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HSS 403-460: Multiculturalism in Literature

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HSS 403 Multiculturalism & Literature

Spring 2021

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Course Description

This seminar closely examines historical and contemporary situations of multiculturalism, including globalization, migration, and urban diversification. It is designed to afford NJIT students the ability to encounter and analyze ideas about multiculturalism and “intercultural relations”, both in artistic representations (i.e. literature, film) and in scientific study (i.e. sociological/historical analyses). Students’ researched and written work in this course ranges from analysis of fiction to consideration of cultural diversity in urban planning and the development of technologies and technological systems. The culmination of the course is a research project of the student’s own design, reflecting course themes in relation to his or her field of study and/or the professional sectors he or she will be entering upon graduation.

Course overview & curriculum:

A common thread among the many definitions of *multiculturalism* is the emphasis on relationships formed between various cultures. These relationships are part of our everyday, globalizing experiences, both personally and professionally. Through our coursework, we will explore these relationships as they manifest through the arts, but also as they have been observed by scientific study. The first section of the course examines how selected authors define and reflect on relevant terms, from “culture” / “multiculturalism” to race and globalization. The second section of the course explores the politics of representation, especially considering how the methodologies of disciplines such as history and sociology impact those politics. In the third section of the course, we will examine primary source material that applies ideas and concepts learned from sections 1 and 2. The final section of the course addresses migration – both real and fictional – and considers its relevancy to personal and professional contexts. The course will close with virtual presentations of the on-going research project.

Works to be studied include short stories, essays, empirical research studies and films by several international authors and activists, including Ta-Nehisi Coates, Toni Morrison, Amy Tan and .

Prerequisites for this class include completion of the GUR in English (3 credits), Cultural History (6 credits), Basic -Social Sciences (6 credits) and either the Lit/Hist/Phil/STS (3 credits) or the Open Elective in Humanities and Social Science (3 credits).

Required Texts

All texts have been made available on Canvas, and are organized by date. Should you need to access an article from *The New York Times*, [you can create an account through Van Houten Library](#).

Ongoing Course Objectives

- Demonstrate an understanding of disciplinary theories that emerge through course notes/ instruction and course readings
- Demonstrate eventual proficiency with analysis of creative works and their use as political expression, including art, film, literature and creative non-fiction.
- Demonstrate improvement with this analysis over the course of the semester by responding effectively to instructor feedback and directives.
- Demonstrate proficiency with information literacy by producing a multi-layered, bibliographic research project, including formal and informal web-based research discussions, the production of several research proposals and an annotated bibliography, and an 8-10 page final paper investigating a question or argument related to our coursework and drawing in part from our course readings.
- Demonstrate consistent engagement with classmates and the professor through discussion forum and other posting activities.
- Demonstrate “online” leadership and initiative capabilities by facilitating conversations within the discussion forum, responding effectively to classmates in a digital environment and directing attention to texts/coursework/research in the online forum.

Coursework Overview

Class Meetings: This class is delivered 100% online. However, it is **not a self-paced course**. There are required weeks of real-time, near synchronous interaction. This means we have both **research and discussion forums**, and that you are expected to meet basic deadlines and requirements for each. **The class is divided into 4 thematic units, or modules.** Most modules consist of 3 weeks, and will include reading assignments, writing assignments, and classmate interaction via discussion board posting. A researched term project incorporating coursework will be submitted at the end of the semester.

Module & Discussion Forum Pattern

First week: Topic intro via first round of readings and notes – **independent pacing with suggested milestones.**

Second week: Research Forum – **collaborative and interactive discussion with deadlines**

Third Week: Discussion Forum – **collaborative and interactive discussion with deadline**

Research Forum exercises will contain specific directions. Generally, you will be expected to post a secondary source with annotations to the forum by Thursday of the Research Forum week, and a follow up response to a classmate by Sunday. Discussion Forum exercises include an open

week for posting. You will be expected to **make at least 3 posts through the week** (i.e. Monday, Wednesday, Friday) for all the forums. Higher grades go to students who participate in a sustained way through a forum week. Lower grades go to students who complete all the required posts at the last minute. While the former demonstrates preparation, sustained engagement and awareness of audience, the latter gives the opposite impression: neglect and lack of consideration for the group's ability to interact with your ideas. We are all busy. Plan for these forum weeks; there are few throughout the semester and they impact your **ongoing course engagement** grade significantly. Discussion Forum posts are part of synchronous interactions and cannot be submitted late. Partial credit will be applied to students who complete Research Forum exercises **within two days** of the deadline. Students must email the instructor to receive approval for a late submission.

There will be optional face-to-face information and discussion sessions scheduled throughout the semester (usually during “week 1” of a Module). Students who attend these sessions will receive extra credit for their **ongoing course engagement** grade.

Written Work Beyond Forum Posts

Exam: This course is divided into different modules, or “Sections”. While the skills of critical reading and analysis, writing in digital environments, writing/communicating analytical ideas and research are ongoing throughout the course, **course content** and **reading** will differ in each unit. It is imperative that students keep pace with the course reading / lesson schedule, as the units build upon each other. Exams will therefore be administered twice through the course. They will include multiple choice questions on the assigned readings, as well as short-answer questions demonstrating student's engagement with the assigned work. Critical feedback on these questions will direct students toward what he or she needs to focus on more specifically in preparation for the final project.

Research project: This course will allow students to draw on knowledge gained from previous courses and work closely with the instructor to develop a substantial and in-depth **research project**. The project will enable students to construct a program of research, investigation and documentation that enhances understanding of course work and offers an opportunity to better understand the implementation of relevant research in argumentative writing. Though sources researched can vary in format for different aspects of the course, it is important to understand that only well-documented and credible sources can be cited in the final research project. **MLA, APA, Chicago or Harvard-style guidelines** for references, in-text citations, and bibliographies must be followed. Papers submitted that do not adhere to these guidelines will not receive credit.

*** Other Course Policies ***

Late assignments: **Discussion forum posting** happens in real-time and thus cannot be made up. Students receiving the highest grades for discussion forum work **post consistently through the module**, and **follow directions regarding the posts** (see notes above on discussion forum exercises). Making all required posts at once and at the end of the module suggests poor planning and neglect of the assignment, and does not allow for other students (or the instructor) to interact with your ideas.

Research projects submitted late will lose 1 grade point per day (ie from a B to a C). Work submitted 48 hours after the stated deadline **will receive NO credit**. Receipt of final papers is verified through TurnItIn or instructor email. If you do not receive a return receipt within four hours of sending the final paper, **it is your responsibility** to follow up and ensure your paper has been received.

Plagiarism, presenting someone else's words, thoughts, or ideas (in whole or in part) as your own, is cheating and will not be tolerated. The NJIT Honor Code will be upheld, and any violations will be brought to the immediate attention of the Dean of Students. NJIT enforces strict academic integrity policies, and any plagiarized material **will** result in a failing grade for the assignment and possibly for the course. Academic probation and possible suspension or expulsion from the university may also be pursued by NJIT administration in cases of plagiarism. **Three very important things to remember:**

- 1) Various plagiarism-detection tools are employed in this course.
- 2) There have been numerous cases of students attempting to submit papers written by students enrolled in earlier versions of this class. These students have received failing grades and academic probation – and the students supplying the papers have also been punished.
- 3) If you're struggling with the final project or concerned about these policies, I'm happy to work with you! Plagiarism is [not worth the risk to your future.](#)

Final Grade assessment formula:

Forums (Research/Open Discussion) (3)	40%
Research Project	40%
Exams (2)	20%

Final Grade assignments:

A =89.6-100; B+=87-89.5; B =80-86.5; C+=77-79.5; C =69.5-76.5; D+ =66.5-69.5; D = 59.5-64.5; F =59.4 or below

Course Schedule

Deadlines for written work to be submitted and/or posted **are in red**. Use this schedule with Canvas to understand what is expected of you for each Module. Ask questions early and often: thunt@njit.edu. If you ever feel overwhelmed by the pace, confused by a reading, unsure of an assignment, and so on, I am here to help you succeed. Please reach out to me throughout the term!

Introductory Case Study: Multiculturalism and Aging – January 19-31

Suggested Pacing: Complete the Following by January 24

1. Watch US Census Bureau, “From Pyramids to Pillars” (approx. 3 mins)
2. Read “How Cultural Attitudes Toward Aging Affect Senior Care” (Lewis)
3. Watch Diamond, “What It’s Like to Grow Old, In Different Parts of the World” (approx. 18 mins)

Week of 1/25 – Research & Discussion Forum: Check Canvas for Assignment Details

Module 1: Multiculturalism and American Experiences: February 1 – February 21

Suggested Pacing: Complete the Following by 2/3

1. Watch videos on racial diversity & US populations (approx. 20 mins)
2. Read Articles (Smith; Gonzalez-Barrera; Parvini)

Suggested Pacing: Complete the Following by 2/7

3. Read “How it Feels When White People Shame Your Culture’s Food...then Make It Trendy” (Tam)
4. Read excerpt from *No Land’s Man* (Mandvi)
5. Read Tan, “Two Kinds”
6. Watch “The Problem with Apu and the Immigrant Stories that Aren’t Being Told”

Week of 2/8 – RESEARCH FORUM PARTICIPATION

Week of 2/15 – DISCUSSION FORUM PARTICIPATION

Module 2: Culture, Health, Science, and Technology – February 22- March 7

Suggested Pacing: Complete the Following by 2/24

1. Read “Your DNA is Not Your Culture” (Zhang)
2. Read “Creepy or Cool? Portraits Derived from DNA” (Gambino)
3. Read “Birth” (Fadiman)

Suggested Pacing: Complete the Following by 2/28

4. Watch “The Difference Between Us” (approx. 60 mins)
5. Read “Covid-19 is Killing Black People Unequally – Don’t Be Surprised” (Ellis)
6. Watch PBS NewsHour: “In Alabama, Racial Disparities in Health Outcomes Predate the Pandemic” (approx. 8 minutes)

Week of 3/1 – RESEARCH FORUM & DISCUSSION FORUM PARTICIPATION

Exam Week: 3/8-3/14

Exam becomes available at 9 AM on 3/8 and must be completed by 9 PM on Sunday, March 14

Module 3: The Changing City – March 22 – April 11

Suggested Pacing: Complete the Following by 3/25

1. Read “How Homeownership Became the Engine of Inequality” (Desmond, approx. 12 pages)
2. Read “The Ghetto is Public Policy” (Coates, approx. 17 pages)
3. Watch “Bushwick” (SNL)
4. Read “There is a Street Named after Martin Luther King, Jr. In Every City” (Willis-Abdurraqib)

Suggested Pacing: Complete the Following by 3/28

5. Read “Death By Gentrification: The Killing That Shamed San Francisco” (Solnit)
6. Listen to “This App Was Made for Walking - But is it Racist?” (approx. 5 minutes)
7. Review Photo Essay, “An Immigrant’s Journey”

Week of 3/29 – RESEARCH FORUM PARTICIPATION

Week of 4/5 – DISCUSSION FORUM PARTICIPATION

Module 4: Research Project Workshops and Conferences – April 12-30

This module will include participating in a **RESEARCH PROJECT FORUM** (tentatively set to **open April 12**), peer-reviewing and drafting exercises, and regular communication with classmates and Dr. Hunt. Further details and deadlines will be announced later in the semester.

Exam Week: 4/19-4/25

Exam becomes available at 9 AM on 4/19 and must be completed by 9 PM on Sunday, 4/25.

All Final Drafts of Research Projects are due no later than midnight Sunday, May 9th by midnight.