

Literatures of the Americas Section 01

ENGL 123A

Spring 2023 3 Unit(s) 01/25/2023 to 05/15/2023 Modified 01/27/2023

Contact Information

Instructor:	Professor Maite Urcalegui
Email:	maite.urcalegui@sjsu.edu
Office Hours:	Mondays 4-5:30 p.m. via Zoom . Wednesdays 12-1 p.m. in Faculty Offices Building (FOB) 216 *Additional times available by appointment via email.
Class Day/Time & Location:	Tuesdays & Thursdays 4:30-5:45 p.m. In person in Boccardo Business Center 130

Course Description and Requisites

Course promotes global understanding by examining the cultures and literary arts of the Americas, and covers representative texts and authors.

GE Area(s): V. Cultures and Global Understanding

Prerequisite(s): Passage of the Writing Skills Test (WST) or ENGL/LLD 100A with a C or better (C- not accepted), 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.

Note(s): All of SJSU Studies courses require completion of the WST and upper division standing.

Letter Graded

* Classroom Protocols

Preparation & Participation

Please come prepared to discuss the day's materials 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 distracting others with your devices, we may need to have a discussion after class or via email.

Engaging in Scholarly Discourse & 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 a civil, respectful, and productive way as long as that disagreement is not predicated on hate speech, disinformation, or exclusion.
- 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 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 you know is appropriate.
- In this course, we will work together to develop an critical, intersectional approach to reading literatures of the Americas that is attentive to the way in which we all negotiate and inhabit multiple identities and varying relationships to power and privilege. This same intersectional approach that informs our reading should shape how we engage in dialogue with one another in this learning community.
- 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.

Course Communication & Emails

Course materials such as syllabus, handouts, notes, 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 Goals

Course Description

English 123A: Literatures of the Americas promotes global understanding and transnational analysis by examining the cultures and literary arts of the Americas and reading representative texts and authors. In this course, we will explore how the idea/myth 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 these national boundaries 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, the Caribbean, and Mexico) as they are shaped by geographic, national, ethnoracial, linguistic, and cultural contexts. Finally, we will consider what cross-cultural/transnational connections and/or coalitional possibilities, if any, exist within the broad, diverse, and vexed category of "Literatures of the Americas."

Course Format

This course will be held in person with office hours available in person and on Zoom. I understand, however, that we are still in the midst of the ongoing and ever-changing Covid-19 pandemic. If you need to miss class due to exposure to or illness from Covid-19 or any other personal or medical emergency, please contact me in advance when possible to work out alternative ways to participate and succeed in the course. **University policy recommends but does not require the use of masks indoors. My personal preference is that we all continue to mask, and I will continue to wear my mask. Masking is, of course, voluntary.**

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

GE Area V Learning Outcomes (GLOs)

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 5,000+ words, as follows:

1. Class Participation Assignments: ~250 words each (~2500 total)
2. Reflective Discussion Posts: 500 words each x 5 posts (2500 total)
3. Close Reading Paper: 1200-1500 words
4. Creative Synthesis & Reflection: ~1000 words
5. 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 your discussion posts and your creative synthesis and reflection.*
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, creative synthesis & reflection, and the critically engaged research paper.*
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, creative synthesis & reflection, and critically engaged research paper.*

Course Materials

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.

All other course readings will be available on Canvas.

Bad Indians: A Tribal Memoir

Author: Deborah Miranda

Publisher: Heyday Books

ISBN: 9781597142014

Availability: Campus Bookstore, Online via SJSU Library, & Course Reserve

This text is available for purchase at the campus bookstore. It is also available online through the "Library Course Materials" tab on canvas or in print on our course reserves at the King Library.

Red: A Haida Manga

Author: Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas

Publisher: Douglas & McIntyre

ISBN: 9781771620222

Availability: Campus Bookstore

At this time, this book is only available for purchase, so please consider buying if you're able.

Pipe Bomb for the Soul

Author: Alice Bag

Publisher: Alice Bag

ISBN: 9780692433195

Availability: Campus Bookstore

At this point, this text is only available at the campus bookstore, so please consider purchasing if able.

A Small Place

Author: Jamaica Kincaid

Publisher: Farrar, Staus and Giroux

ISBN: 9780374527075

Availability: Campus Bookstore & Course Reserve

This text is available for purchase at the campus bookstore or in print on course reserve at the SJSU Library.

Behind the Mountains

Author: Edwidge Danticat

Publisher: Scholastic

ISBN: 9780439373005

Availability: Campus Bookstore

At this time, this book is only available at the campus bookstore, so please consider purchasing if necessary.

Library Liaison

You may contact Peggy Cabrera (peggy.cabrera@sjsu.edu) if you would like additional research support for your work in this course.

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 (10%): 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 indeed be influenced by our own relationships to power and privilege and by experiences of educational exclusion. 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.

Group Teaching Facilitation (20%): The group teaching facilitations are an opportunity for you to become the teachers, share your excitement about a text, and lead class discussion. Your goal is to kickstart class discussion by offering a collaborative close reading that then opens to 2-3 open-ended discussion questions for the class. Presentations will be collaborative, and groups will meet with me in office hours prior to presenting.

Reflective Discussion Posts (five total; 25%): 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 Paper (20%): This 4-5-page close reading paper invites you to follow your curiosity as you pursue an original argument (a thesis) about an assigned literary work of your choice. This paper offers a space for you to engage in sustained close reading as a methodology for exploring what literature means, 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 the critical and literary texts that we've read in class as well as one outside source.

✓ Grading Information

Class participation 10%

Group Teaching Facilitation 20%

Close Reading Paper 20%

Reflective Discussion Posts 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. However, I can only do this if you communicate with me in advance. Please email me at least 48 hours in advance 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 the instructor's discretion and may receive a deduction.

University Policies

Per [University Policy S16-9](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 [Syllabus Information web page](https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php>) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php>). 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, schedule, and assignment deadlines accordingly. All changes will be announced with fair notice via Canvas.

When	Topic	Notes
Week 1	Course Introductions	Tuesday 1/26 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to course and the syllabus
Week 2	(Un)learning & Unpacking "the Americas"	Tuesday 1/31 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angela Valenzuela's "Education" from <i>Keywords for Latina/o Studies</i> • "Conocimiento" activity Thursday 2/2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alexandra T. Vazquez's "Americas" from <i>Keywords for Latina/o Studies</i>
Week 3	(De)Colonial Counternarratives of the Americas	Tuesday 2/7 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deborah Miranda's <i>Bad Indians: A Tribal Memoir</i> "Introduction" • Nichole Meyers Lim's "Educating Elementary School Children about California Missions and the Perpetuation of Genocide" Thursday 2/9 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Miranda's <i>Bad Indians</i> pp. 1-36
Week 4		Tuesday 2/14 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Miranda's <i>Bad Indians</i> pp. 37-74 Thursday 2/16 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Miranda's <i>Bad Indians</i> pp. 75-106
Week 5		*Please check progress. Monday, Feb. 20, last day to drop a class without a "W" and last day to add a class. Tuesday 2/21 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Miranda's <i>Bad Indians</i> 107-175 Thursday 2/23 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Miranda's <i>Bad Indians</i> 176-208 • Carolina A. Miranda's "At Los Angeles toppling of Junipero Serra statue, activists want full history told" • Q&A with Annette Gordon-Reed "Must we allow symbols of racism on public land?" Close Reading Paper due by end-of-day Friday 2/24
Week 6	Constructing & Crossing National Borders	Tuesday 2/28 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excerpt from Gloria Anzaldúa's <i>Borderlands/La Frontera</i> pp. 53-75 Thursday 3/2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nicole M. Guidotti-Hernández's "Borderlands" from <i>Keywords for Latina/o Studies</i> • Selections from Cristina Rivera Garza's <i>Grieving: Dispatches from a Wounded Country</i>

When	Topic	Notes
Week 7		<p>Tuesday 3/7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selections from Cristina Rivera Garza's <i>Grieving: Dispatches from a Wounded Country</i> <p>Thursday 3/9</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No class meeting because Professor Urcaregui is away for approved conference travel. Please complete Canvas discussion board post.
Week 8		<p>Tuesday 3/14</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alice Bag's <i>Pipe Bomb for the Soul</i>pp. 1-60 <p>Thursday 3/16</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bag's <i>Pipe Bomb for the Soul</i>pp. 61-116
Week 9		<p>Tuesday 3/21</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maylei Blackwell's "Indigeneity" from <i>Keywords for Latina/o Studies</i> • Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas's <i>Red: A Haida Mangapp</i>. 1-60 <p>Thursday 3/23</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yahgulanaas's <i>Red: A Haida Mangapp</i>. 61-120
Spring Break (March 27-31)		Rest and enjoy your spring break!
Week 10	Reading Across the Postcolonial Caribbean	<p>Tuesday 4/4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jamaica Kincaid's <i>A Small Place</i>pp. 1-37 <p>Thursday 4/6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No class meeting because Professor Urcaregui is taking approved personal day. Use to work on creative synthesis & reflection. • Jamaica Kincaid's <i>A Small Place</i>pp. 41-81 <p>Creative Synthesis & Reflection due by end-of-day Friday 4/7</p>
Week 11		<p>Tuesday 4/10</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edwidge Danticat's <i>Behind the Mountains</i>pp. 1-25 <p>Thursday 4/14</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edwidge Danticat's <i>Behind the Mountains</i>pp. 25-50
Week 12		<p>Tuesday 4/18</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edwidge Danticat's <i>Behind the Mountains</i>pp. 51-80 <p>Thursday 4/20</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No class meeting because Professor Urcaregui is away for approved conference travel. Please complete discussion board post. • Danticat's <i>Behind the Mountains</i>pp. 81-110
Week 13		<p>Tuesday 4/25</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Danticat's <i>Behind the Mountains</i>pp. 110-140 <p>Thursday 4/27</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Danticat's <i>Behind the Mountains</i>pp. 141-166

When	Topic	Notes
Week 14		<p>Tuesday 5/2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selected Poems from Raquel Salas Rivera's <i>While They Sleep (Under the Bed Is Another Country)</i> <p>Thursday 5/4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selected comic shorts from Rosa Colón Guerra Gemma Sou & John Cei Douglas "After Maria" with commentary by Fernanda Díaz-Basteris Guest speaker TBD
Week 15		<p>Tuesday 5/9</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selected poems from Staceyann Chin's <i>Crossfire: A Litany for Survival</i> Audre Lorde's "Poetry Is Not A Luxury" and "A Litany for Survival" <p>Thursday 5/11</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final reflections & course evaluations
Finals Week		<p>We will not meet during your final exam time, but your final project will be due Thursday, May 18th, by 11:59 p.m. via the Canvas folder.</p>