Contemporary Latinx Literatures & Cultures

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

Live synchronous Zoom sessions Mondays and Wednesdays 3:30 - 4:50 p.m.

Professor Scott Challener (sdchallener@wm.edu)
In Person Office Hours Outdoors (weather permitting), TBD
Virtual Office Hours Mondays and Wednesdays, via Zoom, 12:30-2:30 p.m. EDT

LAND AND SLAVERY ACKNOWLEDGMENT
As the author of this syllabus and as a faculty member at William & Mary, I acknowledge the Indigenous peoples who are the original inhabitants of the lands our campus is on today – the Cheroenhaka (Nottoway), Chickahominy, Eastern Chickahominy, Mattaponi, Monacan, Nansemond, Nottoway, Pamunkey, Patawomeck, Upper Mattaponi, and Rappahannock tribes – and share my regard for tribal members past and present.

I also underscore that William & Mary acknowledges that it “owned and exploited slave labor from its founding to the Civil War; and that it had failed to take a stand against segregation during the Jim Crow Era.”

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course is a study of Latinx literatures and cultures produced in the last two decades. We will concentrate our attention on how contemporary art works represent and participate in the upheavals of the twenty-first century—9/11, global economic and ecological crisis, mass migration and mass deportation, 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, shows, performance art, painting, music—and the historical antagonisms that animate them. We will investigate the cultural work these objects and their authors perform. How do they project, embrace, and constitute the conflicting meanings of Latinx life today? 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 Latina/o/x 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.

**REQUIRED COURSE TEXTS** (All of the texts below, with the exception of Linmark’s and Salas Rivera’s, are available digitally from Swem. Note that Swem has purchased only one (1) license for the electronic edition of Gina Apostol’s *Insurrecto*. You may purchase print editions through W&M’s [Official Bookstore](https://www.wm.edu/officialbookstore) or online. Please consider supporting local independent bookstores by using [Bookshop](https://www.bookshop.org).)


**REQUIREMENTS**

**25% PARTICIPATION**

As with an in-person, on-ground class, regular attendance and active, thoughtful participation are required. You are expected to present at every virtual class meeting. Our virtual classroom will be a mix of pre-recorded and real-time lectures, small-group and large-group discussions, and asynchronous writing. 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 or have a special situation that will affect your participation, please see me during office hours at the start of the term. If you fall ill or miss class for a family emergency, please contact me as soon as possible. Lateness, lack of preparation, and disruptive behavior will affect the participation grade.

**GROUPME CHAT**

Our course has a [GroupMe](https://go.wm.edu/GroupMe). Click on the link to join. Our GroupMe will function as an informal space for “uncritical” responses that zero in what is typically left out of traditional “critical” interpretation. See the [assignment sheet](https://go.wm.edu/assignment_sheet) for details on this difference. Participation in our
GroupMe will not be graded; however, regular contributions can increase your overall participation grade.

10% CRITICAL BLOG POSTS (approx. 250 words each)
Weekly critical reading responses due Sundays by midnight EDT to our course blog on Blackboard. These posts practice key ideas and skills from the class. Each week, assigned students will summarize, synthesize, and frame posts as questions for further inquiry and discussion. Graded complete / incomplete. See the assignment sheet for more details.

20% PAPER 1
An interpretive essay (4-5 pp.) making an argument about one text. Choice of topics distributed in advance. See the assignment sheet for details.

25% PAPER 2
An interpretive essay (5-7 pp.) making an argument about one text, making appropriate use of secondary sources. Choice of topics distributed in advance. See the assignment sheet for details.

20% FINAL PUBLIC-FACING PROJECT
This project may be print or digital. In the past, students have made both digital and handmade zines (see the “Zine Assignment Sheet” for more details), podcasts, animated videos, interactive lesson plans, posters, and multimedia essays; they have also written more traditional “public-facing” op-ed articles for a general audience in the digital public sphere. The project should engage with some aspect—troubling, special, distinctive, dense, problematic, provocative—of Latina/o/x Studies. This project may grow out of the concerns of your writing assignments, or it may engage with a different problem or question. The final project is due on the day of our final exam period. See the assignment sheet for details.

HEALTHY TOGETHER COMMUNITY COMMITMENT
By taking this course you agree to William & Mary’s Healthy Together Community Commitment. As the website states, this agreement means that “you affirm that you understand what is required in order to be physically present in our community this year and that you will fully comply. You also acknowledge that an inability or failure to comply with our Healthy Together Community Commitment may impact your ability to remain on campus and/or participate as a member of the William & Mary community. Accordingly, there will be consequences for non-compliance, for both employees and students.” Specifically, you agree to three key actions: 1) you will mitigate risk of transmitting COVID-19; 2) demonstrate care and concern for the physical and psychological well-being of others; and 3) support W&M’s mission.

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.

CONTRACT GRADING
In this course we will use an evaluation method known as contract grading. Please read the Grading Contract and sign it. Upload signed contracts via the “Assignments” section of our course website. If you breach the contract, the final grade is subject to my discretion. If you do not complete the major assignments, it is not possible to pass the course.

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 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 begin 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. Justify your perspective with evidence; pose questions from your experience. 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, joy, and all the mixtures thereof, for which we may not have a language. Read my latest “Diversity Statement” here.

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.
William & Mary accommodates students with disabilities in accordance with federal laws and university policy. Any student who feels they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a learning, psychiatric, physical, or chronic health diagnosis should contact Student Accessibility Services staff at 757-221-2512 or at sas@wm.edu to determine if accommodations are warranted and to obtain an official letter of accommodation.

**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.

**WMFIRE (formerly UNDOCUTRIBE) 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 Immigrant’s 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.
National Bail Fund Network
- The National Bail Fund Network is made up of over eighty community bail and bond funds across the country.

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

Social media to follow:
- @Undocumedia
- @100latinxartists
- @gallerygurls
- @UndocuBlack
- @angelik.wiki
- @hiphopphotomuseum
- @FWDus
- @archivotrans
- @ITZELALEJANDRA.gif
- @NILC_org
- @atomicculture
- @latinainmuseums
- @UnitedWeDream
- @atx_barrio_archive
- @latinoswholunch
- @TPSAlliance
- @colectivacosmica
- @latinxcurated
- @mantecahtx
- @map_pointz
- @latinx_diaspora_Archives
- @nepantla.usa
- @nuevayorkinos
- @purochingoncollective
- @rockarchivola
- @roincembalast
- @Veteranas_and_Rucas

A NOTE ON COURSE CONTENT

The field of Latinx studies, like ethnic literary studies more generally, emerged from social movements of the sixties and seventies. The texts we will read sometimes depict and respond to violence, trauma, and persecution. When dealing with this material it is particularly important 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 may 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/x, Puerto Rican, and Caribbean studies to Latina/o 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.

REFERENCES FOR THE STUDY OF LATINA/O/X LITERATURES & CULTURE
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)

**DIGITAL RESOURCES**

*afrolatin@forum*
*Hispanic Trends Project* (Pew Research Center)
*Latino and Hispanic American Health* (National Library of Medicine)
LatinoUSA.org
*Latinx Project* (NYU)
*Latinx Spaces*
*Latinx Studies Resources* (Library of Congress)
*Puerto Rico and the American Dream*
*PR on the Map*” (Rosa Clemente)
*Puerto Rico Syllabus Project*
*Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage Project* (Arte Público Press, U Houston)
*Resource Center for Minority Data* (U Mich)
*Tomás Rivera Policy Institute* (USC)
*U.S. Latinx Art Sessions* (South Florida)
*U.S. Latinx Art Futures Symposium* (Ford Foundation)
*U.S. Latinx Art Forum*

**SCHEDULE** (subject to change)

I.: **X FACTORS: KEYWORDS FOR THE STUDY OF LATINX LITERATURES & CULTURES**

Wednesday, January 27th. Introductions, Syllabus.
Read

In class materials:
Sharing what #BlackLatinasKnow & what #WeBeenToldYou, *Black Latinas Know Collective*.

Recommended materials:
Watch some or all of “What it Means to be Latino” (PBS).

Thursday, January 28th, 6:00 p.m. EDT. Optional: Latinx Photography in the United States: Elizabeth Ferrer in Conversation with Roberto Tejada (Whitney Museum).

Sunday, January 31st. Blog posts due by midnight EDT.

Monday, February 1st.

Read:

Recommended:
Julia Alvarez, “Names Nombres.”
Gloria Anzaldúa, “How to Tame a Wild Tongue.”

Wednesday, February 3rd.

Read:

Explore Pelaez Lopez’s Instagram and Twitter feeds @migrantscribble.

Friday, February 5th.
Sunday, February 7th. Blog posts due by midnight EDT.

Monday, February 8th.

Read:


Read:
“Zines,” Blog on the Hyphen, explore the entries with this tag.

Recommended:

Before Monday → Noticing party: Gentefied.

Friday, February 12th. No classes.

II. CUIR | QUEER & TRANS DECOLONIAL LITERATURES & CULTURES

Sunday, February 14th. Blog posts due by midnight EDT.

Monday, February 15th.

Read:

Watch:

Recommended:
Justin Agrelo, “’We Could Do Things Without Having to Ask Permission’” Slate (17 Apr 2019)
Watch micha cárdenas, “We Want More than Just to Live.”

Wednesday, February 17th.

Read:
Raquel Salas Rivera, “an open casket for a puerto rican obituary / for pedro pietri” (21 Nov 2019, SFSU Poetry Center); “the independence (of puerto rico).”
Pedro Pietri “Puerto Rican Obituary” (1968).

Recommended:
Listen to Ed Morales on the Puerto Rico Protests (FAIR, 2019)

Sunday, February 21st. Blog posts due by midnight EDT.

Monday, February 22nd.

Read:

Recommended:
Introduction, Puerto Rico en mi corazón.

Watch:
Raquel Salas Rivera, “Philadelphia’s Poet Laureate.”
Wednesday, February 24th. Paper I draft due.

Read:

Sunday, February 28th. Blog posts due by midnight EDT.

Monday, March 1st.

Read:
Raquel Salas Rivera, “EXIS” in *X / EX / EXIS: poemas para la nación | poems for the nation*, pp. 73/73-92/93.
José Esteban Muñoz, “‘The White to Be Angry’: Vaginal Davis’s Terrorist Drag” (*Social Text*, 1997).

Watch: “Cholita! En no Controles” and “That Fertile Feeling” (Parts 1 & 2).
Vaginal Davis, “This Is Not a Dream.”

Recommended:
An interview with Raquel Salas Rivera (*Asymptote*); see also his interview with *Latino USA* (16 Apr 2018).
“How it Feels to Be Free,” Raquel Salas Rivera and Carina del Valle Schorske.
Dr. Vaginal Davis and José Esteban Muñoz, “No One Leaves Delilah: A W(rap) on Race” (NYU, 2012).
Guillermo Gómez-Peña, “In Defense of Performance Art.”

III. AFRO-LATIN@ AND BLACK LATINX LITERATURES & CULTURES

Wednesday, March 3rd. Paper I due.

Read:

Watch:
Mariposa (María Teresa Fernández), “Diasporican.”

Recommended

Thursday, March 4th. No classes.

Sunday, March 7th. Blog posts due by midnight EDT.

Monday, March 8th.


Watch:
Elizabeth Acevedo, at The Summit on Inequality & Opportunity (12 March 2017).

Wednesday, March 10th.

Read:

Sunday, March 14th. Blog posts due by midnight EDT.

Monday, March 15th.

Read:
Junot Díaz, “How to Date...”
Nelly Rosario, “How to Date a Thugboy...”

Recommended:
Junot Díaz, “The Search for Decolonial Love: An Interview with Junot Díaz.”

Wednesday, March 17th.

Monday, March 22nd.  Paper 2 assigned.
Read:

Wednesday, March 24th.

Read:
Quiara Alegría Hudes, *Water by the Spoonful*, Scenes 1-6 (6-44).

Sunday, March 28th. Blog posts due by midnight EDT.

Monday, March 29th.

Read:
Quiara Alegría Hudes, *Water by the Spoonful*, complete.

IV. FILIPINX LITERATURE & CULTURE

Wednesday, March 31st.

Read:

Sunday, April 4th. Blog posts due by midnight EDT.

Monday, April 5th. Paper 2 working claims due.


Tuesday, April 6th. No classes.

Wednesday, April 7th. No classes.

Sunday, April 11th. Blog posts due by midnight EDT.

Monday, April 12th.

Read:
Wednesday, April 14th. Paper 2 draft due.

Read:
Gina Apostol, *Insurrecto*, Notes, complete.

Sunday, April 18th. Blog posts due by midnight EDT.

Monday, April 19th.

Read:

Wednesday, April 21st.

Read:

Sunday, April 25th. No blog posts due this week. Paper 2 due.

Monday, April 26th. No classes.

If you haven’t already, watch *Selena* (1997, dir. Gregory Nava).

V. CONTEMPORARY CHICANX LITERATURE & CULTURE

Wednesday, April 28th.

Read:
Before class, read and annotate (assigned groups):
- “*Black Rain on the Latina Superbowl Parade*” (*BLKC*).

In class: noticing party: *Selena* (2020, Netflix).

Recommended:
Watch: “Episode 5: Prejudice and Pride” of PBS *Latino Americans*.

Sunday, May 2nd. No blog posts due this week.

Monday, May 3rd. Course Evaluations.

**Read:**
Rafa Esparza on “browning the white cube”; *exhibit* at Mass Moa; 2017 *exhibit* at the Whitney Biennial

**Watch:** Guillermo Gómez-Peña, “Radical Art, Radical Communities, Radical Dreams” (TedXCalArts, 2014).

**Recommended:**
Guillermo Gómez-Peña, *Dresher Conversations* (UMBTCube, 2016); and “A Declaration of Disobedience from the New Border” (2005).

**Watch:**

Wednesday, May 5th. Last class.

**Read:**

Tuesday, May 11th. *Final Public-Facing Project* due by 5 p.m. EDT to Blackboard.