

# • Southwestern Literature

English 4302

Spring 2017

Tuesday, 6-8:45 p.m.

**Room D106**

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## **Goals**

Most people who read a lot think that novels reveal important insights into human nature. That is a good enough reason for studying them. In other words, the ultimate goal of this course is to make you thoughtful about the human condition. Reading these novels will give you a place to begin. This course will also help hone your skills of critical thinking.

After taking this course, you should be able to use these novelists' insights into the human condition to develop your own insights and to help others develop theirs. That does not mean you just adopt these ideas as your own. You can argue, disagree, cite contradicting evidence. It does mean you take these ideas and winnow them through your own experience. Do the characters seem real? Do the incidents, motives, plots seem plausible? You may adopt these ideas, modify them, or reject them, but this is a good place to start developing your own.

To develop your own ideas, you need to think critically, and this course should help you develop critical thinking skills. For example, after taking it you should be able to see patterns in characters and incidents in several novels, synthesize them into a coherent idea and then compare and contrast that idea with what you know. For one thing, that means you will need to see each novel in relation to the others. You should also hone your skills of assessing evidence and developing theses and presenting arguments.

To do all that, of course, you will need some basic knowledge about the novelists and the novels, such as plots, characters, and incidents. For example, you should be able to match characters and novels and even identify specific incidents.

## **Texts**

Anaya, *Bless Me, Ultima*, 0-446-60025-3

Castillo, *So Far from God*, 9780393326932

Cather, *Death Comes to the Archbishop*

Kelton, *The Time It Never Rained*, 0-91264-689-6

McCarthy, *All the Pretty Horses*

Momaday, *House Made of Dawn*, 0-06-093194-9

Nichols, *The Milagro Beanfield War* 0-8050-6374-9

Rivera, *Y no se lo Trago la Tierra*, 9781558850835

Silko, *Ceremony*, 0-14-008683-8

Waters, *The Man Who Killed the Deer*, 0-8040-0194-4

## **Class procedure**

You will read the novels on your own, and then we will discuss them in class, comparing them with what you know about human nature. You will also present oral reports on the novelists' lives and on what critics have said about the novels.

## **Grading**

You will be graded on your knowledge of the novels and on your understanding of the novelists' insights, and your ability to develop and support your own. Specifically, you will take exams and quizzes, write response papers and a term paper, and participate in class discussion. You will accumulate points, up to a possible 1,000, and if you have 900, you will make an A and so on.

Quizzes. 260 points. There will be quizzes over the readings, at the beginning of class and after the break. The quizzes will cover basic questions about the facts of the readings, such as why Tayo cries so much. If you read the novels carefully, you will do well. The purpose is to get you to read the novels and to be in class on time. I'll pass out the quizzes a minute or so before class starts, and you'll have ten minutes.

Exams. 200 points. A mid-term exam on March 21, worth 100 points, and a final exam on May 9, worth 150 points. You will need to identify ideas, novel, characters, etc. and write two essays on topics you select from a list. The object will be to show that you can analyze and synthesize evidence and produce a conclusion and a coherent argument to back it up.

Assignment sheets for the following are on Blackboard.

Weekly question. 30 points. The first two weeks, you will answer questions that I post on Blackboard. Grades will be based on whether you have a topic sentence, the context of your evidence, your evidence, and documentation.

Blackboard posts. 90 points. Later in the course, you will post questions on Blackboard and answer one of your peers' questions.

Response papers. 200 points. You will write two papers responding to questions that I give you or to questions that you ask. Basically, they will ask what a piece of literature indicates about human nature or about culture. You will submit a rough draft of each paper, and I'll tell you what you need to do to make an A.

A list of response questions is on Blackboard. You may respond to questions on any of the literature we have covered up to the time you write a paper. If you wish, you may write all the response papers about the same topic and then put them together with appropriate polishing for the term paper.

Term project. 170 points. You have a choice. You may select a topic regarding American literature, develop a position, and write a six- to eight-page paper to support that position. Or you may emulate a novel. I will look over your work at various points and advise you on how to make an A.

Author report. 50 points. You will research an author's life and literary interests and submit a report to me, which I'll look over, return to you for corrections, and post online.

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### **Late papers**

Late papers without a legitimate, documented reason for being late will get a grade no higher than a C. Legitimate means you were incapacitated and could not do the work. Documented means a document indicating you were incapacitated.

### **Attendance**

To participate in class, you must be present and on time. If you are absent or late frequently, you will lose points on the quizzes. **If you miss three classes, you will be dropped with an F.**

### **Plagiarism**

**If you plagiarize, you will get a zero until you write your own paper.** Plagiarized work will not be accepted. Plagiarism means turning in someone else's work for credit. We will discuss documentation and citation so you will know how to submit work without plagiarizing.

### **Students with disabilities**

Sul Ross State University Rio Grande College is committed to equal access in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1973. Students who need accessibility services should contact Kathy Biddick at 830-279-3003. The address is 2623 Garner Field Road, Uvalde, Texas 78801.

### **Distance education**

Students enrolled in distance education courses have equal access to the university's academic support services, library resources, and instructional technology support. For more information about accessing these resources, visit the SRSU website. Students should submit online assignments through Blackboard or SRSU email, which require secure login information to verify students' identities and to protect students' information. The procedures for filing a student complaint are included in the student handbook. Students enrolled in distance education courses at Sul Ross are expected to adhere to all policies pertaining to academic honesty and appropriate student conduct, as described in the student handbook. Students in web-based courses must maintain appropriate equipment and software, according to the needs and requirements of the course, as outlined on the SRSU website.

• January 17

Introduction to the course

Discussion of southwestern geography and history

January 23

First weekly question. For instructions, see Blackboard.

Jan. 24

Ceremony

Jan. 29

Second weekly question.

Jan. 31

House Made of Dawn

February 5

First online question. For instructions, see the assignment sheet.

February 6

Answer to the first online question. For instructions see the assignment sheet.

Feb. 7

Bless me, Ultima -- hermeneutics

February 12

Your second online question.

February 13

The answer to the second online question.

Feb. 14

Bless me, Ultima -- poetics

February 19

Rough draft of your first response paper

February 21

So Far from God

February 26

Final draft of your first response paper

February 28

Death comes for the Archbishop

March 5

Draft of your second response paper

March 7

Y no se...

March 12

Final draft of your second response paper

March 14

Spring break

March 21

Mid-term Examination online

March 26

The topic for your term project. For the instructions, see the assignment sheet.

March 28

The Milagro Beanfield War -- hermeneutics

April 2

List of passages you will use for your term project. For instructions see the assignment sheet.

April 4

The Milagro Beanfield War -- poetics  
April 9  
The outline of your online project

April 11  
The Time it Never Rained

April 16  
Rough draft of your online project

April 18  
The Man who Killed the Deer

April 23  
Second draft of your online project

April 25  
All the Pretty Horses

April 30  
Final draft of your online project

May 2  
Review

May 9  
Final examination online.