

# Topics in Ethnic American Literature Section 01

## ENGL 165

Spring 2023 4 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 <a href="https://sjsu.zoom.us/j/84765764961?pwd=MkFXSTVhb0d3alF2NXZ1Tm9XZEZKUT09">Zoom</a> ( <a href="https://sjsu.zoom.us/j/84765764961?pwd=MkFXSTVhb0d3alF2NXZ1Tm9XZEZKUT09">https://sjsu.zoom.us/j/84765764961?pwd=MkFXSTVhb0d3alF2NXZ1Tm9XZEZKUT09</a> ). Wednesdays 12-1 p.m. in Faculty Offices Building (FOB) 216 *Additional times available by appointment via email.
Class Time & Location:	T/Th 1:30-2:45 p.m. in Sweeney Hall (SH) 413

### Course Description and Requisites

Focused study of a topic in ethnic American Literature, such as African American, Asian American, Latino American, or ethnic autobiography. Topics change; check schedule of classes for current offering.

Course may be repeated for credit for a total of 8 units.

Prerequisite(s): 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, xenophobia, 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 Latinx comics 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

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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.

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#### Department Information:

Department Name: English and Comparative Literature

Department Office: FO 102

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

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

Department phone number: 408-924-4425

## Course Goals

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#### Course Description:

This course examines how Latina/o/e/x artists and activists have used the comics form to represent intersectional identities, create community, advocate for political change, and speculate alternative futures. Young queer and trans activists of color, working within digital spaces, developed “Latinx” as a gender-inclusive term that names and describes people within the U.S. who are from or have origins in Spanish-speaking regions of Latin America (Mexico, Central and South America, and much of the Caribbean). Together, we will explore how Latinx, as an umbrella term, describes a diverse array of geographic, national, and ethnoracial identities and communities that are not monolithic or homogenous. We will also address the ways that dominant understandings and representations of “Latinidad” have tended to center Whiteness and obscure Indigenous and Afro-Latinx experiences. With these histories in mind, we look to comics, in their visual and verbal hybridity, as a generative prism through which to explore the intersections, complexities, nuances, and conflicts within and across diverse Latinx experiences. In addition to spanning an array of Latinx narratives, the cartoons, comics, and graphic novels we will read in this course will also span a variety of forms and genres, including superhero comics, underground comix, young adult fiction, autobiography, and political cartoons. We will study and situate these works within a longer history of Latinx aesthetics and activist struggles for social justice. Students will engage in close reading/viewing, critical thinking and discourse, analytical writing, and creative writing and comics making to develop and showcase their knowledge throughout this course.

#### 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)

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By reading course texts and engaging in class assignments, activities, and discussions, students will learn to:

1. Identify and discuss different historical trends, cultural contexts, and aesthetic traditions within Latinx comic art.
  - i. You will showcase your understanding of this CLO through participation assignments and the group teaching facilitation.
2. Analyze how comic art emerges within and responds to particular power dynamics, including colonialism, racism, xenophobia and nationalism, classism, ableism, and sexism, including cis- and hetero-sexism.
  - i. You will showcase your understanding of this CLO through the group teaching facilitation, close reading practice, and close reading paper assignments.

3. Use comics theory to develop your close reading/viewing practice in order to construct original arguments about course texts and to create your own original comics.
  - i. *You will showcase your understanding of this CLO through the close reading practice, close reading paper, "Biography of Belonging" mini-comic, and final project and showcase.*
4. Evaluate the role of art within struggles for social justice and individual and collective constructions of identity within and across Latinx history and cultural production. Essentially, how does art, both literary and visual, help us understand identity and power?
  - i. *You will showcase your understanding of this CLO through all course participation and assignments, with a particular emphasis on the "Biography of Belonging" mini-comic.*

## Course Materials

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While you are not required to purchase 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 materials will be provided on Canvas.

### My Favorite Thing Is Monsters

**Author:** Emil Ferris

**Publisher:** Fantagraphics

**ISBN:** 978-1606999592

**Availability:** Campus Bookstore & Course Reserve

Please purchase if able; only 1 print copy available on course reserve for 2 hr. checkout.

### I'm a Wild Seed

**Author:** Sharon Lee De La Cruz

**Publisher:** Street Noise Books

**ISBN:** 9781951491055

**Availability:** Canvas, Campus Bookstore, & Course Reserve

This text will be available via PDF on Canvas, but please consider purchasing if you are able to/interested in supporting the artist.

### Miles Morales: Sock Waves

**Author:** Pablo Leon & Justin A. Reynolds

**Publisher:** Scholastic Graphix

**ISBN:** 9781338648034

**Availability:** Campus Bookstore & Course Reserve

Please purchase if able; only 1 print copy available on course reserve for 2 hr. checkout.

### Darkroom: A Memoir in Black and White

**Author:** Lila Quintero Weaver

**Publisher:** University of Alabama Press

**ISBN:** 9780817357146

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

Both English and Spanish version available online through "Library Course Materials" tab on Canvas. Print version available on course reserve for 2 hr. checkout.

### Spit and Passion

**Author:** Cristy C. Road

**Publisher:** The Feminist Press

**ISBN:** 9781558618077

Availability: Campus Bookstore & Course Reserve

Please purchase if able; only 1 print copy available on course reserve for 2 hr. checkout.

## Film

*Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*

Availability: Optional class screening or various online streaming platforms

## Undocumented: A Worker's Fight

Author: Duncan Tonatiuh

Publisher: Abrams

ISBN: 9781419728549

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

Available online through "Library Course Materials" tab on Canvas. Print version on course reserve for 2 hr. checkout.

## Library Liaisons

You may contact either (or both) Kathryn Blackmer Reyes ([Kathryn.blackmerreyes@sjsu.edu](mailto:Kathryn.blackmerreyes@sjsu.edu)) and/or Peggy Cabrera ([peggy.cabrera@sjsu.edu](mailto:peggy.cabrera@sjsu.edu)) if you would like additional research support for your success in this course and/or to discuss your personal interests in Latinx comics and/or librarianship.

## ☰ Course Requirements and Assignments

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- 1. 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.
- 2. Group Teaching Facilitation (15%):** The group teaching facilitation is 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 and 3-4 open-ended discussion questions for the class. Presentations will be collaborative, and groups will meet with me in office hours prior to presenting.
- 3. Close Reading/Viewing Practice (10%):** Through careful close reading of a single page or scene, you will develop your own tentative thesis statement that you support with a single body paragraph (about 1-1 ½ pages). This is a low-stakes opportunity for you to practice selecting and analyzing concrete details from a literary text that will then serve as a foundation for the close reading paper.
- 4. Close Reading/Viewing 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 work of your choice. This paper offers a space for you to engage in sustained close reading/viewing as a methodology for exploring how a comic creates meaning and why it is important.
- 5. "Biography of Belonging" Mini-Comic (20%):** The "Biography of Belonging" assignment is inspired by Alberto Ledesma's graphic autobiography *Diary of a Reluctant Dreamer* and offers an opportunity to practice making comics to explore your own personal narrative in relation to a central course theme, belonging.
- 6. Final Project & Showcase (25%):** In your final project, you will have the option of showcasing your learning in a format of your choice: an analytical paper, a short comic and artist statement, or a reflective essay. You will also create a 3-minute flash presentation to share and showcase your work at our class comic con during our final exam time.

## ✓ Grading Information

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Class participation 10%

Group Teaching Facilitation 15%

Close Reading/Viewing Practice 10%

Close Reading/Viewing Paper 20%

"Biography of Belonging" Mini-Comic 15%

Final Comic Portfolio & Showcase 30%

#### 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 as soon as possible, 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 announce with fair notice via Canvas.

When	Topic	Notes
Week 1	Course Introductions	Thursday 1/26 <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Introduction to course &amp; syllabus</li></ul>
Week 2	What Is "Latinx"?	Tuesday 1/31 <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Read Angela Valenzuela's "Education" from <i>Keywords for Latina/o Studies</i></li><li>• In-class "conocimiento" exercise</li></ul> Thursday 2/2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Read Frances R. Aparicio's "Latinidad/es" from <i>Keywords for Latina/o Studies</i></li><li>• Read selected shorts from Frederick Luis Aldama's <i>Tales from La Vida</i></li></ul>
Week 3	What Is "Latinx"?	Tuesday 2/7 <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Read Catalina M. de Onís' "What's in an 'x'?: An Exchange about the Politics of 'Latinx'"</li><li>• Read Terry Blas' "You Say Latinx"</li></ul> Thursday 2/9 <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Read Isabel Millían's "Latinx" from <i>Keywords for Comics Studies</i></li><li>• Read Claudia Milian's "Introduction" from <i>LatinX</i></li><li>• Read selected shorts from Frederick Luis Aldama's <i>Tales from La Vida</i></li></ul>

When	Topic	Notes
Week 4	Introduction to Reading Comics	<p>Tuesday 2/14</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Ch. 1-4 of Scott McCloud's <i>Understanding Comics</i></li> </ul> <p>Thursday 2/16</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Kate Polak's "Three Ideas"</li> <li>• Read excerpt from Jonathan Flowers' "Misunderstanding Comics"</li> </ul>
Week 5	Chicanx "Combat Cartoonists" & Political Cartoons	<p><b>*Please check progress. Monday, Feb. 20, last day to drop a class without a "W" and last day to add a class.</b></p> <p>Tuesday 2/21</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Lenny M. Cauich Maldonado's "Trans-hemispheric activism: Mexican and Latinx Grafica"</li> <li>• Read selected cartoons from Lalo Alcaraz</li> <li>• Discuss Group Teaching Facilitation</li> </ul> <p>Thursday 2/23</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Cathy Schlund-Vials' "Border" from <i>Keywords for Comics Studies</i></li> <li>• Read selected cartoons from Eric J. García</li> <li>• Sign-up for Group Teaching Facilitation via Google Doc</li> </ul>
Week 6	Documenting Undocumented Experiences	<p>Tuesday 2/28</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read selections from Alberto Ledesma's <i>Diary of a Reluctant Dreamer</i></li> <li>• Read Alberto Ledesma's "Doodling as Activism"</li> <li>• Discuss Biography of Belonging Mini-Comic</li> </ul> <p>Thursday 3/2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read first half of Duncan Tonatiuh's <i>Undocumented: A Worker's Fight</i></li> <li>• Read Nicholas De Genova's "Citizenship" from <i>Keywords for Latina/o Studies</i></li> </ul>
Week 7	Documenting Undocumented Experiences	<p>Tuesday 3/7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finish Duncan Tonatiuh's <i>Undocumented: A Worker's Fight</i></li> </ul> <p>Thursday 3/9</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>No class meeting because Dr. Urcalegui is at approved academic conference. At-home workday for "Biography of Belonging" assignment.</b></li> <li>• <b>Submit "Biography of Belonging" min-comic by 11:59 p.m. via Canvas folder.</b></li> </ul>
Week 8	Cross-Racial Solidarities & Civil Rights Struggles	<p>Tuesday 3/14</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Lila Quintero Weaver's <i>Darkroom: A Memoir in Black and White</i> pp. 1-60 (Prologue-Ch. 3)</li> </ul> <p>Thursday 3/16</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Lila Quintero Weaver's <i>Darkroom: A Memoir in Black and White</i> pp. 61-132 (Ch. 4-7)</li> </ul>
Week 9	Cross-Racial Solidarities & Civil Rights Struggles	<p>Tuesday 3/21</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Lila Quintero Weaver's <i>Darkroom: A Memoir in Black and White</i> pp. 133-250 (Ch. 8-Epilogue)</li> </ul> <p>Thursday 3/23</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Jorge Santos Jr.'s "On Photo-Graphic Narrative: 'To Look—Really Look'" into the <i>Darkroom</i>" from <i>Graphic Memories of the Civil Rights Movement: Reframing History in Comics</i></li> <li>• Discuss Close Reading Practice Assignment</li> </ul>
Spring Break		Enjoy your spring break and catch up on rest and relaxation!

When	Topic	Notes
Week 10	Queer Comics	<p>Tuesday 4/4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Sandra K. Soto's "Gender" from <i>Keywords for Latina/o Studies</i></li> <li>• Read first quarter of Emil Ferris' <i>My Favorite Thing is Monsters</i></li> </ul> <p>Thursday 4/6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read second quarter Emil Ferris' <i>My Favorite Thing is Monsters</i></li> <li>• <b>No class meeting because Dr. Urcalegui is away on approved personal day. At home writing day.</b></li> <li>• <b>Submit Close Reading Practice by 11:59 p.m. via Canvas folder</b></li> </ul>
Week 11	Queer Comics	<p>Tuesday 4/11</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Juana María Rodríguez's "Sexuality" from <i>Keywords for Latina/o Studies</i></li> <li>• Read third quarter of Emil Ferris' <i>My Favorite Thing is Monsters</i></li> </ul> <p>Thursday 4/13</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finish Emil Ferris' <i>My Favorite Thing is Monsters</i></li> <li>• Discuss Close Reading Paper</li> </ul>
Week 12	Queer Comics	<p>Tuesday 4/18</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Ramzi Fawaz and Daireck Scott's "Queer" from <i>Keywords for Comics Studies</i></li> <li>• Read Cristy C. Road's <i>Spit and Passion</i></li> </ul> <p>Thursday 4/20</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Cristy C. Road's <i>Spit and Passion</i></li> <li>• <b>No-class meeting because Dr. Urcalegui is at approved academic conference. At-home writing day</b></li> <li>• <b>Submit Close Reading Paper by 11:59 p.m. via Canvas folder</b></li> </ul>
Week 13	Queer Comics/ Afro-Latinx Comics	<p>Tuesday 4/25</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Cristy C. Road's <i>Spit and Passion</i></li> </ul> <p>Thursday 4/27</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Tanya Katerí Hernández's "Afro-Latinas/os" from <i>Keywords for Latina/o Studies</i></li> <li>• Read Sharon Lee De La Cruz's <i>I'm a Wild Seed</i></li> </ul>
Week 14	Afro-Latinx Comics	<p>Tuesday 5/2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read selections from Frederick Luis Aldama's <i>Latinx Superheroes in Mainstream Comics</i></li> <li>• Read Justin A. Reynolds and Pablo Leon's <i>Miles Morales: Shock Waves</i> pp. 1-62</li> <li>• Discuss Final Project</li> </ul> <p>Thursday 5/4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Justin A. Reynolds and Pablo Leon's <i>Miles Morales: Shock Waves</i> pp. 65-113</li> </ul>
Week 15	Afro-Latinx Superhero Comics	<p>Tuesday 5/9</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watch <i>Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse</i> and come prepared to discuss</li> </ul> <p>Thursday 5/11</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Final reflections &amp; course evaluations</li> </ul>
Finals Week	Final Project	<p>Wednesday 5/17</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Note, we will be meeting in-person during our final exam time on Wednesday, May 17, from 12:15-2:30 in SH 413.</b></li> <li>• Present flash presentation for class comic con</li> <li>• Submit final project &amp; slides by noon via Canvas folder</li> </ul>