

English 363
Latina/o Genre Fiction: Romance, Sci-Fi, and Historical Fantasy
Spring 2014

Professor: Dr. David J. Vázquez
Office: 263 PLC
Phone: 541-346-1051
Email: vazquez@uoregon.edu

Class time: Tues, Thurs. 8:30-9:50 am, 360 Condon
Office Hours:
Mondays, 11 am - 2:00 pm
By appointment

Course Description:

Despite the more than 200 years of literary history during which Latina/os have written and published in the United States, it has only been for the past 20 or so that we have engaged such “low” forms as science fiction, fantasy, romance, and detective fiction. In this course we will examine a series of “genre” fiction novels, with an eye towards how, as critic Ralph Rodríguez observes, these texts function as “cultural commodities that have much to tell us about the historical, social, and political milieu in which they emerged.” Consequently, we will read these seemingly non-serious texts from a serious perspective. We’ll consider how they speak to and represent issues of race and racialization, sexuality and gender, history and colonization, environmental justice and space, and labor and migration. We’ll also spend time thinking about what constitutes various genres, from romance to sci-fi and beyond.

Course Goals:

1. Introduce the history, scope, and major critical trends in Latina/o genre fiction from the 1990s to the present.
2. Consider some of the ways in which Latina/o genre fiction represents race, gender, sexuality, labor, and citizenship.
3. Develop student understanding of the social construction of race, gender, sexuality, and class in literary and popular culture texts
4. Deepen student understanding of the complexity of Latina/o culture and experience in the U.S.

Learning Outcomes

(Students will be able to...)

1. Provide working definitions of the terms Latina/o, Chicana/o, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality
2. Comparatively analyze how Latina/os imagine resistance to race, gender, sexual, and class marginalization in genre fiction and to communicate these interpretations verbally and in prose formats.
3. Develop close reading and textual analysis skills.
4. Demonstrate an understanding of the social construction of race, gender, sexuality, and class.
5. Develop a deeper understanding of genres such as sci-fi, romance, speculative realism, and historical fantasy.

Required Texts

All texts available at the U of O Bookstore, unless otherwise noted

Acevedo, Mario, *X-Rated Bloodsuckers*
Acosta, Marta, *Happy Hour at Casa Dracula*
Díaz, Junot, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*
Foster, Sesshu, *Atomik Aztex*
Morales, Alejandro, *The Rag Doll Plagues*
Murray, Yxta Maya, *The Conquest*
Sánchez, Rosaura and Beatrice Pita, *Lunar Braceros*

Other readings available on Blackboard

Requirements

1. **Read, Read, Read!** My main requirement is that you read. The reading for this course is both engaging and intensive. However, falling behind in the reading will spoil the endings and put you at a disadvantage during class discussions. If I feel that people are falling behind in the reading, I reserve the right to give reading quizzes. I would prefer to spend our time in class discussing these interesting and provocative texts. However, I will not hesitate to give reading quizzes.
2. **Papers:** Every two weeks you will turn in a two-page critical reflection paper. This paper is a space for you to reflect on what you learn, how you feel, and how you engage with a piece or pieces. The critical reflection paper is also a space for you to engage with the larger questions we have taken up in our discussion. I will provide more detailed instructions at the beginning of week two. Your main goal in these papers is to provide a polished critical response to the readings.

In addition to the critical reflection papers, you will turn in a 3-5 page analytical paper due on Friday, May 30 at 5:00 pm via SafeAssign on Blackboard. Your task in the paper will be to provide an analysis and close reading of a topic related to the course in one or more of the texts.

3. **Two Exams:** One Midterm and one Final. The final will take place at 10:15 a.m. on Tuesday, June 10.
4. **Discussion Questions:** All students will sign up for a discussion question. Students will introduce their discussion question with a 3-5 minute presentation. While it should be brief, you should be prepared for a formal presentation. This means that you should be ready to stand in front of the class to explain your ideas and provide supporting cues for our discussion. While your participation grade is not solely dependent on a discussion question, you cannot receive full credit for participation if you do not present a question. If you are not in attendance to present your discussion question, you will not receive credit. All discussion questions **MUST** be posted to the discussion forum on Blackboard 24 hours **prior** to the next class meeting. Please plan your reading accordingly

Those NOT presenting on a given day are responsible for reading the discussion question prior to our class meeting. Please make sure to check the discussion question forum on Blackboard before you come to class.

Grading

Mid-Term: 25 percent

Final: 25 percent

Reflection Papers: 15 percent

Final Paper: 25 percent

Participation: 10 percent

Policies

- Attendance and Participation are mandatory: You may not miss more than two class meetings without a documented excuse. Absences may be excused in the case of illness, serious injury, or a family or other emergency. Absences for missing the bus, oversleeping, or other preventable matters will not be excused.
- **Participation includes oral participation**, participating in group work, completing in-class assignments, coming to class prepared (and on time), AND presenting your discussion question. In order to receive full credit for participation, you should be prepared to speak at each class meeting. Participation also means that you will **ALWAYS** bring the text(s) with which we are currently working, always bring necessary writing materials, always bring your questions about the reading, and always bring a respectful and positive attitude. Participation grades will be assigned accordingly: A = Completing the discussion question and contributing to the conversation in most every class. B = Completing the discussion question and participating most of the time. C =

- Completing the discussion question and participating a few times throughout the term. F = No participation and no discussion question.
- Tardiness: It is imperative that you get to class on time. I will also respect this aspect of our time. We all have tight schedules. Please respect me, your classmates, and most of all yourself by getting to class on time. If you are coming from a place on campus that consistently prevents you from arriving on time, please let me know ASAP so that we can make an arrangement.
 - Paper Policies:
 - All written work must be typed, stapled, and double-spaced with one-inch margins on all sides.
 - Fonts should be 12 points.
 - All written work must include your name, the course, the instructor's name, and the name of the assignment in the upper left corner.
 - Page counts are vital. Papers shorter than **three full pages** will not be graded. Likewise, papers **longer than six pages** will be marked down 1/2 letter grade for each page that exceeds the limit. If you are having trouble with these limits, please see me ASAP so that we can work together on developing your paper.
 - Handwritten work will not be accepted.
 - Make sure to number your pages.
 - Please document citations using the MLA format. You can get the MLA style guidelines online at <http://www.liu.edu/cwis/cwp/Library/workshop/citmla.htm> or you can check the reference desk at the library.
 - You are responsible for keeping a backup copy of all of your work. Backups may take the form of computer copies, hard copies, or both. In any event, make sure that you have a readily accessible copy of ALL of your work. Your computer crashing is not a valid excuse for missing an assignment.
 - **Please turn your off your cell phone.**
 - **No laptops, tablets, smart phones, or other electronic devices will be allowed.** The only exception to this rule will be in the case of a documented accommodation.
 - Bring the assigned text to class.
 - How to address me: Please feel free to call me Professor Vázquez or Dr. Vázquez. Calling me by my first name is not acceptable. I don't care for Mr. Vázquez. My preference is for Professor Vázquez.

Disclaimer 1:

All literatures, including US Latina/o literature, depict aspects of social reality—violence, discrimination, conflict, etc—you may find disturbing. Some of the literature depicts social, political, religious or other kinds of views that may be different from your own. In this class we will deal directly with issues of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality as they are presented in the text(s). **If you are unwilling to discuss such readings thoroughly and/or unable to discuss such readings respectfully, you should not take this course.**

Disclaimer 2:

This course is primarily a discussion course, rather than a lecture course. If you come away from the term only knowing what the professor thinks about the materials, then your time has been wasted. Instead, the goal of this course is for you to come to your own conclusions and ideas through discussion and writing. It is therefore highly important that you attend class often and that you come to class prepared and actively participate.

About Making Life Easier for Each Other

This course is not designed to be competitive. In fact, a competitive atmosphere will work against the activities of the class. Many of the activities are interactive, and each individual deserves the full cooperation of everyone else. **The one rule that is sacred in this classroom is to respect everyone**—each other, me, and the authors. Disagreements will happen and ideas will be challenged, but they must be controlled and expressed *academically*—which means in a civil, well-considered, and intelligent manner. Please note that we WILL be discussing the political ramifications of these texts. These may include

discussions that may at first *seem* unrelated to the material at hand. My hope is that you will begin to understand that NO text emerges in a political or aesthetic vacuum. In fact, as we will soon see, these texts have important political and social implications for our everyday lives. For this reason, please bring an open mind and a patient attitude. It is much easier to learn from each other, about each other, and about ourselves when we are listening.

Timeline

This syllabus is primarily a reading guide. As such, it may be subject to revision.

<u>Week 1</u>	<u>Ready by This Date:</u>
Monday 3/31	Introduction
Wednesday 4/2	George Lipsitz from <i>The Possessive Investment in Whiteness</i> , Samuel R. Delaney, "Racism and Science Fiction" (http://www.nyrsf.com/racism-and-science-fiction-.html)
<u>Week 2</u>	
Monday 4/7	Catherine Ramirez "Afrofuturism/Chicanafuturism: Fictive Kin," Ralph Rodríguez from <i>Brown Gumshoes</i>
Wednesday 4/9	Ramón Saldivar "Historical Fantasy, Speculative Realism, and Posttrace Aesthetics in Contemporary American Fiction" Critical Reflection 1 due to SafeAssign by 5:00 p.m.
<u>Week 3</u>	
Monday 4/14	Marta Acosta, <i>Happy Hour at Casa Dracula</i> 1-197
Wednesday 4/16	Acosta, <i>Happy Hour at Casa Dracula</i> 197-end
<u>Week 4</u>	
Monday 4/21	Yxta Maya Murray, <i>The Conquest</i> 1-118
Wednesday 4/23	<i>The Conquest</i> 119-195 Critical Reflection 2 due to SafeAssign by 5:00 p.m.
<u>Week 5</u>	
Monday 4/28	<i>The Conquest</i> 195-end
Wednesday 4/30	Midterm
<u>Week 6</u>	
Monday 5/5	Mario Acevedo, <i>X-Rated Bloodsuckers</i> 1-230
Wednesday 5/7	<i>X-Rated Bloodsuckers</i> 230-end Critical Reflection 3 due to SafeAssign by 5:00 p.m.
<u>Week 7</u>	
Monday 5/12	Sánchez and Pita, <i>Lunar Braceros</i>
Wednesday 5/14	Alejandro Morales, <i>The Rag Doll Plagues</i> 1-78
<u>Week 8</u>	
Monday 5/19	<i>The Rag Doll Plagues</i> 78-end
Wednesday 5/21	Sesshu Foster, <i>Atomik Aztex</i> 1-73 Critical Reflection 4 due to SafeAssign by 5:00 p.m.
<u>Week 9</u>	
Monday 5/26	<i>Atomik Aztex</i> 73-end
Wednesday 5/28	Junot Díaz, <i>The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao</i> 1-75, supplemental reading: <i>The Annotated Oscar Wao</i> web page (http://www.annotated-oscar-wao.com/)
Friday 5/30	Submit Final Paper to SafeAssign on Blackboard by 5:00 pm
<u>Week 10</u>	
Monday 6/2	<i>Oscar Wao</i> 76-261
Wednesday 6/4	<i>Oscar Wao</i> 262-end Critical Reflection 5 due to SafeAssign by 5:00 p.m.