Mexican American Literature and Culture in the Borderlands

This course examines the intersection of Mexican American literature and culture. Toward that end, the course addresses definitions of culture and the role of language and literature in its formation. One assumption is that literature (broadly construed) reflects and shapes the way people think, behave, and give their lives meaning with particular insight, for example, into their own social positions, gender, self-identifications, politics, ethics, and an understanding of the past woven into future aspirations. Another assumption is that literature, as a meaningful, influential site, changes over time, enabling people to draw upon texts (explicitly and implicitly) in ways that pertain to their immediate needs and circumstances. In this course, these assumptions guide the tenor of discussion, our understanding of culture and its study in anthropology.

Course Objectives

1. Students will learn U.S. Southwest history with an emphasis on Anglo, Mexican and Mexican American relations.
2. Students will learn key political concepts and their application.
3. Students will learn to identify and explore the relationship between expressive culture and social consciousness and movements.

Grading

Three short 3-5 page papers = 60%
Presentation and report = 20%
Class facilitation = 10%
Class participation = 10%

Papers and class facilitation

You will write three (3) short, concise papers in response to a study question. I encourage you to schedule an office visit and a visit to the university writing center well in advance (at least 1 week) of due dates.

You will facilitate one class discussion by preparing and distributing a short list of questions (3 or 4) that refer to salient themes, providing insight into the reading material.

Community Project:
During the semester, you will participate in at least three relevant community events. The events may be inter-related and their relevancy is defined by their representation of Mexican American literature and/or culture. These events might be any of the following: poetry readings, lowrider car club meetings, religious gatherings, art openings, celebrations of Our Lady of Guadalupe (December 12), quinceañeras, and so forth. The presentation will be approximately 10 minutes long, and the report, 5–6 pages long. You are required to make at least one office visit where we will discuss the links between your community project and the class material.

**Required materials: (Available at the TCU bookstore)**


Reading packet.

**Week 1  What is Culture?**

(Day one)
Introduction:

(Day 2)


**Week 2  Language**

(Day 1)

Two articles from *El Clamor Público*.


(Day 2)


**Week 3  Wars and Wars in Words**

(Day 1)

The following selections:
—Pronunciamiento de Varela y otros de California contra los americanos. 1846 (translation)
—Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. 1848
—Secretaría de Relaciones al Ministro de México en Washington. 1853
—The Gadsden Treaty. 1853
—Las Gorras Blancas, Our Platform. 1890
—F.W. Meyer to William Taft. President of the United States. 1910
—Henry Warren account of the Porvenir Massacre in Presidio. 1918.
—José T. Canales testimony on Texas Rangers before Texas legislature. 1919
—Ricardo Flores Magón to Harry Weinberger. 1921
—P.C. Alamía to Texas Governor Dan Moody. 1927

(Day 2)

The following selections: Preface, Introduction, Loneliness without Despair, Buffalo Hunters, Comancheros, Sheep on a Thousand Hills, and Mustangs.


Week 4 Religion, Politics, and Ideology

(day 1)


(Day 2)


Week 5 Civil Rights, Student Protests, and the UFW

(Day 1)
—The Fight for Educational Reform. 172–195
—The Chicano Moratorium. 196–207

(Day 2)


**Week 6 Popular movement**


(Day 2)
Selections:
—The Homeland, Aztlan/El Otro México. 23–35
—Movimientos de rebeldía y las culturas que traicionan. 37–45
—La conciencia de la mestizo/Towards a New Consciousness. 99–113


**Week 7 Arturo Islas**

— Judgment Day. 1–50
— Compadres and Comadres. 53–110

(Day 2)

**Week 8 Cultural Poetics**

(Day 1)
Selections: Traditions, Institutions, and Formations; Dominant, Residual, and Emergent, and Structures of Feeling. 115-135.

(Day 2).

**Week 9 Cherrie Moraga/Watsonville**

(Day 1)


(Day 2)
— Act 2 and Epilogue.

**Week 10 Sandra Cisneros**

(Day 1 and 2)

**Week 11 History and Its Critique**

(Day 1)


**Week 12  History, Power, and Symbol**

(Day 1)
—Introduction
—Chapter 1, The Texas Modern.

(Day 2)
—Chapter 5, Cinematic Images
—Chapter 6, Why Does Davy Live
—Conclusion, The Alamo as Tex(Mex) Master Symbol of Modernity

**Week 13  Poetry**

(Day 1 and 2)

**Week 14  Presentations**

**Week 15  Presentations and Conclusion**

**Policies and Procedures**

**Grading Scale:**

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Score</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>60-69</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>0-59</td>
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**Grades:**

In compliance with TCU’s privacy policy, grades are not disseminated by telephone or email. Grades will be available through eCollege and from the registrar at the end of the semester. Please do not e-mail the instructor with grade inquiries.

**Attendance:**

Attendance facilitates your understanding of the course material and the cultivation of relationships with your classmates. However, in compliance with TCU policy, I acknowledge Official University Absences and unfortunate life experiences, including family emergencies, severe illness, and catastrophic accidents. Apart from these types of absences, you are allowed up to three unexcused absences (one and a half
weeks of class) without penalty. **Your fourth unexcused absence will result in the loss of your class participation grade or 10 per cent of your course grade.**

Anticipate illness, car breakdowns, and other unavoidable events where this policy will serve your needs. Otherwise, please attend class.

Please note that your examinations and quizzes will be based on the required readings as well as additional materials presented in the classroom or as part of class discussion. It is, therefore, your responsibility to contact your classmates whenever necessary to keep up with all course-related materials and announcements.

**Religious observance policy:** Students who anticipate missing class due to a major religious observance must provide written notice of the date(s) to the professor before the second class meeting.

**Writing Center:** Students are encouraged to take advantage of the university’s Writing Center well in advance (at least 2 weeks) of the deadline for all writing assignments. (817) 257-7221.

**Disability Services:**

Texas Christian University complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 regarding student with disabilities. Eligible students seeking accommodations should contact the Coordinator for Students with Disabilities in the Center for academic Services located in Sadler Hall, 11. Accommodations are not retroactive. Therefore, students should contact the Coordinator as soon as possible in the term for which they are seeking accommodations. Further information can be obtained from the Center for Academic Services (TCU Box 297710, Fort Worth, TX 76129 or call 817-257-7486).

Adequate time must be allowed to arrange accommodations and accommodations are not retroactive; therefore, students should contact the Coordinator as soon as possible in the academic term for which they are seeking accommodations. Each eligible student is responsible for presenting relevant, verifiable, professional documentation and/or assessment reports to the Coordinator. Guidelines for documentation may be found at [http://www.acs.tcu.edu/DISABILITY.HTM](http://www.acs.tcu.edu/DISABILITY.HTM).

Students with emergency medical information or needing special arrangements in case a building must be evacuated should discuss this information with their instructor/professor as soon as possible.

**Academic Misconduct Policy** (Sec. 3.4, Student Handbook)

Any act that violates the academic integrity of this institution is considered academic misconduct. In the course plagiarism—the appropriation, theft, purchase, or use of another’s work, and the unacknowledged incorporation of that work into one’s own—is of particular concern. Definitions of academic misconduct as well as possible sanctions for academic misconduct can be found in the TCU Student Handbook (pp 12–15). A “Procedures for Dealing with Academic Misconduct” can be found at the Department of Campus Life and the AddRan College Dean’s office.

**Class Disruption:**

No form of disruption will be tolerated in this class. Disruption of the academic process consists of the act or words of a student in a classroom or teaching environment which in the reasonable estimation of a faculty member: (a) directs attention from the academic matters at hand, such as noisy distractions,
persistent, disrespectful or abusive interruptions of lecture, exam or academic discussions, or (b) presents a danger to the health, safety or well being of the faculty member or students.

Please be courteous to each other and respectful of your professor! If you have a pertinent comment to make, please share it with the entire class, not your neighbor(s). Arriving late, leaving early, talking (with your classmates or on a cell phone), playing games, reading newspapers or magazines, eating or sleeping during class are all examples of behaviors that are disruptive and likely to be punished.

**Cell Phones and Pagers: Turn them off.**

**Email and Class Correspondence**

Only the official TCU student e-mail address will be used for all course notification. It is your responsibility to check your TCU e-mail on a regular basis or have it forwarded to the address of your choice.

**Syllabus Changes:**

This syllabus represents current plans and objectives. The latter may change throughout the course of the semester in order to enhance your learning opportunities. Such changes, should they occur, will be clearly communicated to you via e-mail and announced in class. You are responsible for updating your syllabus and schedule accordingly.