bring the day's reading material to class—
students who don't do so may be marked absent)

T JAN 11 Introduction to the course and to each other

- Robert Frost, "The Gift Outright" (1942); Langston Hughes, "I, Too, Sing America" (1925)

R JAN 13 Takaki, *A Different Mirror*, "The 'Tempest' in the Wilderness," 24-50

F JAN 14 By 5 p.m. today, carefully read the policies and procedures for this course, and then send a message to Dr. Engles (cftde@eiu.edu) from your EIU e-mail account. In your message, 1) explain which course you are in (English 3705); 2) describe yourself in whatever ways you choose, including your career aspirations; 3) write a statement to the effect that you have read and agree with the course policies and procedures; and 4) be sure that, as with all e-mail messages, you "sign" it by adding your name at the end.

T JAN 18 Mary Rowlandson, from *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God . . .* (1682; in *American Captivity Narratives*, 132-54 AND 166-76)

R JAN 20 Course Packet: Thomas Morton, excerpts from *Revels in New Canaan* (1637); and from *Manners and Customs of the Indians (of New England)* (1637); Langston Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" (1926)

T JAN 25 Olaudah Equiano, from *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* (1784; in *American Captivity Narratives*, 225-57)

R JAN 27 CP: Gertrude Bonin (Zitkala-Sa), excerpts from *Impressions of an Indian Childhood* and *The School Days of an Indian Girl* (1900)

T FEB 1 Charles Waddell Chesnutt, "The Passing of Grandison" (1899)

R FEB 3 CP: Langston Hughes, stories (TBA) from *The Ways of White Folks* (1934)

T FEB 8 Nella Larson, *Passing* (1929)

R FEB 10 *Passing*

- 7:00 lecture by Michele Wallace in the Tarble Arts Center: for a (maximum of) five points of extra-credit on the first exam, write a typed, two-page response—what parts of Wallace's talk stood out for you, and why?

T FEB 15 *White Privilege*: David Roediger and James R. Barrett, "How White People Became

White,” 29-34; Tim Wise, “Membership Has Its Privileges: Thoughts on Acknowledging and Challenging Whiteness,” 103-10

R FEB 17 Course Packet: Don Lee, “The Lone Night Cantina” (from *Yellow: Stories* [2002]); Lois-Ann Yamanaka, “When Asian Eyes Are Smiling” (1997)

- In-class film screening: Pam Tom, *Two Lies*

T FEB 22 **Exam One**

R FEB 24 Information on *Madame Butterfly* (handout); David Henry Hwang, *M Butterfly* (1986)

T MAR 1 *M Butterfly*

- **Paper One Due**

R MAR 3 CP: Toni Morrison, “Recitatif” (1983) (SEMESTER MIDTERM)

T MAR 8 Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987), “Preface” and “The Homeland, *Atzlán*”

R MAR 10 *Borderlands/La Frontera*, “*La Conciencia de la Mestiza: Toward a New Consciousness*” and assigned poems

MARCH 14 to MARCH 18 — Spring Break

T MAR 22 Khaled Mattawa & Munir Akash, “Introduction: Post Gibran”; Khaled Mattawa, “Freeways and Rest Houses: Toward an Arab Location on the American Cultural Map,” “Ode to Mejnoon” (from *Post Gibran: Anthology of New Arab American Writing*, 1999)

R MAR 24 Mohja Kahf, “My Body Is Not Your Battleground,” “More Than One Way to Break a Fast” (from *Post Gibran: Anthology of New Arab American Writing*, 1999); Ellen Mansoor Collier, “Arab Americans: Living with Pride and Prejudice”; Laila Halaby, “Browner Shades of White”; D.H. Melhem, “Gulf War” (from *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American & Arab-Canadian Feminists*, 1994)

T MAR 29 Li-young Lee, *Rose* (1986)

R MAR 31 *Rose*

T APR 5 CP: Maurice Berger, excerpts from *White Lies: Race and the Myths of Whiteness* (1999)

R APR 7 CP: Dan Guillory, "Being Midwestern" (from *In the Middle of the Middle West: Literary Nonfiction from the Heartland* [2003], Becky Bradyway, ed.); "Allan Gurganus, "Nativity, Caucasian" (from *White People* [1990])

T APR 12 CP: TBA

R APR 14 CP: Junot Díaz, "Drown," and ["TBA"] (2000)

T APR 19 Sherman Alexie, *Indian Killer* (1996)

R APR 21 *Indian Killer*

T APR 26 *Indian Killer*

R APR 28 Last day of classes

Final paper due

Tearful, heartfelt farewells

Final Exam: Wednesday, May 4, 2:45-4:45 p.m.