**SPA 109. Latin American and US Latinx Literature and Film**

Professor: Michael Mosier mmosier@cornellcollege.edu

Class hours: M-F 9-11, TR 1-3 Office: 317 College Hall

Classroom: Merner Hall classroom Office phone: x4322

Block 1, 2018-19 Office Hours: MTWRF 11-12



**Course Description**

In addition to being an introduction to achieving success as a student at Cornell College, this course will be an exploration of Latin American and US Latinx literature, film, and culture. Latin America has long been intricately entwined with the United States, yet to many in the US, Latin America is an unknown entity. In this course we will expand our awareness and explore major trends in recent Latin American and US Latinx cultural production. Through our readings and films, we will examine major questions and concerns recently grappled with by Latin American artists and intellectuals. We will concentrate on historic tensions with the US in addition to the intersections of immigration, poverty, and constructions of race and gender. Some of the authors we read will include Junot Díaz, Cristina Henríquez, Jorge Luis Borges, and Valeria Luiselli.

**SPA 109 Course Goals**

Students will:

* Demonstrate their ability to use literary and film analysis to examine a series of texts and films
* Improve their ability to read critically
* Explore the literature, film, and history of Latin America and Latinos in the US
* Contemplate, communicate, and challenge their own and others’ readings through discussion and writing

**Common Goals for First-year Seminars**

1. Introduce an academic discipline (literary and film analysis) and the concept of a discipline within the context of the liberal arts
2. Provide instruction for academic skills common to all disciplines:
   * Academic Honesty:  knowing when to document sources; understanding ethical, legal and professional reasons for documenting sources
   * Critical Reading: restating central points; making inferences; identifying and questioning underlying assumptions; assessing evidence
   * Information Literacy: distinguishing between and evaluating primary and secondary sources; popular and scholarly sources
   * Writing: using write-to-learn assignments to investigate, analyze, and summarize course material
3. Address college-level academic expectations and practices
4. Introduce academic support services

**Educational Priorities and Outcomes**

As an intentional learning community, the college has chosen to emphasize the following Educational Priorities and Outcomes for all students:

* **Knowledge.** *Students will integrate and apply knowledge from a focused area of study as well as a broad general education which includes disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives in the arts, humanities, and social sciences.*
* **Inquiry.** *Students will respond to the complexities of contemporary and enduring problems using information literacy tools, research skills, creative thinking, and analysis.*
* **Reasoning.** *Students will evaluate evidence; interpret data; and use logical, mathematical, and statistical problem-solving tools.*
* **Communication.** *Students will speak and write clearly, listen and read actively, and engage with others in productive dialogue.*
* **Intercultural literacy.** *Students will connect with diverse ideas and with people whose experiences differ from their own and that may be separated from them by time, space, or culture.*
* **Ethical behavior.** *Students will recognize personal, academic, and professional standards and act with integrity.*
* **Citizenship.** *Students will collaborate with others and contribute in their communities and the larger world.*
* **Vocation.** *Students will discover and prepare for the range of opportunities and challenges that await them beyond their college experience.*
* **Well-being.** *Students will respect the ways physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual well-being may contribute to a balanced life.*

**SPA 109** prioritizes the Cornell College outcomes of *Intercultural Literacy*, *Knowledge*, *Inquiry*, *Reasoning, and Communication*. *Ethical Behavior* is expected at all times (See statement on Academic Honesty).

**Course Information**

*Responsibility:*

As students at a liberal arts college, you are responsible for your own engagement in the academic conversation, meaning that you are expected to be a prepared and active participant every day. This includes reading or viewing all the assigned material as well as turning in each assignment on time, but more importantly, this means thinking critically, asking questions, coming to class having formulated your own ideas and responses to the course material, and engaging in dialogue with others. It means relying on your own reading for your opinions. It means not only carefully consulting the course materials to understand policies and assignments, but also taking the initiative to come talk with me outside of class if you still do not understand a topic of discussion, a set of directions, or a grade, or have any other questions or concerns.

*Class format:*

This class will be run mostly in a discussion format designed to promote interaction and exchange. I expect everyone to contribute to discussion, which requires that you read/view carefully and think about the assigned material before every class. No one—neither professor nor student—can participate effectively without having completed and contemplated the course material. Be an informed participant: your comments should be related to the course material and should add to the topic being discussed. I also expect people to listen to one another, which necessitates patience, empathy, and mutual respect. You should be willing to share your ideas and be open to opposing perspectives. It is possible to disagree and still interact respectfully. Listening attentively, asking questions, and responding to what people have said demonstrate respectful engagement. On the other hand, inattention, sleeping, talking to neighbors, texting, and rude or disconnected responses all show a lack of respect for the members of this class and for your own intellect.

*Required texts, available in bookstore*:

*The Brief and Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, by Junot Díaz

*The Book of Unknown Americans*, by Cristina Henríquez

*Tell Me How It Ends: An Essay in 40 Questions*, by Valeria Luiselli

*Down the Rabbit Hole*, by Juan Pablo Villalobos

Additional readings on our Moodle page. Print these out, mark them up, and bring them to class

*Recommended resources*:

Course Moodle page

Writing Studio

Academic Technology Studio

Academic Support Services office

Humanities Librarian

**Attendance**

Coming to class in a timely manner is mandatory. Three tardy arrivals will result in an absence counted against you, and more than two absences (that is, two class sessions) will result in a lowering of your final grade by 3 points for each additional absence. If you know that you will miss a class for religious reasons or for an official Cornell College activity, please let me know ahead of time so that we can talk about arrangements. Note that in any case of absence, it is your responsibility to cover the material you missed. It is therefore a good idea to exchange contact information with at least two other students in this class with whom you can discuss what you missed and who are willing to share their notes with you.

**Classroom Policies and Etiquette**

*Email*. Check your Cornell email account at least once per day, but not during class time. Respond to course-related emails in a timely manner (24 hours or less, usually).

*Phones*. Turn off your cell phone or set it so that it does not make any noise, put it in your bag, and leave it there during class. If you are texting, you are absent.

*Laptops*. Students stay more engaged with class discussion and retain more information when they take notes by hand; therefore I ask that you not use your laptop or tablet during class. However, I might permit a laptop under special circumstances; please speak with me if you wish to have a laptop in the classroom.

*Class discussion*. Listen carefully. Listen to all of what others are saying; reflect on their words. You might consider what your classmates (or your professor) are not saying as well as what they are. Resist the temptation to craft your response while someone else is still speaking.

Speak constructively. Constructive contributions to class discussion avoid turning into lengthy speeches and help the entire class move forward in its search for meaning. Everyone needs to participate. If you are already comfortable taking part in group discussions, you may need to occasionally restrain yourself and give others a chance to talk; conversely, if you are shy, you will need to find ways to speak up. Either way, be willing to share what you think and be open to opposing viewpoints. This means both critically evaluating what your classmates (and professor) say, and voicing your questions and responses clearly and respectfully. Supporting the class by listening carefully, asking questions, responding to what others say, and appreciating others’ views demonstrates respect and will help form an environment where all members of the group feel comfortable speaking up.

**Drop policy**

The College drop policy will be strictly enforced, meaning that in order to drop on the fifteenth day of the block, you must have attended all class meetings, turned in all work, and made a good faith effort to succeed in the course.

**Academic Honesty**

Cornell College expects all members of the Cornell community to act with academic integrity. An important aspect of academic integrity is respecting the work of others. A student is expected to explicitly acknowledge ideas, claims, observations, or data of others, unless generally known. When a piece of work is submitted for credit, a student is asserting that the submission is her or his work unless there is a citation of a specific source. If there is no appropriate acknowledgement of sources, whether intended or not, this may constitute a violation of the College’s requirement for honesty in academic work and may be treated as a case of academic dishonesty. The procedures regarding how the College deals with cases of academic dishonesty appear in the Catalogue under the heading “Academic Honesty."

**Students Needing Accommodations**

Cornell College makes reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities.  Students should notify the Coordinator of Academic Support and Advising (Brooke Paulsen) and their course instructor of any disability related accommodations within the first three days of the term for which the accommodations are required, due to the fast pace of the block format.  For more information on the documentation required to establish the need for accommodations and the process of requesting the accommodations, see <http://www.cornellcollege.edu/academic-support-and-advising/disabilities/index.shtml>.

**Assignments and Evaluation**

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| --- | --- |
| Participation and attendance | 15% |
| Reading quizzes (5) | 15% |
| Presentation/leading discussion | 10% |
| Daily reading responses | 20% |
| Film reviews | 15% |
| Final paper proposal and sources | 5% |
| Final paper | 20% |

**Presentation/leading discussion:** Each of you will lead the day’s discussion of the readings for 30-40 minutes. You can present the material any way you’d like (group discussion questions, a game, a powerpoint, a debate, etc.). The important thing is to move beyond mere description of the reading to end with a discussion/analysis of a major theme.

**Reading responses**: By 7a.m. before the day’s class, each student will write an informal reflection about the reading (150-250 words) on our Moodle “reading forum.” These should go beyond mere description to get at something you found compelling/important/problematic about the reading. The forum responses will help guide our class discussions. You can also post questions you had as you read. Please make them specific. Instead of saying, “I didn’t understand a thing!!,” you could say, “I had a hard time understanding how the author was using the terms ‘modernity’ and ‘modernization.’”

**Final Paper**: There will be additional information on Moodle regarding the paper.

**Film Reviews**: Students will write a two-page film review after three movies we watch. There will be a guideline on how to write these on Moodle. You have two days to submit the reviews.

**Grade Scale:**

A 93-100% B+ 87-89% C+ 77-79% D+ 67-69%

A- 90-92% B 83-86% C 73-76% D 63-66%

B- 80-82% C- 70-72% D- 60-62%

F 59% and less

**Student Success Component Syllabi Language**

The student success component of your FYS extends beyond the first block, to encompass activities and reflection assignments throughout Blocks 1, 2, and 3.   Block 1 focuses on time management with an emphasis on helping you manage their academic responsibilities, campus involvement, and personal wellbeing.  Block 2 emphasizes civil discourse and intercultural literacy. Block 3 focuses on academic planning and future opportunities.

Student success assignments will comprise 20% of your final FYS grade.  These assignments will be evaluated by your FYS success instructor. You and your academic advisor will be informed of your preliminary in-progress grade at the end of Block 1 (which will not include student success assignments) and you will receive your final comprehensive grade at the end of Block 3.

**Evaluation of Student Success Assignments**

**ALL** of the following criteria must be met for each assignment in order to earn full credit (4 points):

* Attendance at associated meetings and activities
* Thorough and in-depth reflection on all but one question.  All questions must be addressed at more than a minimal level.
* The quality of writing does not limit understanding of the reflection.
* Answers are complete sentences and make sense without reading the question.

If any **ONE** of the following criteria is met, then the assignment earns minimal credit (1 point).

* Inattentive or disruptive attendance (being late, not paying attention or not listening to others, talking to neighbors, sleeping,  texting, rude comments, etc)
* One or more of the responses does not or only minimally addresses the question
* The quality of writing limits the reader’s ability to understand the reflection
* Answers are not complete sentences or do not make sense without reading the question first.

Assignments falling in between these criteria will earn partial credit (2 points)

Failing to attend or failing to submit a reflection results in no credit (0 points).

See Assignment Rubrics for more details.

Without either prior approval or evidence of a serious emergency: late student success assignments will not be accepted.  If an extension is needed, please consult with your FYS success instructor prior to the assignment deadline.

**Options for Revising Student Success Assignments**

Student may revise up to 3 assignments for which they did not receive full credit.  Assignments from Block 3 are not eligible for revision.

For each revised assignment, the following must be completed:

* Students must have attended the relevant activities, participated appropriately, and submitted an initial assignment on time (or if given an extension, by the agreed upon deadline).
* Students must either work with a writing consultant or attend a writing studio workshop on revising their reflection.
* Students must review the rubric and comments provided by the FYS success instructor,  make the relevant changes, and submit both a revised reflection and an overview of the revision indicating in bullet points how they addressed each of the concerns raised in the rubric and comments.
* Revisions must be submitted via Moodle within one week of the return of the assignment.

**Course Schedule**

**Week One**

Monday, August 27

9-11: Introduction to course; Visit from Jennifer Ferrell; Discussion of article on multiculturalism and Gonzalez Ch. 1

Homework: Read *Lieutenant Nun* [Moodle]

Tuesday, August 28

9-11: The colonial period; discussion of *Lieutenant Nun*

1-3: Film: *Even the Rain*. Dir. Icíar Bollaín. 2010.

Homework: Film review (2 pages); read Gonzalez Ch. 2

Wednesday, August 29

9-11: Colonial period, continued

Homework: Read “Chac Mool” and “The South” [Moodle]

Thursday, August 30

9-11: Magic Realism and the return of the past

1-3: Film: *Black in Latin America: An Island Divided.* Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

Homework: Film review; read Junot Diaz (1-76)

Friday, August 31

9-11: Junot Diaz, immigration, and the Dominican Republic

Homework: Read Junot Diaz (77-165)

**Week Two**

Mon., September 3

9-11: Continue discussion of *Oscar Wao*

Homework: Read Junot Diaz (167-223)

Tue., September 4

9-11: Continue discussion of *Oscar Wao*

1-3: Meeting with Brooke Paulsen in Thomas Commons, Hedges room

Homework: Read Diaz (223-end)

Wed., September 5

9-11: Finish discussion of *Oscar Wao*

Homework: Read Henríquez (1-66)

Thurs., September 6

9-11: *The Book of Unknown Americans*

1-3: Film: *The Motorcycle Diaries*. Dir. Walter Salles. 2004.

Homework: Write film review; read Henríquez (67-143)

Friday, September 7

9-11: Che Guevara and the Cuban Revolution; continue discussion of the novel

Homework: Finish *Book of Unknown Americans*

**Week Three**

Mon., September 10

9-11: Finish discussion of the novel

**2-3: Visit with Adriana Borja-Enríquez, award winning author**

Homework: Read *Down the Rabbit Hole*

Tue., September 11

9-11: *Down the Rabbit Hole* and narco-violence in Mexico; Chile’s 9/11

1-3: Film: *Sin Nombre.* Cary Fukunaga*.* 2009.

Homework: Film review; read Valeria Luiselli(1-53)

Wed., September 12

9-11: The migration crisis and *Tell Me How it Ends*

Homework: Finish *Tell Me How it Ends*

Thurs., September 13

9-11: The migration crisis and *Tell Me How it Ends*

1-3: Research session

Homework: Work on paper proposal

Fri., September 14

9-11: The Postville, IA immigration raid; **Hand in paper proposal and list of sources**.

Homework: Read “We Came All the Way from Cuba so You Could Dress Like This?”

**Week Four**

Mon., September 17

9-11: Cuba today

Homework: TBD

Tue., September 18

9-11: Discuss readings

Homework: Finish writing final paper

Wed., September 19

9-11: Conclusions. Share and discuss papers. **Final Paper due**