

Literatures of the Americas Section 01

ENGL 123A

Spring 2024 3 Unit(s) 01/24/2024 to 05/13/2024 Modified 04/16/2024

Course Information

English 123A: Literatures of the Americas promotes global understanding and transnational analysis by examining the cultures and literary arts of the Americas, a broad term that brings together many different regions, nations, cultures, and languages across North and South America and the Caribbean. In this course, we will explore how the concept of “the Americas” has been constructed, in part, through European colonial enterprises, U.S. imperialism and neocolonialism, global capitalism, and various forms of nationalism. At the same time, we will examine the ways in which authors and artists across the Americas create counternarratives that challenge the coherence of that concept and envision alternative forms of identity, community, and belonging. We will historicize and analyze distinct literary traditions across the Americas (with particular emphasis on Native North America and the Caribbean) as they are shaped by historical, cultural, and political contexts. Finally, we will consider what cross-cultural and transnational connections and/or coalitional possibilities exist within the broad, diverse, and vexed category of “Literatures of the Americas.”

Course Description and Requisites

Examines the literatures of the Americas including the cultural, historical, and political contexts from which they emerge.

Satisfies SJSU Studies Area V: Cultures and Global Understanding.

Prerequisite(s): Completion of Core General Education and upper division standing are prerequisites to all SJSU studies courses. Completion of, or co-registration in, 100W is strongly recommended.

Letter Graded

Classroom Protocols

Attendance

While attendance is not graded and cannot be per [University Policy F15-12](https://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F15-12.pdf) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F15-12.pdf>), regular attendance is vital to your learning and success in the course and is ultimately your responsibility. If you are sick, please stay home from class for your own and others' wellbeing. If you are unable to attend class, please email me in advance when possible to discuss how to make up what you missed.

Preparation & Participation

Please come prepared to discuss the day's readings and participate in class activities. This means that you've completed the assigned reading for the day in advance of class, you have access to those readings during our class discussion (the exception to this is if you accessed the reading through our print course reserves), and you have basic materials like pen/pencil and paper.

Devices

You are welcome to read and take notes on your phone, laptop, or tablet. However, please respect me and your peers by using your devices for class work only during our time together. If it appears that you are becoming distracted by or are distracting others with your devices, I will address this with you one-on-one.

Engaging in Scholarly Conversations & Community

Our class will require participation and collaboration and will cover complex issues, such as but not limited to race and ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and citizenship status. Your respectful, responsible, and self-aware engagement and dialogue will be vital to maintaining a safe and supportive learning community for all. While we will develop community expectations and discussion guidelines together in class, here are some foundational considerations:

- We can disagree and challenge each other's thinking and ideas in caring, respectful, and generative ways as long as that disagreement is not predicated on hate speech, disinformation, or exclusion. We will strive to direct our critiques toward ideas and not attack people.
- We will not use sexist, racist, homophobic, transphobic, ableist and other marginalizing language. If harmful language is used in class, we will address it together as a learning moment to the extent it is appropriate and safe to do so. Intentionally violent and exclusionary language (i.e., slurs or insults of any kind), however, will not be tolerated.
- The texts we will read will sometimes use offensive language to either illustrate the realities of racist, colonialist, sexist, and queerphobic violence or to recuperate and reclaim violent language that has been directed at their community as a member of that specific community. Because our class is a diverse community and we all occupy different identities and positionalities, when a slur appears within a text, please do not reproduce it in your own writing or say it aloud. You may say "first letter of word-word" (i.e., "f-word") or simply redact it with a written (----- or f-----) or spoken pause. If you are unsure of the history or meaning of a word, please ask about it and/or use language that know is inclusive.
- Close attention to the language that we read, write, and use is a necessary component of reading and thinking like a literary scholar, which we all are when we enter this classroom. Please be mindful of the language you use, and we will continue to work together to unpack the relationship between and among language, identity, and power together throughout the course.

Course Communication & Emails

Course materials such as syllabus, supplementary readings, announcements, assignment instructions, etc. can be found on [Canvas Learning Management System course login website](#). You are responsible for regularly checking both your email and the Canvas messaging system through MySJSU on [Spartan App Portal](#) to learn of any updates. For help with using Canvas see [Canvas Student Resources page](#).

Please be aware that I do not respond to emails outside of traditional business hours, M-F 9-5. If it is not a weekend and I have not responded to your email within 48 hours, please do not hesitate to follow up and send me a reminder (in fact, I would appreciate it).

When you email me, please be clear, concise, and respectful. Include a specific subject that states the purpose of your email as well as a greeting and a signature that includes your name.

Program Information

Welcome to this General Education course.

SJSU's General Education Program establishes a strong foundation of versatile skills, fosters curiosity about the world, promotes ethical judgment, and prepares students to engage and contribute responsibly and cooperatively in a multicultural, information-rich society. General education classes integrate areas of study and encourage progressively more complex and creative analysis, expression, and problem solving.

The General Education Program has three goals:

Goal 1: To develop students' core competencies for academic, personal, creative, and professional pursuits.

Goal 2: To enact the university's commitment to diversity, inclusion, and justice by ensuring that students have the knowledge and skills to serve and contribute to the well-being of local and global communities and the environment.

Goal 3: To offer students integrated, multidisciplinary, and innovative study in which they pose challenging questions, address complex issues, and develop cooperative and creative responses.

More information about the General Education Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) can be found on the [GE website](#).

English Program Information

The following statement has been adopted by the Department of English for inclusion in all syllabi: In English Department Courses, instructors will comment on and grade the quality of student writing as well as the quality of ideas being conveyed. All student writing should be distinguished by correct grammar and punctuation, appropriate diction and syntax, and well-organized paragraphs. The Department of English reaffirms its commitment to the differential grading scale as defined in the SJSU Catalog ("The Grading System").

Grades issued must represent a full range of student performance:

- A = excellent;
- B = above average;
- C = average;
- D = below average;
- F = failure.

Within any of the letter grade ranges (e.g. B+/B/B-), the assignment of a +(plus) or -(minus) grade will reflect stronger (+) or weaker (-) completion of the goals of the assignment.

Program Learning Outcomes (PLO)

Upon successful completion of an undergraduate degree program in the Department of English and Comparative Literature, students will be able to:

1. Read closely in a variety of forms, styles, structures, and modes, and articulate the value of close reading in the study of literature, creative writing, or rhetoric.
2. Show familiarity with major literary works, genres, periods, and critical approaches to British, American, and World Literature.
3. Write clearly, effectively, and creatively, and adjust writing style appropriately to the content, the context, and nature of the subject.
4. Develop and carry out research projects, and locate, evaluate, organize, and incorporate information effectively.
5. Articulate the relations among culture, history, and texts, including structures of power.

Department Information:

Department Name: English and Comparative Literature

Department Office: FO 102

Department Website: www.sjsu.edu/english (<https://www.sjsu.edu/english>)

Department email: english@sjsu.edu (<mailto:english@sjsu.edu>)

Department phone number: 408-924-4425

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

GE Area V Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of an Area V course, students should be able to:

1. Analyze historical, social, and/or cultural significance of creative works of human expression (examples include, but are not limited to, written works, images, media, music, dance, technologies, designs), from at least one cultural tradition outside the United States;
2. Examine how creative works of human expression [as defined in #1] outside the United States have influenced the United States' cultures;
3. Explain how a culture outside the U.S. has changed in response to internal and external influences;

4. Appraise how the study of creative works of human expression from outside the United States shapes one's own understanding of cultural experiences and practices.

Writing Practice: Students will write a minimum of 3000 words in a language and style appropriate to the discipline.

The GE writing requirement will be met in this class by means of weekly blog posts and a series of written assignments with an aggregate word count of 4,200+ words, as follows:

1. Reflective Discussion Posts: ~300 words each x 4 posts (~1200 total)
2. Close Reading Paper: 1200-1500 words
3. Critically Engaged Final Project: 1500-1800 words

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. **Historicize “the Americas” as a contentious category that is shaped by colonial histories and comprises multiple literary traditions that emerge from specific national, geographic, linguistic, and cultural contexts (aligned with GLO 1).**
 1. You will demonstrate your understanding of this CLO throughout all class readings, discussions, and assignments.
2. **Discuss how literature of the Americas critically portrays and creatively resists coloniality, imperialism, racism, and capitalism and reflect on how these literary works shape our own understanding of cultural experiences and practices across the Americas (aligned with GLO 1-3).**
 1. You will demonstrate understanding of this CLO primarily through class participation and your discussion posts.
3. **Analyze, contextualize, and critically respond to both content and form of literary texts through close readings (aligned with GLO 4).**
 1. You will demonstrate understanding of this CLO through the group teaching facilitation, discussion posts, close reading paper, and the final project.
4. **Practice writing and researching across genres and forms within the discipline with a particular audience and purpose in mind (aligned with GLO 4).**
 1. You will demonstrate understanding of this CLO through the discussion posts, close reading paper, and the final project.

Course Materials

Major Course Readings

- Deborah Miranda's *Bad Indians: A Tribal Memoir* (free electronic copy available through SJSU library)
- Alice Bag's *Pipe Bomb for the Soul**
- Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas' *Red: A Haida Manga* (free electronic copy available through SJSU library)
- Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place**
- Jamaica Kincaid's *Lucy**

All other course readings will be available on Canvas.

*While you are not required to buy these texts, you are responsible for getting access to the required readings, whether you purchase them through the campus bookstore, find them online, or check them out through the course reserves or the SJSU or SJPL libraries.

Library Liaison

You may contact Peggy Cabrera (peggy.cabrera@sjsu.edu) if you would like additional research support for your writing assignments in this course, or if you're interested in learning more about pursuing a career in library science.

Course Requirements and Assignments

Detailed assignment directions and grading rubrics will be available on Canvas and discussed in class in advance of due dates.

Class participation (15%): I encourage you to participate in class discussion not only by sharing your thoughts and asking questions but also by actively listening and creating space for others to share. I understand, however, that we all participate and process knowledge in different ways and that our level of comfort participating in the classroom may be influenced by our own relationships to power and privilege and by our educational experiences. The graded portion of your participation will not be based on how much you talk in class but will be based on a series of informal reflections, free write assignments, and small group activities done in class. These activities are "pop" style and will not be announced in advance; however, if you complete them, you will earn full credit. *If you know in advance that you will be absent from class or if an emergency arises that prevents you from attending class, please email me in advance or as soon as possible to let me know and discuss options to make up participation.*

Passage Presentation & Discussion (15%): The purpose of these presentations is to give you an opportunity to learn by becoming the teacher. You will take leadership over guiding your small group through your close reading and discussion of a passage of your choice from the text.

Reflective Discussion Posts (four total; 20%): Your discussion posts will provide a low-stakes setting for you to practice your close reading & analysis of assigned readings and reflect on how they shape your own understandings of cultural experiences and practices across the Americas.

Close Reading Practice + Paper (25%): In the close reading practice, you will develop a tentative research question, argument, and a draft of a body paragraph to begin brainstorming ideas and getting feedback. You will then use that feedback to develop a 4-5-page paper. This process allows you to engage in writing as a *process* and offers a space for you to practice close reading as a methodology for exploring: what literature means, how it communicates meaning formally, why it is important, and how it contributes to cultural understandings of the Americas.

Critically Engaged Final Project (25%): In your final project (about 6-8 pages) you will have the option of showcasing your learning in a format of your choice: an analytical paper, an original creative work and reflective statement, or a reflective essay. All three options must critically engage with scholarly and literary texts that we've read in class as well as your own outside research.

Grading Information

Class participation 15%

Group Teaching Facilitation 15%

Reflective Discussion Posts 20%

Close Reading Practice + Paper 25%

Critically Engaged Final Project 25%

Extensions & Late Work

I am very willing to work with you if you anticipate that you may need extra time to submit your best work in an assignment. Please email me at least 24 hours in advance of the deadline if you would like to request an extension on an assignment. If an emergency or other extenuating circumstance arises that makes this impossible, please contact me, and we can work out a solution. If late work is submitted, it will be graded at my discretion and may receive a deduction.

University Policies

Per [University Policy S16-9 \(PDF\)](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on the [Syllabus Information](https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php>) web page. Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

Course Schedule

Note that this schedule is subject to change at instructor's discretion. While I will never add more work, I may adjust readings and deadlines to respond to the class needs/interests. All changes will be announced with fair notice via Canvas.

When	Topic	Notes
Week 1	Course Introductions	Thursday 1/25 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Course introductions• Review syllabus• Complete syllabus quiz by 11:59 p.m.

When	Topic	Notes
Week 2	(Un)learning "the Americas"	<p>Tuesday 1/30</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angela Valenzuela's "Education" from <i>Keywords for Latina/o Studies</i> • "Conocimiento" activity <p>Thursday 2/1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alexandra T. Vazquez's "Americas" from <i>Keywords for Latina/o Studies</i> <p>Friday 2/2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion Post #1 due by 11:59 (submit two peer responses by end of weekend)
Week 3	Decolonial Counternarratives of the Americas	<p>Tuesday 2/6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deborah Miranda's <i>Bad Indians: A Tribal Memoir</i> "Introduction" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Content warning: this text discusses various forms of physical violence, child abuse, and rape within the context of settler colonialism • Nichole Meyers Lim's "Educating Elementary School Children about California Missions and the Perpetuation of Genocide" • Discuss group teaching facilitation and sign up <p>Thursday 2/8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Miranda's <i>Bad Indians</i> pp. 1-36 (The End of the World: Missionization 1776-1836)
Week 4		<p>Tuesday 2/13</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Miranda's <i>Bad Indians</i> pp. 37-74 (Bridges: Post-Secularization 1836-1900) • "Indigeneity" from <i>Native Studies Keywords</i> edited by Stephanie Nohelani Tevas, Andrea Smith, and Michelle H. Raheja <p>Thursday 2/15</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Miranda's <i>Bad Indians</i> pp. 75-106 (The Light from the Carrisa Plains: Reinvention 1900-1961)

When	Topic	Notes
Week 5		<p>*Please check progress. Monday, Feb. 19, is last day to drop a class without a "W."</p> <p>Tuesday 2/20</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Miranda's <i>Bad Indians</i> pp. 107-175 (Teheyapami Achiska: Home 1961-present *Read Silver through Testimony*) • Guest visit from Dr. Regiani A. S. Zacarias, International Visiting Faculty at SJSU <p>Thursday 2/22</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Miranda's <i>Bad Indians</i> pp. 176-208 (finish book) • "Colonialism" from <i>Native Studies Keywords</i> edited by Stephanie Nohelani Tevas, Andrea Smith, and Michelle H. Raheja <p>Friday 2/23</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion Post #2 due by 11:59 p.m. (complete two peer responses by end of weekend)
Week 6	Graphic Narratives of Native North America/Turtle Island	<p>Tuesday 2/27</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selected comic shorts from <i>Deer Woman: An Anthology</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Content warning: Portrays sexual violence and graphic violence of self-defense. <p>Thursday 2/29</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Marnette Federis and Mina Kim's "Examining the Painful Legacy of native American Boarding Schools in the US" • Watch & discuss Reservation <i>Dogs</i> season 3, episode 3 "Deer Lady" in class <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Content warning: Does not graphically portray but discusses child abuse and sexual assault within the context of Native American boarding schools. • Discuss Close Reading Practice + Paper

When	Topic	Notes
Week 7		<p>Tuesday 3/5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas's <i>Red: A Haida Manga</i> (read full text) • Maylei Blackwell's "Indigeneity" from <i>Keywords from Latina/o Studies</i> <p>Thursday 3/7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue discussing Yahgulanaas's <i>Red: A Haida Manga</i> <p>Friday 3/8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close reading practice due by 11:59 p.m.
Week 8	Chicana Feminist Crossings (US-Central America)	<p>Tuesday 3/12</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alice Bag's <i>Pipe Bomb for the Soul</i> pp. 1-28 • Sheila Marie Contreras' "Chicana/o/@/x" from <i>Keywords for Latina/o Studies</i> <p>Thursday 3/14</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alice Bag's <i>Pipe Bomb for the Soul</i> pp. 29-55
Week 9		<p>Tuesday 3/19</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alice Bag's <i>Pipe Bomb for the Soul</i> pp. 56-90 • Feedback on close reading practice <p>Thursday 3/21</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alice Bag's <i>Pipe Bomb for the Soul</i> pp. 90-107 • María Eugenia Coterá's "Feminisms" in <i>Keywords for Latina/o Studies</i>
Week 10		<p>Tuesday 3/26</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-class writing workshop <p>Thursday 3/28</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No regular class meeting--open office hours during class time in FOB 216 <p>Friday 3/29</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close Reading Paper due by 11:59 p.m.

When	Topic	Notes
Spring Break (April 1-5)		Rest and enjoy your spring break!
Week 11	Postcolonial Caribbean Prose	<p>Tuesday 4/9</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jamaica Kincaid's <i>A Small Place</i> pp. 1-37 <p>Thursday 4/11</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No class meeting because Dr. Urcalegui is away on university-approved travel. • Jamaica Kincaid's <i>A Small Place</i> pp. 41-81
Week 12		<p>Tuesday 4/16</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wrap up discussion of Kincaid's <i>A Small Place</i> <p>Thursday 4/18</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No class meeting because Dr. Urcalegui is out on university-approved personal day. • At home work day. Read Jamaica Kincaid's <i>Lucy</i> pp. 3-16 & work on Discussion Post #3 <p>Friday 4/19</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion Post #3 due by 11:59 p.m. (submit two peer responses due by end of weekend)
Week 13		<p>Tuesday 4/23</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jamaica Kincaid's <i>Lucy</i> pp. 17-42 <p>Thursday 4/25</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jamaica Kincaid's <i>Lucy</i> pp. 43-84 • Discuss final projects

When	Topic	Notes
Week 14		<p>Tuesday 4/30</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jamaica Kincaid's <i>Lucy</i> pp. 85-132 • Supplementary scholarly reading TBD <p>Thursday 5/2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jamaica Kincaid's <i>Lucy</i> pp.133-164 <p>Friday 5/3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion Post #4 due by 11:59 p.m. (submit two peer responses by end of weekend)
Week 15	Final Preparations & Reflections	<p>Tuesday 5/7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final project workshop <p>Thursday 5/9</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course reflections & evaluations
Finals Week		<p>Tuesday 5/21</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final projects due by 11:59 p.m.