

UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE
HUM 152-50: Cultures of America (3 credit hours)
Summer

Instructor: Lynda Mercer
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Course Description

Interdisciplinary study of the arts and humanities in contemporary American culture emphasizing the convergence of European, African, Hispanic, Asian, and indigenous cultures as well as the distinguishing characteristics of each culture as revealed in three of the following areas: fine arts, drama, literature, philosophy, religion, and popular entertainment.

Course Objectives:

1. To become well acquainted with some of the major cultural groups who make up the US.
2. To think critically about the ways race, culture, and nation are constructed.
3. To have a rich understanding of the cultural history of the US as a nation and how race and ethnicity are affected by various events and phenomena in the cultural history of the U.S.
4. To utilize arts & humanities effectively as a way to analyze issues of diversity, and to be able to synthesize a variety of humanities forms as a way to gain new perspectives about diversity in the United States.

Cultural Diversity Statement:

This class fulfills a General Education requirement in Cultural Diversity (CD1) and will enable students to:

1. Recognize that social and cultural systems develop out of adaptation to environmental and historical circumstances.
2. Communicate an understanding of ways in which race, ethnicity, and/or gender are socially constructed.
3. Communicate an understanding that different cultures may hold different perspectives on the same issue.
4. Evaluate pertinent information and assertions for relevance, bias, stereotyping, manipulation, and completeness.

UofL Arts and Humanities Learning Outcomes:

Arts and Humanities are concerned with understanding texts of art, music, theatre, literature, philosophy, and religious thought. Students who satisfy this requirement will demonstrate that they are able to do all of the following:

1. Communicate an understanding of vocabulary, concepts, materials, techniques, and methods of intellectual inquiry within the arts and/or humanities;
2. Describe and evaluate texts using primary and secondary materials;
3. Analyze and synthesize texts, recognizing the diversity of cultures and historical contexts.

State-wide Arts and Humanities Student Learning Outcomes:

1. Utilize basic formal elements, techniques, concepts and vocabulary of specific disciplines within the Arts and Humanities.
2. Distinguish between various kinds of evidence by identifying reliable sources and valid arguments.
3. Demonstrate how social, cultural, and historical contexts influence creative expression in the arts and humanities.
4. Evaluate the significance of human expression and experience in shaping larger social, cultural, and historical contexts.
5. Evaluate enduring and contemporary issues of human experience.

University of Louisville General Education Rubric Measures:

Effective Communication (EC) Rubric

1. Writer articulates clear purpose and employs tone consistent with purpose and audience.
2. Writer employs clear and coherent organization.
3. Writer demonstrates analysis or synthesis.
4. Writer uses appropriate conventions and style.

Critical Thinking (CT) Rubric

1. Claim – States thesis; Identifies purpose; Demonstrates recognition of problem or question.
2. Evidence – Uses evidence, information, data, observations, experiences, and/or reasons.
3. Inference – Makes a logical argument; Develops a line of reasoning based on evidence.
4. Influence of Context and Assumptions.
5. Implications – Evaluates implications, conclusions, and consequences.

Cultural Diversity (CD) Rubric

1. Writer recognizes ways that culture shapes behavior and attitudes.
2. Writer demonstrates ability to understand the relationship of culture to its environment and history.
3. Writer recognizes that cultural groups are internally diverse.
4. Writer brings awareness of cultural diversity to the analysis of problems or issues.

Disabilities statement

Students who have a disability or condition, which may impair their ability to complete assignments or otherwise satisfy course criteria are encouraged to meet with the instructor to identify, discuss and document any feasible instructional modifications or accommodations. Please inform instructor about circumstances no later than the second week of the semester or as soon as possible after a disability or condition is diagnosed, whichever occurs earliest. For information and auxiliary assistance, contact the Disabilities Resource Center.

Plagiarism statement

The University defines plagiarism as “representing the words or ideas of someone else as one’s own in any academic exercise.” Thus, all writing you do for this course must be your own and must be exclusively for this course, unless the instructor stipulates differently. Please pay special attention to the quotes, paraphrases, and documentation practices you use in your papers. If you have any questions about plagiarism, please ask your instructor. **If you plagiarize, your instructor reserves the right to fail you for the course and your case may be reported to the College of Arts and Sciences.**

Plagiarism will not be tolerated in our discussion boards or other assignments. Do not copy/paste ANY material from the Internet without including it as a quotation and carefully citing it, even in discussion posts (please try to refrain from copying/pasting material at all). In a college-level course, your ideas MUST be your own, and if they are not yours, you MUST credit them to the source from which you obtained them. No exceptions.

Texts and Materials

We will be using one main textbook for this course, Tanya Golash-Boza’s *Race and Racisms*. You will need to purchase this book, as we will be using it intensively throughout the semester. Please be sure to purchase the full edition, **not the brief edition**. Other texts (multimedia, powerpoints, art, etc) will be made available to you on Blackboard. Be aware that although the weekly reading assignment from this textbook is usually around 30 pages, the font is large and there are also illustrations and offset boxes with excerpts and supplemental information, so it is nowhere near as lengthy as a typical 30-page reading. I will be adding supplemental readings each week in order to fulfill our Humanities objectives along with the Cultural Diversity objectives. These readings, however, will not be overly long either.

Required Work and Assessment

Reading, participation in online discussions, and critical awareness are key. Your overall grade will be comprised of 5 reading quizzes, 5 discussion board responses, and a final paper. Please note that participation is a high percentage of your grade. You will not make a good grade in this course unless you participate in online discussions. It is imperative that you make an effort to use your voice in a respectful and thoughtful manner in this class. These concepts are best examined in a discussion format, so we should all come into discussions with the willingness to share our ideas and to be receptive to others’ ideas. Your participation grade will be based not only on whether you post a comment, but whether you engage with other students, and on the quality and thoughtfulness of your comments, as well. You should be making informed comments that show you’ve read the material and that you’ve thought about it.

Grade Breakdown

Quizzes—30% (6 points each)

Participation (blackboard discussion board postings)—40%

Final Paper—30%

This course is graded on the following plus/minus scale:

A+ 100-97 | A 96-94 | A- 93-91

B+ 90-87 | B 86-84 | B- 83-81

C+ 80-77 | C 76-74 | C- 73-71

D+ 70-67 | D 66-64 | D- 63-61

F 60 and below

Attendance Policy

Because this course is online and condensed into a 10-week semester, it's very important to keep up with reading, quizzes, and your classmates' contributions—which will help you think more deeply about this material. All quizzes and discussion postings are mandatory. I will not grade discussion posts on a weekly basis, but will assess your overall discussion performance at regular intervals, adjusting your participation grade accordingly.

If you're struggling with discussions, please communicate with me about it. Don't wait until the last few weeks to contact me in a panic, and **definitely** don't stop doing the work because you think you can't recover from your missed assignments. I am willing to try to work with you as long as you communicate with me, and as long as you show that you really want to learn. For quizzes and discussions, you will receive a 0 for any work not completed. Since these comprise a large portion of your grade, you should be sure to complete them on time and to do your best work on them.

In the case of an emergency (I will need some documentation) or other important concern (funeral, hospital, etc—documented), the missed work will be considered as excused and will not count against you. Please make sure you stay up-to-date on what you've missed. This will be a busy time for all of us, so staying on top of the reading assignments will make it much easier to manage even if you do miss some of our weekly work. Everything you need to know about our assignments will always be available on Blackboard.

Late Work Policy

If you fail to complete a quiz or discussion post on time without a valid excuse, you will **not** be allowed to make it up. If you do have a valid excuse and do not make arrangements to submit your quiz or discussion comment within **3 days** (including weekend days), you will forfeit your opportunity to receive credit for the missed assignment. If you fail to turn in a final paper, you will receive a 0 for the assignment. **The final paper cannot be submitted after the deadline.** I am always available and usually respond very quickly to emails, so there should be no hindrance to you in arranging to submit late work.

Just as car trouble is not a valid excuse for missing a class on campus, technical difficulties will not be considered a valid excuse for missing assignments. If you are taking this course, you should be aware of the basic expectations of your weekly contributions, and you should have a backup plan in case your primary source of technology fails for any reason. Our school library has free computers and Internet, and public libraries and Internet Cafes are also easily accessible in most areas. Additionally, in emergencies, a cell phone with Internet capabilities could be used to complete your work

Class Behavior

Again, this is a course that entails a great deal of interaction with each other online. Please abide by the proper online etiquette for your discussion board postings. Maintain respect in all of your language and if you have any issues with anything in the class or have concerns with other students or the material, email me first. No harassment of other students or of the instructor will be tolerated. If any student shows a disregard for the expectations of proper college classroom behavior, I will dismiss the student from this class, and refer the student to the Director of Humanities for further action.

Assignments

Quizzes:

Over the semester, I will assign 5 short reading quizzes that will be submitted through the “assignments” link on Blackboard. I will advise you of when each quiz is due, and you will have ample time to complete each one. They will be approximately 10 questions and will be multiple-choice quizzes. The purpose of these quizzes is to help you stay up to date with the reading load and to invite you to think deeply about what you’re reading as you’re working with the class material. This portion of your grade is worth 30%.

Participation:

I will be looking for you to bring your knowledge and insight into class discussions, which I hope will be academically rigorous and enjoyable for all of us. Don’t be afraid to challenge your own ideas and really delve into the material. I will make note of those who contribute thoughtful comments to discussions and those who do not. I will assess and post participation grades on a regular basis, so you will be able to monitor your participation grade as you proceed through the course (as you participate more or as your participation decreases, likewise, your grade will be subject to fluctuation. Having a high participation grade for one week will not result in a high overall participation grade. You must consistently participate in a thoughtful manner that shows you are really reading and thinking about the materials and about each other’s ideas). For each week, you will be given guiding thoughts, questions, or ideas for you as “jumping off” points for thinking about the material, but the discussion posts are really your opportunity to intellectually engage with each other and with me, so I expect you to contribute your own original thoughts, as well. This portion of your grade is worth 40%.

Final Paper

The final paper prompt will be given at least 2 weeks before the due date. The assignment will be a 4 to 6 page essay that synthesizes components of the materials and concepts we have learned from the class. You will have a choice from several options of prompts for completing this assignment. It will be due on the last day of finals week at 11:59pm. Because it will be due at the very end of finals week, I will only have 48 hours (at most) to submit your final grades, which means that **I cannot wait for any late submissions**. If you do not submit this essay on time, you will not be able to turn it in later, so please be sure you plan accordingly. This essay is worth 30% of your grade.

***Each week’s assignment is from Tuesday-Tuesday. For week one, for instance, you’ll read the weekly assignment on Tuesday 05/31 and complete the work for the week by 11:59 on the Tuesday following, unless otherwise noted.**

THE INSTRUCTOR RESERVES THE RIGHT TO CHANGE THE SYLLABUS TO MEET CLASS NEEDS

Please be aware that with 15 chapters in our book and 10 weeks of coursework, the weeks will not always correspond with the same numbered chapter. Consult the syllabus and schedule weekly to be sure you’re aware of the assignment for each week.

Schedule:

June

CLASS ONE

Golash-Boza (*Race and Racisms*) Chapter 1 (pp. 3-35)

Excerpts from *A Narrative of the Capture and Captivity of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* (Sections 1-4, section 8, and section 20. Link available in course documents) Note that in Rowlandson, the sections are called “removes.”

Excerpt from *The Interesting Life of Olaudah Equiano* (Link available in course documents)

Introduction to cultural diversity (powerpoint).

Discussion Board #1—**due by 11:59pm on Tuesday 6/07.**

CLASS TWO

Golash-Boza Chapter 2 (pp. 35-61)

Film, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* (Available for free. Link available in course documents)

Powerpoint lecture on “The New World”

Discussion Board #2—**due by 11:59pm on Tuesday 06/14.**

CLASS THREE

Golash-Boza Chapter 3 (pp. 63-91)

“Letter From a Birmingham Jail” (Available in course documents)

Photographs by Dorothea Lange (Available in course documents)

Reading Quiz #1—**due by 11:59 on Tuesday 06/21.**

CLASS FOUR

Golash-Boza Chapter 5 (pp. 121-144)

Readings from Gloria Anzaldua and Sojourner Truth (Available in course documents)

Reading Quiz #2—**due by 11:59pm on Tuesday 06/28**

CLASS FIVE

Golash-Boza Chapter 6 (pp. 147-174)

Skits and readings on satire (available in course documents)

Reading Quiz #3—**due by 11:59pm on Tuesday 07/05.**

CLASS SIX

Golash-Boza Chapter 8 (pp. 205-233)

“Indian Education” by Sherman Alexie (available in course documents)

Reading Quiz #4—**due by 11:59pm on 07/12**

CLASS SEVEN

Golash-Boza Chapter 10 (pp. 267-290)

Readings on wealth and housing (available in course documents)

Discussion Board #3—**due by 11:59pm on Tuesday 07/19.**

CLASS EIGHT

Golash-Boza Chapter 11 (pp. 293-323)

Selected songs and poems (available in course documents)

Reading Quiz #5—**due by 11:59pm on Tuesday 07/26.**

CLASS NINE

Golash-Boza Chapter 13 (pp. 355-387)

Selected film (available in course documents)

Discussion Board #4—**due by 11:59pm on Tuesday 08/02.**

CLASS TEN

Golash-Boza Chapter 15 (pp. 415-441)

Readings, photos, and excerpts

Discussion Board #5—**due by 11:59 on Tuesday 08/09.**

****Final essays will be due no later than Thursday 08/11 at 11:59pm****