
AML 3682 - 01

Bodies and Borders

American Multi-Ethnic Literature | Florida State University | Spring 2020

Instructor: Frances Tran

Course/Section: AML 3682 - 01

Class: T/R 11:00 AM - 12:15 PM, WMS 002

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Office Hours: T/R 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course invites reflection on the relationship between bodies and borders as a timely topic of concern within a political climate marked by intensifying debates over citizenship, belonging, immigration, and the meaning of America. We will take up the border as a critical frame and opening from which to grapple with questions of identity, difference, embodiment, home, and community. Borders have always been vexed sites; they are rich areas for contact, exchange, and intimacy as well as places of extreme violence where divisions are erected and defended. To develop a nuanced understanding of the challenges and possibilities, pleasures and dangers, of confronting and crossing borders, and living in the borderlands, we will survey a range of literary and cultural productions and theoretical scholarship. We will attend to how authors write about the roots they came from and the routes they have traveled, and engage interdisciplinary scholarship on border studies, critical race theory, settler colonialism, postcolonial theory, ecocriticism, and more. Over the course of the semester, students will produce a portfolio of their own creative and critical writing that charts the evolution of their understanding of both literal and figurative borders, responses to textual representations of border crossings, and interventions in debates about immigration, historiography, and individual and national identity formation.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Develop a deeper understanding of the wide range of multi-ethnic American literary and cultural productions that grapple with questions of difference, embodiment, borders, and belonging
- Enhance interpretive skills by engaging in careful close reading of literary works while recognizing the importance of reading texts with an attention to their historical, social, cultural, and political contexts

- Effectively assess, reflect on, and contribute to scholarly conversations in border studies, critical race theory, settler colonialism, postcolonial theory, ecocriticism, and related discourses
 - Propose, complete, and share research projects focused on or creative endeavors inspired by contemporary debates around borders, including what it means to inhabit both figurative and literal borderlands today
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COURSE MATERIALS

Required Texts

- Sandra Cisneros, *House on Mango Street* (2009) - ISBN: 9780679734772
- Art Spiegelman, *Maus I* (1986) - ISBN: 9780394747231
- GB Tran, *Vietnamerica* (2011) - ISBN: 9780345508720
- Colson Whitehead, *The Nickel Boys* (2019) - ISBN: 9780385537070
- Karen Tei Yamashita, *Through the Arc of the Rain Forest* (2017) - ISBN: 9781566894852

PDFs and links to electronic course readings are available on Canvas under "modules" where they have been organized by date.

ASSIGNMENTS & ASSESSMENT

ONLINE DISCUSSION FORUMS

For each class session (unless otherwise stated), students are responsible to contribute a post to the discussion forum on Canvas, marked by the appropriate date. **On weeks where we are scheduled to meet twice, students should post (1) a question about one or more of the assigned readings on one day AND (2) a brief response to another student's question on the other day.** For example, on a Tuesday session you can decide to post a response to a peer's question and on a Thursday session you can post your question about an assigned reading, or vice versa. **On weeks where we are scheduled to meet only once, students can decide between posting a question or a response.** The choice is yours!

On posting questions:

Constructing effective and engaging questions is a difficult skill and one that we rarely have an opportunity to practice. The discussion forums will be a chance for you to experiment with asking each other complex, difficult, and, above all, genuine questions about the readings and topics we will cover this semester. Here are some things to consider when developing your questions for the discussion forums:

- Your questions should demonstrate that you have read the assigned readings so be sure to contextualize your question as necessary. Craft your questions carefully and cite relevant page numbers when necessary.

- Avoid asking plot-driven or yes/no questions that are easily answered if you have read the material. Keep in mind that the goal is to challenge your peers to think deeply about the assigned texts and the issues and questions it raises.
- Before posting your question, read carefully through the questions your peers have posted. You will not get credit for repeating the same question someone else has already asked!

On posting replies:

You should respond to a classmate's question that you find striking or thought-provoking. While your response does not have to be lengthy, it should demonstrate a substantive engagement with the question and/or any other posted comments. Here are some things to consider when developing your replies:

- Draw on specific ideas, examples, and/or passages from the assigned readings to support your response. Your response should demonstrate that you have read the material.
- Keep in mind that you are participating in an ongoing conversation. In other words, do not simply repeat what others before you have written but contemplate how you might build on, challenge, or take the discussion into a different direction.
- Feel free to speak *to* each other, i.e., use names when you are referring to someone's writing and ask questions if you are curious about a point another person has made.

Discussion posts are due before the start of class and will be evaluated on a check scale (✓+, ✓, ✓-) over the course of the semester for a cumulative grade. You are allowed 3 freebie posts, which you can miss without penalty. Discussion posts cannot be made up unless you contact me in advance for an extension.

SEMINAR FACILITATIONS

Once during the semester, students will work in groups to **lead and stimulate discussion about the assigned theoretical reading(s) for the first 30 minutes of a class session**. This assignment consists of an **in-class** and **written component**.

On the in-class group facilitation:

Working in small groups of 2-3 students, you will guide the class in a discussion and analysis of at least one of the assigned literary reading(s) for your facilitation date. You are not required to cover all of the materials listed under a given day, though your group can choose to do more than one.

You should come prepared with well-crafted discussion questions, presentation materials, and/or activities. Feel free to use the questions that your peers have crowd-sourced on the discussion forum as well. If your group decides to use a PPT presentation as part of your facilitation, have one person email it to me before class so that I can pre-load it onto the screen.

In general, I will refrain from participating during student facilitations—this is your time to introduce questions and topics that you want the class to explore. As a facilitator, you may not read from a prepared speech. Consulting bullet points or note cards is permissible but remember that your job

is less to give a formal presentation than to engage class conversation about the assigned reading(s). I encourage you to be as creative as possible!

You will be receiving a group grade for the facilitation so be considerate of your peers and contribute as best as you can to this collective effort. A good platform to use for collaboration is Google Docs, which will allow you to collect notes and questions even if it is difficult to meet with your group members in person. If you discover that you are going to be absent when you are the assigned facilitator, please let me know at least 48 hours in advance so we can try to reschedule. Keep in mind, however, that this may not always be feasible depending on where we are in the semester.

On the written component:

You are expected to write a **3 page thesis-driven essay** on at least one of the texts you organized your facilitation around. **This essay is due exactly two weeks after your facilitation date.** No extensions will be provided unless you contact me in advance.

When crafting your essay, here are some things to consider:

- The essay should present an argumentative claim and detailed analysis of your primary cultural text. Pay particular attention to the literary and aesthetic qualities of the text (e.g., language, form, style, narrative strategies) as well as its broader thematic concerns, meanings, and purpose.
- The essay should also draw on and engage with at least one of the non-literary theoretical secondary sources we have read and discussed this semester. Consider how your thesis builds on, piggybacks off, or challenges the arguments and ideas within the secondary source you have chosen.
- Strong essays will include brief quotations and analyses of specific passages from both primary and secondary sources to illustrate your main ideas and arguments.

MIDTERM EXAM

There will be an in-class midterm exam that will give you an opportunity to apply key concepts and theoretical frameworks that we have discussed to an analysis of multi-ethnic American literature. The exam will be composed of **short answer questions on material covered within the first unit of the course**: “The Borders we Cross and Those that Contain Us: Identity, Immigration, and the Dream of America.” This assignment is designed to evaluate whether students have a strong grasp of the foundational theories and texts that will guide much of our discussions in the latter half of the semester. I will hold several review sessions in the classes leading up to the exam to ensure that you are amply prepared for the types of questions you will encounter on the exam.

My hope is that this exam will not only allow you to reflect on the materials we have already discussed but also serve as an opportunity to identify the ideas, texts, and critical debates that will be most generative for thinking ahead to your final research projects. More details and instructions about the exam will be given in class 1-2 weeks in advance of the test date.

FINAL RESEARCH PROJECT

In lieu of a final exam, you will develop a **research project** for our course blog, “**To Live in the Borderlands Today.**” For your contribution, you can decide between **writing a blog essay (7-8 pages) or producing a creative piece**. Students who choose the creative option will also be asked to compose a **brief artist’s commentary (2-3 pages)** that reflects on the inspiration, motive, and larger stakes of their creative endeavor.

For the blog essay, you will need to identify a specific cultural artifact and make an argument about how and why this particular text captures an understanding of the kinds of borders we confront in our contemporary moment. You may choose to focus on a work that we have read in class or any relevant external text. Alternatively, for those who select the creative option, you will produce a representation of what it means to inhabit the borderlands today, including the potential struggles, questions, and concerns attached to borders and border-crossing. You are free to use any medium or mode of expression that best supports your vision.

Conducting research will be a crucial component of your final project regardless of which option you choose for your contribution. As such, the final project will be scaffolded with a **proposal and annotated bibliography, peer review session, and presentation** where you will share your research and works-in-progress with your classmates. More details on this assignment will be distributed in advance of the deadlines marked in the course schedule below.

ESSAY SUBMISSIONS

- Students are expected to submit their essays **in MS Word format (.doc or .docx file) through Canvas under “Assignments” by 11:59pm** on the specified due date. Keep in mind that facilitation essays are due two weeks after your scheduled facilitation date.
 - **Technology policy:** Electronic submission is a privilege that I extend to allow you more time to work on your essays in a setting that is most convenient for you. As such, I expect you to make sure to **properly attach your essay**—missing/corrupted attachments will be penalized in accordance to the lateness policy below.
 - **Lateness policy:** The final grade for a late paper will drop one whole letter grade for each day it is late, including weekends. For example, a paper that merits a “B” will result in a “C” grade if it is turned in one day late. Deadline extensions, though rare, may be granted for extenuating circumstances.
 - Graded assignments are typically returned within 2 weeks after the due date.
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GRADING POLICY

Breakdown

Participation	10%
Discussion Posts	15%
Group Seminar Facilitation	10%
Facilitation Essay	15%
Midterm Exam	15%
Final Research Project	
Proposal and Annotated Bibliography	10%
Presentation	5%
Blog Essay or Creative Piece	20%

GRADING SCHEME

Below, I have listed the numerical equivalents for letter grades, which you can use to track your progress in this class.

A	100% to 93%	B	< 87% to 83%	C	< 77% to 73%	D	< 67% to 63%
A-	< 93% to 90%	B-	< 83% to 80%	C-	< 73% to 70%	D-	< 63% to 60%
B+	< 90% to 87%	C+	< 80% to 77%	D+	< 70% to 67%	F	< 60% to 0%

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

Course content is accessible through Canvas. You should log on to Canvas at least once every other day to check for course updates.

You will need to be able to view videos, write and upload assignments, post to discussion boards, and take assessments. As such, you should have access to high-speed internet and updated software. To view the most current technology requirements, visit the FSU Canvas support site (<http://support.canvas.fsu.edu/>).

CANVAS SUPPORT

Need help with Canvas? Contact FSU Canvas Support:

- Email: canvas@fsu.edu
 - Phone: (850) 644-8004
 - Website: support.canvas.fsu.edu
 - Hours: 8am to 5pm, Monday - Friday
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COURSE POLICIES

COURSE CONTENT

The nature of this course will ask you to read and discuss issues that may be sensitive and controversial, such as sexuality, racism, colonialism, violence, political and religious beliefs, etc. In a college level course you are expected to think about these issues in a way that is critical, analytical, and mature, even if certain issues excite strong personal opinions from you. It is crucial that this class be a forum for the respectful exchange of ideas. Students engaging in conduct inappropriate for the classroom will be asked to leave; the same applies to online discussions. If you are unable to engage with the aforementioned topics in an open-minded and sophisticated manner, I encourage you to reconsider your enrollment in this class.

PARTICIPATION & ATTENDANCE/LATENESS POLICY

The success of this course depends on frequent, active, and sustained participation from all students. Participation entails coming to class having done the assigned readings and writing, prepared with the necessary texts and documents on hand (including materials made available electronically). Strong participation, however, involves being engaged in discussions, workshops, facilitations, and group activities. As such, I expect you to speak and contribute regularly, whether it is by asking questions, offering to read a passage aloud, or voicing your own insights. I understand that not everyone is comfortable speaking up in class so I have structured activities throughout the semester that will help you practice getting out of your comfort zone. You may also visit me during my office hours, which counts as a form of participation as well.

Attendance and Lateness: In order to participate in class, you must be present during class meetings. As a result, failure to attend class and persistent lateness will negatively impact your grade. Over the course of the semester, **you are allowed a maximum of 4 unexcused absences**. Being late to class three times equals one absence. If you arrive more than fifteen minutes late to class, you will be counted as absent. One third of a letter grade will be deducted for each additional unexcused absence (e.g., your final grade is a "B," but you have missed five classes. You now have a "B-").

This course follows FSU's attendance policy for excused absences, which is outlined below in the "University Policies" section. If your absence is excused, I will give you the opportunity to make up

exams or other graded assignments. When possible, please notify me of anticipated absences in writing as soon as you can. Appropriate documentation for excused absences is required.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Author integrity is vital to the mission of this class. Consequently, plagiarism, cheating, and other violations of academic integrity will be penalized severely and may even result in a failing course grade. Examples of academic dishonesty include but are not limited to:

- Submitting essays or portions of essays written by other people, including well-intentioned friends and family
- Failing to document paraphrases, ideas, or verbatim phrases taken from outside sources
- Collaborating on an assignment without the explicit permission of the professor*
- Submitting an essay written for one course to another course without the explicit permission of both professors
- Submitting work as your own that has been purchased or copied from a paper preparation service or website

*In this class you will be collaborating with your peers on a number of group activities. I hope that these activities will help facilitate intellectual exchange and social interaction. As such, it will not be a violation of academic integrity for you to share resources and collaborate in developing discussion questions and activities. However, these group projects often include individual writing components as well, which should be completed in a way that preserves author integrity.

Please familiarize yourself with FSU's academic honor policy (detailed in the "University Policies" section of the syllabus).

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

UNIVERSITY ATTENDANCE POLICY

Excused absences include documented illness, deaths in the family and other documented crises, call to active military duty or jury duty, religious holy days, and official University activities. These absences will be accommodated in a way that does not arbitrarily penalize students who have a valid excuse. Consideration will also be given to students whose dependent children experience serious illness.

ACADEMIC HONOR POLICY

The Florida State University Academic Honor Policy outlines the University's expectations for the integrity of students' academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process. Students are responsible for reading the Academic Honor Policy and for living up to their pledge to "...be honest and truthful and... [to] strive for personal and institutional integrity at Florida

State University." (For more details see the FSU Academic Honor Policy and procedures for addressing alleged violations, found at:

<http://fda.fsu.edu/academic-resources/academic-integrity-and-grievances/academic-honor-policy.>)

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should (1) register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center and (2) bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. Please note that instructors are not allowed to provide classroom accommodation to a student until appropriate verification from the Student Disability Resource Center has been provided. This syllabus and other class materials are available in alternative format upon request. For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact the:

Student Disability Resource Center
874 Traditions Way
108 Student Services Building
Florida State University
Tallahassee, FL 32306-4167
(850) 644-9566 (voice)
(850) 644-8504 (TDD)
Email: sdrc@admin.fsu.edu
Website: <http://www.disabilitycenter.fsu.edu/>

FREE TUTORING FROM FSU

On-campus tutoring and writing assistance is available for many courses at Florida State University. For more information, visit the Academic Center for Excellence (ACE) Tutoring Services' comprehensive list of on-campus tutoring options - see the Academic Center for Excellence (ACE) Tutoring Services' website (<http://ace.fsu.edu/tutoring>) or contact tutor@fsu.edu. High-quality tutoring is available by appointment and on a walk-in basis. These services are offered by tutors trained to encourage the highest level of individual academic success while upholding personal academic integrity.

SYLLABUS CHANGE POLICY

"Except for changes that substantially affect implementation of the evaluation (grading) statement, this syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advance notice."

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

Below you will find our working class schedule of readings and assignments. Depending on the course of our conversations and the perspectives and contributions you offer, we can discuss

possible changes to organizing themes and texts. I hope that we can work together to make this class as engaging, generative, and rewarding as possible for your studies and future pursuits.

**The Borders we Cross and Those that Contain Us:
Identity, Immigration, and the Dream of America**

- T. 01/07 Introduction to course
Lorna Dee Cervantes, "Poem for the Young White Man Who Asked Me How I, an Intelligent Well-Read Person Could Believe in the War Between Races" (1990)
- Th. 01/09 **Class canceled**
- T. 01/14 Lucrecia Guerrero, "Even in Heaven" (2000)
Pat Mora, "La Migra" (1993)
Gloria Anzaldúa, "Don't Give In, *Chicanita*," in *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987)
Gloria Anzaldúa, "The Homeland, Aztlán: El Otro México," "How to Tame a Wild Tongue," "La conciencia de la mestiza: Towards a New Consciousness," in *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987).
- Th. 01/16 **Class canceled**
- T. 01/21 Sandra Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street* (2009) - pp. 3-64 ("The House on Mango Street" - "Elenita, Cards, Palm, Water").
- Th. 01/23 Sandra Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street* (2009) - pp. 65-110 ("Geraldo No Last Name" - "Mango Says Goodbye Sometimes").
Cherríe Moraga, "Theory in the Flesh" and "La Güera," In *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings By Radical Women of Color* (1983), pp. 23-24, 27-34.
Donna Kate Rushin, "The Bridge Poem," in *This Bridge Called My Back* (1983)
- T. 01/28 Joy Harjo, Excerpts from *An American Sunrise* (2019)
Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" (1893)
Mark Rifkin, "Introduction" to *Settler Common Sense: Queerness and Everyday Colonialism in the American Renaissance* (2014)
Rebecca Roanhorse, "Postcards from the Apocalypse," in *Uncanny Magazine* 20 (Jan/Feb 2018),
<https://uncannymagazine.com/article/postcards-from-the-apocalypse/>.
- Th. 01/30 Thomas King, "Borders," in *One Good Story, That One* (1993)
Zitkala-Sa, "The School Days of an Indian Girl," in *American Indian Stories* (1921)
- T. 02/04 Colson Whitehead, *The Nickel Boys* (2019), pp. 3-83 (Prologue - Chapter 7)
- Th. 02/06 Colson Whitehead, *The Nickel Boys* (2019), pp. 84-131 (Chapters 8 - 10)

Martin Luther King Jr., "Letter from Birmingham Jail" (1963)

- T. 02/11 Colson Whitehead, *The Nickel Boys* (2019), pp. 132-210 (Chapter 11 - Epilogue)
 Avery Gordon, "Some Thoughts on Haunting and Futurity," *borderlands* 10, no. 2 (2011) pp. 1-21.
 Yahdon Israel, "'The Outrage Was So Large and So Secret': Colson Whitehead Talks Hope, Despair, and Fighting Power in *The Nickel Boys*," *Vanity Fair*, <https://www.vanityfair.com/style/2019/07/colson-whitehead-the-nickel-boys-interview>.
- Th. 02/13 N.K. Jemisin, "The Effluent Engine" and "Walking Awake," in *How Long 'Til Black Future Month?* (2018)
 Sheree Renée Thomas, "Foreword: Birth of a Revolution," Walidah Imarisha, "Introduction," and adrienne marie brown, "Outro" in *Octavia's Brood: Science Fiction Stories from Social Justice Movements* (2015), pp. 1-5, pp. 279-281.
- T. 02/18 **Midterm Exam**
- Borders Unseen But Deeply Felt:
 Time, Trauma, and Collective Memory**
- Th. 02/20 Ken Liu, "The Man Who Ended History: A Documentary" (2011)
 Dori Laub, "Truth and Testimony: The Process and the Struggle," *Psychoanalysis, Culture and Trauma* (1991): 75-91.
- T. 02/25 Art Spiegelman, *Maus I: A Survivor's Tale: My Father Bleeds History* (1986) - Chapters 1-3.
- Th. 02/27 Art Spiegelman, *Maus I: A Survivor's Tale: My Father Bleeds History* (1986) - Chapters 4-6.
 Samantha Zuckerman, "The Holocaust and the Graphic Novel: Using *Maus* and its Narrative Forms to Bring Credence to the Medium" (2008)
- T. 03/03 GB Tran, *Vietnamerica: A Family's Journey* (2011) - pp. 1-179.
- Th. 03/05 GB Tran, *Vietnamerica: A Family's Journey* (2011) - pp. 180-279.
 Yen Le Espiritu, "The Endings That Are Not Over," *Body Counts: The Vietnam War and Militarized Refuge(es)* (2014), pp. 171-188.
- T. 03/10 Jeannie Barroga, *Walls* (1993) - Act I
 Viet Nguyen, "Just Memory," *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War* (2016) - pp. 4-19.
- Th. 03/12 Jeannie Barroga, *Walls* (1993) - Act II
Proposal and Annotated Bibliography Due

T. 03/17 **Spring Break- No classes**

Th. 03/19 **Spring Break- No classes**

**Crossing Borders, Blurring Boundaries:
Globalization, Environmental Justice, and the Impasses of the Present**

- T. 03/24 Charles Yu, "Standard Loneliness Package" (2012)
Lesley Nneka Arimah, "What It Means When a Man Falls From the Sky" (2015)
Aimee Bahng, "On Speculation: Fiction, Finance, and Futurity," in *Migrant Futures: Decolonizing Speculation in Financial Times* (2018), pp. 1-23.
- Th. 03/26 Karen Tei Yamashita, *Through the Arc of the Rain Forest* (2017) - chapters 1-11 (pp. 3-70).
- T. 03/31 Karen Tei Yamashita, *Through the Arc of the Rain Forest* (2017) - chapters 12-26 (pp. 73-175).
Anna Tsing, Introduction to *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection* (2005) - pp. 1-11.
- Th. 04/02 Karen Tei Yamashita, *Through the Arc of the Rain Forest* (2017) - chapters 27-32 (pp. 179-212).
Ursula Heise, "Adventures in the global Amazon," *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global* (2008)
- T. 04/07 *Babel* (2006)
Rosa Urteaga, "9/11 and the Power of the Network Society in Alejandro González Iñárritu's *Babel*," *miscelánea* no. 50 (2014): pp. 99-114.
- Th. 04/09 **Peer Review Session**
- T. 04/14 Student Presentations
- Th. 04/16 Student Presentations
- T. 04/21 Student Presentations
- Th. 04/23 Student Presentations
- T. 04/28 **Final Project Due**