**San José State University  
English and Comparative Literature  
English 255:**

**Race, Ethnicity, and Historiography in American Literature**

# Spring 2011

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| Instructor: | **Dr. Noelle Brada-Williams** |
| Website: | http://www2.sjsu.edu/faculty/awilliams/index.html |
| Office Hours: | Mondays 1:30 PM to 4:30 PM. Additional times by appointment in Faculty Office Building (FOB) 110. |
| Email: | Noelle.Brada-Williams@sjsu.edu |
| Telephone: | (408) 924-4439 |
| Class: | Mondays 7 to 9:45 PM, Clark |

Ethnic minorities have frequently struggled to determine how their own experiences are recorded in official histories. Often literary artists have served to fill in the gaps left by historians. This class will particularly examine the representation of race and ethnicity in American literature through the practice of historiographic metafiction, a practice which breaks down the barriers between literature and history by making readers interrogate their ability to understand history except through highly selective, mediated narrative constructions. One of its foremost practitioners, E.L. Doctorow, will be visiting our campus near the end of the semester.

**Departmental Learning Objectives**

In the Department of English and Comparative Literature, students will demonstrate the ability 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, and/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 the 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.

Our weekly readings and class discussions will emphasis the practice of objectives 1, 2, and 5, while the written assignments and presentations will emphasize objectives 3 and 4 while continuing to draw on students’ skills in objectives 1, 2, and 5.

**Grading:**

Note that *doing the reading and being able and willing to respond* to the comments and questions of both the professor and your fellow students on a weekly basis is a requirement of the course. 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.

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| Class Presentation with handout and questions | Lead discussion on one of the assigned readings pus *briefly* summarize two other articles or chapters of relevance to the week’s reading. Provide a handout. | 15% |
| Proposal and Annotated Bibliography | One-page proposal (for long research paper) plus min. of 10 annotated bibliographic entries | 20% |
| Research Paper | 15-20 page essay | 40% |
| Paper presentation | 10-minute presentation on a condensed/edited version of your research paper | 10% |
| Participation | Participation in 15 classes, including prepared questions and comments on each week’s readings | 15% |

## Classroom Protocol

You are required to be courteous and professional to both classmates and the professor. Most people take this as a requirement in their daily lives and this statement does not need to be reiterated here. However, people sometimes forget that the classroom is a professional setting and rules that govern a business meeting apply here. For example, devices such as cell phones need to be turned off; coming to class late is unacceptable. While you may use a laptop to take notes in class, you may not waste class time by texting or performing non-course related activities on a phone or computer. If an emergency arises that requires your absence from class, please contact the professor. Simply prioritizing your education behind other time commitments does not constitute such an emergency. Participating in class discussions and listening to and taking notes on class lectures are absolutely necessary for the successful completion of this course. Protocol for written work requires that all quotations must be enclosed in quotation marks or, when more than three lines, put in an indented block. Full citation of the original author and source must also be included. For all papers, review a recent (post 2009) *MLA Handbook* for help with quote integration, formatting & proper citation. Also see the University policy on “Academic Integrity” below for help defining and avoiding plagiarism of all kinds.

## University Policy on Academic Integrity

Students should know that the University’s [Academic Integrity Policy is availabe at http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/download/judicial\_affairs/Academic\_Integrity\_Policy\_S07-2.pdf](http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/download/judicial_affairs/Academic_Integrity_Policy_S07-2.pdf). Your own commitment to learning, as evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University and the University’s integrity policy, require you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development. The website for [Student Conduct and Ethical Development is available at http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/judicial\_affairs/index.html](http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/judicial_affairs/index.html).

Instances of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Cheating on exams or plagiarism (presenting the work of another as your own, or the use of another person’s ideas without giving proper credit) will result in a failing grade and sanctions by the University. For this class, all assignments are to be completed by the individual student unless otherwise specified. If you would like to include in your assignment any material you have submitted, or plan to submit for another class, please note that SJSU’s Academic Policy F06-1 requires approval of instructors.

### Campus Policy in Compliance with the American Disabilities Act

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. Presidential Directive 97-03 requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with the DRC (Disability Resource Center) to establish a record of their disability.

## Library Liaison for English & Comparative Literature:

## Contact Toby Matoush via email: Toby.Matoush@sjsu.edu, or phone: (408) 808-2096 if you have library research questions that have not been answered in class.

## Nine Required Texts:

1. A reader available at Maple Press (located on West San Carlos between 10th and 11 streets)
2. E.L. Doctorow’s *The Book of Daniel*, 1969/1971. (ISBN: 978-0812978179)
3. E.L. Doctorow’s *Ragtime,* 1975*.* (ISBN: 978-0812978186)
4. Louise Erdrich’s *Tracks*, 1988. (ISBN: 0-06-097245-9)
5. Maxine Hong Kingston’s *China Men*, 1980.(ISBN: 978-0679723288)
6. Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*, 1987. (ISBN: 978-1400033416 )
7. John Steinbeck’s *East of Eden,* 1952.(ISBN: 978-0-14-200423-4)
8. Luis Valdez’s *Zoot Suit*, 1979.(ISBN: 978-1558850484)
9. Karen Tei Yamashita’s *I Hotel.* Coffee House Books, 2010. (ISBN: 978-1-56689-239-1)
10. You also need to make sure that your MySJSU account has your most accessible and current email address. Since we only meet once a week, expect to occasionally get questions or information emailed to you.

The texts (not including the reader) can be purchased at Spartan Books and Roberts Bookstore as well as via internet sellers via <http://www.sjsu.edu/english/donations/>.

# English 255

**Race, Ethnicity, and Historiography in American Literature**

# Spring 2011 Course Schedule

*The schedule may vary depending on the needs of the class or scheduling issues. Any changes will be reported in class and via the email you have registered with MySJSU.*

| Week | Readings & Assignments |
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| 1: **January 31** | Introduction to course and film, *Zoot Suit,* in class. |
| 2: **February 7** | Read *East of Eden* parts one and two (to page 270, through chapter 22) and Engler and Muller essays in reader. |
| 3: **February 14** | Finish *East of Eden*  (to page 601). Busch and Tagoya recommended (in reader). |
| 4: **February 21** | Read Doctorow’s *The Book of Daniel* and “False Documents” in reader. |
| 5: **February 28** | Finish Doctorow’s *The Book of Daniel* and begin reading of Doctorow’s *Ragtime.* Also read Linda Hutcheon essay in reader. |
| 6: **March 7** | Finish Doctorow’s *Ragtime.* Read Brian McHale chapter in reader. |
| 7: **March 14** | Read *Zoot Suit* plus related readings in reader. |
| 8: **March 21** | Read Maxine Hong Kingston’s *China Men* and “No Name Woman” excerpt from *Woman Warrior* in reader. |
| **March 26-30** | **SPRING BREAK** |
| 9: **April 4** | Read all of Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* and Wolff and Berger essays in reader. |
| 10: **April 11** | Read all ofLouise Erdrich’s *Tracks* plus Peterson and Beidler essays in reader. **Proposals and annotated bibliographies due.** |
| 11: **April 18** | Read *I Hotel* (first two novellas) and essay by Hayden White in reader. |
| 12: **April 25** | Read *I Hotel* to page 400 or so and essay by Fredric Jameson in reader. |
| 13: **May 2** | Finish *I Hotel.* Additional essays may be assigned. |
| 14: **May 9** | **Seminar Papers due.** In-class **presentations** based on your seminar papers. |
| May 10th | **E.L Doctorow, 7pm** Reading and book signing. University Theatre |
| May 11th | **1pm:** E.L. Doctorow in Conversation with Andrew Altschul. University Theatre |
| 15: **May 16** | **Second half of our mini conference.** |
| **Finals week** | Meeting only if needed (i.e. additional conference papers, etc.) |