

WS 367.02 U.S. Latina Writers: Text and Context
Professor Guisela Latorre

Time and Days: Mondays and Wednesdays
1:30-3:18 p.m.

Classroom: 110 Aviation Building

Office Hours: Mon and Wed 3:30-5pm

Office Location: 286 University Hall

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Accommodation for students with disabilities

Students who need to have an accommodation for disability should contact their professor as soon as possible. The Office for Disability Services (150 Pomerene Hall; 292-3307; 292-0901 TDD) verifies the need for accommodations and assists in the development of accommodation strategies.

Course Description

This course will provide students with a general background on the different themes, histories and oppositional narratives presented in U.S. Latina literature. We will read these texts within the broader context of U.S. Latina/o history, which has been largely defined by experiences of colonization, immigration, stratification, displacement, and marginalization, but also determined by expressions of empowerment, social protest, and radical politics. U.S. Latina literary production will be situated somewhere between the Latin American, and U.S. literary canons yet will also be defined by its unique cultural, and historical position. Students will explore these writers' strategies for articulating a Latina experience through the intersections of race, class, gender, and sexuality. Moreover, we will come to an understanding of literature, and other forms of creative expression, as catalysts for social, and political change. Substantial writing is required for this course so a significant amount of class time will be devoted to helping students develop their writing skill.

This course will be interdisciplinary in nature so we will be drawing parallels between the work of the writers assigned for the class and that of Latina visual artists, filmmakers, and other cultural producers. In the process, we will explore the various commonalities and recurring themes across media. Classes will combine lecture, discussion, in-class activities, and open dialogue.

Required Texts (available at SBX)

- Denise Chávez, *Loving Pedro Infante*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001, 1st edition.
- Cristina García, *Dreaming in Cuban: A Novel*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1992.
- María Amparo Ruíz de Burton, *The Squatter and the Don*. Houston: Arte Público Press, 1992.
- Esmeralda Santiago, *When I was Puerto Rican*. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 1993.
- Helena María Viramontes, *Under the Feet of Jesus*. New York: A Plume Book, 1996.
- CARMEN readings

Recommended Text

- Claire Kehrwald Cook, *The MLA's Line by Line: How to Edit your Own Writing*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1985.

Films (screened in-class)

- Herbert J. Biberman, dir., *Salt of the Earth* (1954), Independent Productions.
- Mariano Barroso, dir. *In the Time of the Butterflies* (2001), MGM.
- Nereyda Garcia-Ferraz, Kate Horsfield, Branda Miller, dirs. *Ana Mendieta: Fuego de Tierra* (1987), Women Make Movies.

Goals

As a course that fulfills the "Writing and Related Skills" and "Diversity: Social Diversity in The United States" GEC requirements, the goals of Women's Studies 367.02 are to help students:

- develop skills in writing, reading, critical thinking, and oral expression
- foster an understanding of the pluralistic nature of institutions, society, and culture in the United States

Learning Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, students will have developed:

- 1) practice and proficiency in critical thinking, writing, and reading through written assignments and oral presentations
- 2) skills necessary to retrieve and analyze written information through the practices of close reading and feminist textual analysis
- 3) knowledge of selected female literary traditions in the U.S. in relation to the status of women, past and present, and to other movements for social change
- 4) competence in utilizing methods of interdisciplinary feminist analysis that emphasize the intersectionality of race, gender, class, ethnicity, and sexuality in shaping the institutions and cultures of the United States
- 5) understanding of the role of social diversity in shaping their own attitudes and values

Course Requirements

- 1) Attendance (10%) – Your attendance points will be based on your physical presence in class.
- 2) Participation (10%) – Your participation points will be based on your level of engagement with class discussion. It is extremely important that you actively partake in our classroom conversations, and always come to class prepared to discuss the assigned readings.
- 3) Three In-Class Papers (3-4 pages) (8% each) – You will write three papers during in-class writing sessions which will be turned in during the following class period. These papers will relate to the readings done during the previous weeks. Before the end of the writing session, however, you will exchange papers with one classmate to be peer edited. You will be graded on

the paper itself and on the editorial remarks made to your classmates. Specific guidelines for these essays will be provided on the day of the writing session.

4) Two Research Papers (5-7 pages) (20% each) – You will be asked to identify two recurring themes, one for each paper, across the different readings, topics, and discussions covered in class. These themes will be the central foci of your papers. Additional research will also be required for these assignments.

5) Final Exam (16%): This comprehensive examination will focus on the historical and cultural information covered during the lecture portions of the class. This will be an open-book test where you will be allowed to use your texts, notes and written assignments.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious offense that is strictly forbidden. Use of another's work without proper documentation, intentional or not, is tantamount to plagiarism and thus unacceptable. For information on plagiarism and how to avoid it, see the following link:

http://cstw.osu.edu/writingCenter/handouts/research_plagiarism.cfm

Language and Etiquette in Class Discussion

Even though knowledge of Spanish is not required for this class, you will find that many U.S. Latina writers use code-switching in their writing, that is, they utilize both English and Spanish as part of their intellectual vocabulary. Translations or explanations of Spanish words will be provided in class as the need arises. Nevertheless, you will be expected to familiarize yourself with a few words in Spanish that have become critical components of Latina literary discourse.

As many courses on feminism, gender and ethnic studies do, this class deals with numerous controversial and sensitive issues that often elicit heated discussion. I expect that a number of you will disagree with the opinions expressed in the class readings and discussion. I certainly expect you to express your honest opinion. Nevertheless, all in-class dialogue needs to happen within an atmosphere of civil intellectual exchange and mutual respect. Personal attacks, loud speaking and cutting people off before they are done talking will not be permitted.

Personal Emergencies

If you experience a personal emergency during this quarter such as a serious illness, death in the family, accidents and/or other unforeseen circumstances that may potentially prevent you from completing coursework in this class, please contact me immediately. I will deal with these emergencies on a case-to-case basis. Be aware, however, that you will need to provide documentation for any reported emergency in order to for me to help you. Note that social and family events such as weddings, vacations, *quinceañeras* and *barmitzvahs*, to cite just a few examples, are not considered emergencies.

Note on PowerPoint Presentations

I use PowerPoint as a pedagogical tool in almost all my lectures. It is important, however, that you not misunderstand the function that my PowerPoint presentations have in this course. These are meant to facilitate in-class note-taking by providing you with general outlines for each

lecture. Nevertheless, I do not share my PowerPoint slides outside of class, nor do I post them on the web. Moreover, it is not sufficient for you to just write down what is up on the screen because these outlines will merely contain keywords and ideas that will not make much sense without the oral explanations and discussions that we will have in class.

CALENDAR

Week 1

March 24 – **Introduction**

No Readings

March 26 – **The Spanish Colonial Legacy**

Readings

- Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, “Response to the Most Illustrious Poetess Sor Filotea de la Cruz,” *Poems, Protest, and a Dream*, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (New York: Penguin Books, 1997): 2-75. CARMEN.

Week 2

March 31 – **The Spanish Colonial Legacy**

Readings

- Antonia I. Castañeda, “Sexual Violence in the Politics and Policies of Conquest: Amerindian Women and the Spanish Conquest of Alta California,” *Building with Our Hands: New Directions in Chicana Studies*, eds. Adela de la Torre and Beatriz Pesquera (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993): 15-33. CARMEN.
- Antonia I. Castañeda, “Presidarias y Pobladoras: The Journey North and Life in Frontier California,” in *Chicana Critical Issues*, eds. Norma Alarcón et al. (Berkeley: Third Woman Press, 1993): 73-94.

April 2 – **Manifest Destiny and Expansion**

Readings

- María Amparo Ruiz de Burton, *The Squatter and the Don*, Chapters I, II, III, IV, V, VI, and VII, pp. 55-105.

Week 3

April 7 – **Manifest Destiny and Expansion**

Readings

- María Amparo Ruiz de Burton, *The Squatter and the Don*, Chapters VIII, IX, X, XI, XII, XIII, XIV, XV, and XVI, pp. 106-165.

April 9 – **In-Class Writing Session I**

Readings

- Alicia Gaspar de Alba, “The Politics of Location of the Tenth Muse of America: An Interview with Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz,” 136-165, in *Living Chicana Theory*, ed. Carla Trujillo (Berkeley: Third Woman Press, 1998): pp. 136-163. CARMEN.

- Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita, "Introduction to *The Squatter and the Don*," in *The Squatter and the Don*, pp. 7-49.

Week 4

April 14 – **Chicanas and Mexican-American Women – Land and Labor**

Readings

- Helena María Viramontes, *Under the Feet of Jesus*, Chapters 1 and 2, pp. 3-90.

April 16 – **Chicana and Mexican-American Women – Land and Labor**

Film Screening – *Salt of the Earth*

Readings

- Helena María Viramontes, *Under the Feet of Jesus*, Chapters 3 and 4, pp. 93-176.

Week 5

April 21 – **Chicanas and Mexican-American Women – Desire and Sexuality**

Readings

- Denise Chávez, *Loving Pedro Infante*, page #s TBA.

April 23 – **Chicanas and Mexican-American Women – Desire and Sexuality**

Readings

- Denise Chávez, *Loving Pedro Infante*, page #s TBA.

Week 6

April 28 – **In-Class Writing Session II – RESEARCH PAPER #1 DUE**

Readings

- Devra Weber, "Raíz Fuerte: Oral History and Mexicana Farmworkers," *The Oral History Review* 17:2 (Autumn 1989): 47-62. CARMEN.
- Patricia Zavella, "Talkin' Sex: Chicanas and Mexicanas Theorize about Silences and Sexual Pleasures," in *Chicana Feminisms: A Critical Reader*, eds. Eds. Gabriela Arredondo et al. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003): 228-253. CARMEN.

April 30 – **Tropicalization and Diaspora– Cuban-American Women**

*** Film Screening, *Ana Mendieta: fuego de tierra****

Readings

- Cristina García, *Dreaming in Cuban*, "Ocean Blue," "Going South," "The House on Palmas Street," "Celia's Letters: 1935-1940," "A Grove of Lemons," "The Fire Between Them," and "Celia's Letters: 1942-1949", pp. 3-101.

Week 7

May 5 – **Tropicalization and Diaspora - Cuban-American Women**

Readings

- Cristina García, *Dreaming in Cuban*, "The Meaning of Shells," "Enough Attitude," "Baskets of Water," "Celia's Letters: 1950-1955," "A Matrix Light," "God's Will," pp. 105-191.

May 7 – Tropicalization and Diaspora– Puerto Rican Women

Readings

- Esmeralda Santiago, *When I was Puerto Rican*, from “Prologue: How to Eat a Guava” to “Why Women Remain *Jamon*,” pp. 3-104.

Week 8

May 12 – Tropicalization and Diaspora– Puerto Rican Women

Readings

- Esmeralda Santiago, *When I was Puerto Rican*, from “Mami Gets a Job” to “Dreams of a Better Life,” pp. 106-209.

May 14 - In-Class Writing Session III

Readings

- Frances Aparicio, “On Sub-Versive Signifiers: Tropicalizing Language in the United States,” in *Tropicalizations: Transcultural Representations of Latinidad*, eds. Frances R. Aparicio and Susana Chávez-Silverman (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1997): 194-212. CARMEN.
- Kimberle S. López, “Women on the Verge of a Revolution: Madness and Resistance in Cristina García’s *Dreaming in Cuban*,” *Letras Femeninas* 22: 1-2 (1996): 33-49. CARMEN.
- Joanna Barszewska Marshall, “ ‘Boast now, chicken, tomorrow you’ll be stew’: Pride, Shame, Food, and Hunger in the Memoirs of Esmeralda Santiago,” *MELUS* 32: 4 (Winter 2007): 47-68. CARMEN.

Week 9

May 19 – Militarism and Displacement – Dominican Women

*** Movie Screening – *In the Time of the Butterflies* ***

Readings

- Julia Alvarez, *In the Time of the Butterflies*, page #s TBA. CARMEN.

May 21 – Militarism and Displacement – Dominican Women

Readings:

- Julia Alvarez, “A Regular Revolution,” and “Daughter of Invention,” in *How the Garcia Girls Lost their Accents* (New York: A Plume Book, 1992): 107-149. CARMEN.

Week 10

May 26 – Memorial Day, No Classes

May 28 – Wrap-Up, Final Exam Review and Evaluations – RESEARCH PAPER #2 DUE

FINAL EXAM – Tuesday, June 3, 1:30-3:18pm, 110 Aviation Building