Latinx Literatures & Cultures in the U.S. and Beyond*

The here and now is a prison house. We must strive, in the face of the here and now’s totalizing rendering of reality, to think and feel a then and there. Some will say that all we have are the pleasures of this moment, but we must never settle for that minimal transport; we must dream and enact new and better pleasures, other ways of being in the world, and ultimately new worlds.

—José Esteban Muñoz

Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, 10:00 a.m. 10:50 a.m.
Tucker Hall 221
Professor Scott Challener (sdchallener@wm.edu)
Office: Tucker Hall 033; College Apartments 217
Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, 3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is a study of Latinx literatures and cultures produced in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. We will concentrate our attention on works by Chicanos, Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, Cuban Americans, and Dominican Americans. We will consider how these works represent and participate in the upheavals that characterize the period—from economic crisis, revolution, decolonization, and mass migration, to political and social mobilization, state repression, neoliberalization, border conflict, and the transformation of mass media. We will examine specific literary and cultural objects—novels, poems, plays, films, music—and their reception histories. We will investigate the cultural work these objects and their authors perform. How do they project, embrace, and constitute the meanings of Latinx literature and culture? How do they contravene, suppress, or refuse certain fantasies of the “Latin”? We will address questions about race and racialization, gender and sexuality, and assimilation and transculturation, as well as about the politics of Spanglish and Spanish and the situation of Latinx artists in the global marketplace. We will conclude by looking at several works by Latin American artists that consider these questions from “beyond” the United States—that is, from outside of the political borders of the U.S., and from the margins of the canon and the culture industry.

COURSE TEXTS

Tomás Rivera, *y no se lo tragó la tierra* [*And the Earth Did Not Devour Him*], Arte Público Press, 2015.

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* This syllabus draws on the work and syllabuses of various scholars, including Yolanda Martinez-San Miguel and Désirée Díaz.


Additional assigned texts will be provided on the course website.

**COURSE WEBSITE**

Our class has a Blackboard site that contains the syllabus, assignments, and other course-related materials. You can log in to our Blackboard site at blackboard.wm.edu.

**REQUIREMENTS**

10% **PARTICIPATION IN CLASS**

Regular attendance and active, thoughtful participation in class are required. Classes will be a mix of lecture, small-group and large-group discussion. Discussion requires every student to take the intellectual risk of offering observations, ideas, and arguments in class in response to one another and to the instructor. You aren’t supposed to know all the answers in advance, but you are required to come to class prepared to join in a communal effort to figure things out. If you are apprehensive about speaking in class, please see me during office hours at the start of the semester.

I discourage the use of laptops, smartphones, tablets, or smartwatches in class. Their power to distract from discussion often outweighs their potential uses.

If you have a special obligation that will require you to miss several classes (e.g. religious observances, varsity athletics), please talk with me at the beginning of the semester. If you fall ill or miss class for a family emergency, please contact me as soon as possible; you can make up for an excused absence. If you miss three classes without excuse, the maximum participation mark you can earn is a B; if you miss four, C. Missing more than four meetings without an excuse will normally result in a failing grade for the course.

Lateness, lack of preparation, and disruptive behavior will affect the participation grade. Students who arrive late to class more than three times will receive one absence. Students who arrive later than 15 minutes past the start time will be counted as absent for that class period.

10% **COURSE BLOG & INFORMAL WRITING ASSIGNMENTS**

Weekly blog entries and occasional informal analytical writing assignments on the basis of your own or others’ writing.

25% **PAPER 1**

An interpretive essay (5-7 pp.) making an argument about one text. Choice of topics distributed in advance. You will have an opportunity to revise this paper.
30% PAPER 2

An interpretive essay (6-8 pp.) making an argument about one text, making appropriate use of secondary sources. Choice of topics distributed in advance. This paper is due on the final day of the course. You will not have the opportunity to revise it.

25% TAKE HOME FINAL

Essay questions, open book, no collaboration.

GRADING

William & Mary uses a four-point grading system. The general standards for grades are as follows:

A range: Outstanding work, demonstrating thorough mastery of course materials and skills.

B range: Good work, demonstrating serious engagement with all aspects of the course but incomplete mastery of course materials and skills.

C range: Satisfactory work, meeting requirements but indicating significant problems mastering the course materials and skills.

D range: Poor or minimally passing work, meeting the basic course requirements, but frequently unsatisfactory in several major areas.

F: Failure due to unmet course requirements or consistently unsatisfactory work.

The final grade is subject to my discretion. Unsatisfactory work in all areas of the course will result in an F even if the numerical score corresponds to a passing grade. It is not possible to pass the course without turning in both papers and completing both the midterm and the final.

Unless you make other arrangements with me in advance, graded assignments will be penalized by one-third of a letter grade for each class day they are late. If you are habitually late with your assignments, you will be unable to participate fully in the class.

RECORDING OF CLASS LECTURES & DISCUSSIONS

Students may not record class lectures and discussions without permission. Permission will be granted on a case-by-case basis.

WRITING RESOURCES CENTER

The Writing Resources Center (Swem Library, 1st floor) offers one-on-one consultations for students to discuss their work in any discipline with well-trained writing consultants. Consultants will work with you at any stage in your writing process. They will work with you to help you do your own best work, so you should expect to be actively involved in your session. The WRC is a resource
for all William & Mary students. Whether you consider yourself to be a strong writer or a weak one, you can benefit from meeting with a writing consultant.

The hours for the current semester are posted on the website. I encourage you to reserve an appointment in advance. You may schedule a session online or in person. In addition to consultations at the WRC, Swem Library offers a number of other resources for students, including workshops, guidance on research, and physical spaces ideal for an array of projects, from individual projects to group work.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Academic integrity is at the heart of the university, and we all are responsible to each other and to our community for upholding the ideals of honor and integrity. William & Mary has had an Honor Code since at least 1779. Your full participation and observance of the Honor Code is expected. To present something as your own original writing or thinking when it is not is plagiarism. Plagiarism and other forms of cheating are serious violations of trust. Academic and intellectual dishonesty, including plagiarism, will have severe consequences, in accordance with the student-led honor system. For details about your responsibilities as a student, please see the Student Handbook.

**STATEMENT ON DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, & BELONGING**

You are welcome in this course regardless of status, documentation, gender, race, class, ethnicity, or ability. This classroom is a safe space. But it is not a hermetically sealed environment. Rather, it is a microcosm of our larger community. To make the classroom an equitable space you have to follow a few basic guidelines. You are expected to be respectful in your speech and actions. Intentions matter; effects do too. Practice self-reflexivity. Consider the positions you inhabit and the positions you take. Recognize the impact you have on others. Active participation does not necessarily mean that you talk; it means that you listen. It means that you recognize both the spaces you occupy and move through and the structures that organize them. Be aware of how much airtime you take up. Prioritize historically marginalized voices whenever possible. Practice critical compassion. Whether you agree or disagree, acknowledge and respond in turn. Speak from your own experiences. Use “I” statements whenever possible. Try to learn the names of your peers. And finally, accept and sit with your feelings, whether “bad” or “good” or otherwise. Embrace and explore the full range of intellectual and affective possibilities at hand—including discomfort, confusion, anxiety, insecurity, pleasure, delight, gladness, happiness, joy, and all the mixtures thereof, for which we may not have a language.

“The curriculum is us,” Eric Hayot affirms. When we study texts, we read them; when we read them, we interact with them. We press on them; they press back. We bring to them norms we’ve learned through habit, practice, and repeated exposure. Given this, we will wrestle with parallel truths: that norms are constitutive of literary form; that they differ among different publics; and that they change over time—that they’re fluid, neither permanent nor inevitable.

**CHOSEN NAME & GENDER PRONOUNS**

This course aims to be an inclusive learning community that supports students of all gender expressions and identities. Please let me know if you would like to be addressed by a different name.
or set of pronouns than those listed in the official class roster. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

I assume that all of us learn in different ways. If there are circumstances that may affect your performance in this course, please talk to me as soon as possible so that we can work together to develop strategies for accommodations that will satisfy both your learning needs and the requirements of the course. Whether or not you have a documented disability, William & Mary provides many support services that are available to all students.

*Student Accessibility Services* is the office responsible for assisting students with disabilities. If you have a disability that interferes with your learning (whether visible or invisible, physical or mental), you are encouraged to register with this office. Student Accessibility Services will work with you to determine appropriate accommodations for your courses, such as additional time on tests, staggered homework assignments, or note-taking assistance. This office will give you a letter outlining the accommodations you need that you can share with your teachers; specific information about your disability will remain private. If you have any questions about accommodation, or what constitutes a disability, I invite you to speak with me or to Student Accessibility Services.

**UNDOCU TRIBE RESOURCES** (with thanks to Allen Lopez and the members of UndocuTribe)

**ORGANIZATIONS TO GET INVOLVED WITH:**

*Virginia Coalition of Latino Organizations* (VACOLAO)
- Serves as a working alliance among organizations in Virginia that advocates for Latino communities.

*National Korean American Service & Education Consortium* (NAKASEC)
- Grassroots organization founded in 1994 by local community centers to project a progressive voice and promote the full participation of Korean and Asian Americans within the larger society.

*The Virginia Latina Advocacy Network* (VALAN)
- Operates as an extension of NLIRH, serving as the voice and advocacy presence in Virginia. The VA LAN works with activists throughout Virginia to organize our communities around issues-based campaigns that impact our families and our lives.

ICE out of RVa
- Grassroots organization with the focus of making RVa a safer community for immigrant families in fear of ICE; uplifts the work of activists, particularly those who are undocumented/QTPOC.

*Sin Barreras* (Charlottesville)
- Non-profit that focuses on outreach to the immigrant (primarily Hispanic) community, connecting individuals to services such as workshops in Health, Immigration, Legal affairs, Banking, Education, and others. They also provide individual services, such as low-cost legal counseling and work one on one in daily obstacles immigrants face.
United We Dream
• The largest immigrant youth-led community in the country.

RESOURCES FOR UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS:

Dream Project and Mentoring Program
• Non-profit organization in Arlington that encourages and supports promising immigrant youth in their pursuit of higher education through mentoring, scholarships, advocacy, and community outreach.

Just Neighbors
• Provides immigration legal services to low-income immigrants and refugees of all faiths and nationalities, especially those who are most vulnerable.

Legal Aid Justice Center
• The Legal Aid Justice Center is committed to providing a full range of services to clients, including services our federal and state governments choose not to fund. Free Informational sessions at Mason for current students are currently under development.

Ayuda
• Serving immigrants in the Washington, DC, metropolitan region. Has 36 full-time, bilingual attorneys and social workers/case managers providing legal, social, and language access services

Capital Immigrants' Rights Coalition (CAIR)
• Only legal service provider providing legal representation to detained Immigrants in facilities in DC, MD, and VA.

Tahirih Justice Center
• National non-profit committed to individuals fleeing violence and to serving as many immigrant women and girls as possible.

Edu-futuro
• Empowers immigrant and underserved youth and families through mentorship, education, leadership development and parent engagement.

OTHER RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS
• Financial Aid and Undocumented Students (U.S. Department of Education)
• Immigrants Rising
• UndocuScholars

Social media to follow:
@Undocumedia
@UndocuBlack
@FWDUs
@NILC_org
@UnitedWeDream
@TPSAlliance
A NOTE ON COURSE CONTENT

The field of Latinx studies, like ethnic literary studies more generally, emerged from social movements sixties and seventies. The texts we will read sometimes depict and respond to violence, trauma, and persecution. It is particularly important, when dealing with this material, that class discussions remain respectful. If you have any concerns, please talk to me. In addition, some of the texts you are required to read use terminology that we no longer use. You might find some terms outdated or inappropriate: I encourage you to keep in mind that conventions of language change over time, and that they have changed particularly rapidly in Latino/a/x studies (from Chicano/a, Puerto Rican, and Caribbean studies to Latino studies to Latin@ studies to Latinx studies). The most inclusive language available to writers in 1985 may seem exclusionary in 2020; keep in mind that language that we now find outdated may have been fought for by earlier activists.

SOME RESOURCES FOR THE STUDY OF LATINX LITERATURES AND CULTURES

Frederick Luis Aldama, ed., The Routledge Companion to Latina/o Popular Culture (Routledge, 2016)
Maria Elena Cepeda, Dolores Inés Casillas, eds., The Routledge Companion to Latina/o Media (Routledge, 2016)
Ilan Stavans et. al., eds., Norton Anthology of Latino Literature (Norton, 2010)
Deborah R. Vargas, Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes, Nancy Raquel Mirabal, eds. Keywords for Latino/a Studies (NYU P, 2017).
Schedule

I. Keywords, Foundations, Precursors

Week 1

Wednesday, January 22

Introductions.
Clips from “What it Means to be Latino” and Latino Americans (PBS), and “A Conversation with Latinos on Race” (New York Times, 2016).

Friday, January 24


Week 2

Monday, January 27

“Corrido de Joaquín Murrieta.”

Wednesday, January 29


Thursday, January 30

Blog posts due by 5 p.m. to Blackboard.

II. Chicana/o/x & Mexican American Literature & Culture

Friday, January 31 [Last day to add/drop]

Silvio Torres Saillant, “The Political Roots of Chicano Discourse” (Latino Studies, 2006).
Watch Luis Valdez’s “I am Joaquin” (1969) after you read Gonzales’s poem.
Week 3

Monday, February 3.

José Antonio Villareal, *Pocho*, chapters one and two.

Wednesday, February 5.

José Antonio Villareal, *Pocho*, chapters three and four.

Thursday, February 6.

Blog posts due by midnight to Blackboard.

Friday, February 7.

José Antonio Villareal, *Pocho*, chapters five and six.

Week 4

Monday, February 10.

José Antonio Villareal, *Pocho*, complete.


Wednesday, February 12.


Thursday, February 13.

Blog posts due by midnight to Blackboard.

Friday, February 14.

Luis Valdez, *Zoot Suit*, complete.

Luis Alvarez, “From *Zoot Suit* to Hip Hop: Towards a Relational Chican@ Studies” (*Latino Studies*, 2007).

Screening: *Zoot Suit* (1981, dir. Luis Valdez)
Location: Botetourt Theatre, Swem Library. Exact start time TBD.

Week 5

Monday, February 17.
Wednesday, February 19.

Sandra Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street*, pages 3-34.
Tomás Rivera, *...y no se lo tragó la tierra*, pages 75-100.

Thursday, February 20.

Blog posts due by midnight to Blackboard.

Friday, February 21. Visit to Swem Library Special Collections: Latinx Zines

Week 6

Monday, February 24.

Sandra Cisneros, complete.
Sandra Cisneros, “Never Marry a Mexican” (course website).
Tomás Rivera, *...y no se lo tragó la tierra*, complete.

Wednesday, February 26.

Paper 1 Draft Due by the beginning of class. Workshop.

Friday, February 28.

Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherríe Moraga, *This Bridge Called My Back*. Selections.

Week 7

Monday, March 2.

Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*. Selections.

Tuesday, March 3.

Paper 1 due by midnight to Blackboard.

Wednesday, March 4.

Watch: “Cholita! En no Controles” and “That Fertile Feeling” (Parts 1 & 2).
Optional: Dr. Vaginal Davis and José Esteban Muñoz, “No One Leaves Delilah: A W(rap) on Race” (NYU, 2012).

Friday, March 6.

Guillermo Gómez-Peña, Selected Writings (course website).
Guillermo Gómez-Peña, “Radical Art, Radical Communities, Radical Dreams” (TedXCalArts, 2014) and Dresher Conversations (UMBCTube, 2016)

Week 8 Spring Recess


III. PUERTO RICAN & NYORICAN LITERATURE & CULTURE

Week 9

Monday, March 16


Wednesday, March 18.

Urayoán Noel, “How Puerto Ricans Have Reinvented West Side Story.”
Pedro Pietri “Puerto Rican Obituary” (1968).
Edwin Torres, “I Am Trying to Perfect My Assént,” Ameriscopia (2014) (course website)

Thursday, March 19.

Blog posts due by midnight to Blackboard.

Friday, March 20.

NYORICAN POETRY & BEYOND

Miguel Algarín, Selected Poems (course website).
Sandra María Estévez, Selected Poems (course website).
Tato Laviera, “AmerRican,” “My graduation speech,” “asimilao,” “Nuyorican”
Miguel Piñero, Selected Poems (course website).

Week 10

Monday, March 23 [Last day to withdraw].
NUYORICAN POETRY & BEYOND
Marigloria Palma, Selected Poems (course website).
Raquel Salas Rivera, lo terciario / the tertiary (2018) and while they sleep (under the bed is another country) (2019). Selections.
Listen to Ed Morales on the Puerto Rico Protests (FAIR, 2019)
Juan González, “Celebrating the Young Lords—Amid Revolution in Puerto Rico” (The Nation, 2019)

Wednesday, March 25.

Justin Torres, We the Animals, pp. 1-60.

Thursday, March 26.

Blog posts due by midnight to Blackboard.

Friday, March 27.

Justin Torres, We the Animals, complete.

IV. CUBAN AMERICAN LITERATURE & CULTURE

Week 11

Monday, March 30.

Cristina García, Dreaming in Cuban, 1-48.

Wednesday, April 1.

Cristina García, Dreaming in Cuban, 49-104.

Thursday, April 2.

Blog posts due by midnight to Blackboard.

Friday, April 3.

Cristina García, Dreaming in Cuban, 105-160.

Week 12

Monday, April 6.

Cristina García, Dreaming in Cuban, 161-209.
Wednesday, April 8.

Cristina García, *Dreaming in Cuban*, complete.
Raphael Dalleo, “How Cristina García Lost HerAccent and Other Latina Conversations.”
Juliá Alvarez, “My English,” “Names Nombre.”

Location: Botetourt Theatre, Swem Library. Exact start time TBD.

Thursday, April 9.

Blog posts due by midnight to Blackboard.

Friday, April 10.

**SPANGLISH & THE POLITICS OF LANGUAGE**
Ilan Stavans, “*Interview*” (US Embassy in Madrid, 2015); Optional: “Spanglish: The Making of a New American Language” (UMBCTube)
George Lopez, “Spanglish”
Frances Negrón Muntaner and Yolanda Martínez San-Miguel, “*In Search of Lourdes Casal’s Ana Veldford*” (*Social Text*, 2007)
Gloria Anzaldúa, “*How to Tame a Wild Tongue*”

V. **DOMINICAN AMERICAN LITERATURE & CULTURE**

Week 13

Monday, April 13.


Wednesday, April 15.


Thursday, April 16.

Blog posts due by midnight to Blackboard.

Friday, April 17.

Junot Díaz, *The Brief and Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, chapter three, complete.

Week 14

Monday, April 20.

Wednesday, April 22.


Thursday, April 23.

Blog posts due by midnight to Blackboard.

Friday, April 24.

Junot Díaz, “*How to Date...*” *Drown* (1996) and “*Silence: The Legacy of Childhood Trauma*” *(The New Yorker, April 9 2018).*

V. **THE NEW BORDER**

Week 15

Monday, April 27.

John Alba Cutler, “The New Border” *(College Literature, 2017)*
Valeria Luiselli, *Tell Me How It Ends*, 1-54

Wednesday, April 29.  Course evaluations.

Valeria Luiselli, *Tell Me How It Ends*, complete.

Friday, May 1.  Last class.

Paper 2 due, by midnight to Blackboard.

TBD.

Take Home Final due to Blackboard, no exceptions.