**RETHINKING AMERICA: A HEMISPHERIC PERSPECTIVE**

English 178A.1 Fall 2010

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**TEXTS**: Fernandez-Armesto, *The Americas* (Modern Library); Bender, *Nation Among Nations* (Hill); Delany, *Blake; Or The Huts of America* (Beacon); Burton, *Free Flag of Cuba* (LSU); Amparo, *Squatter and the Don* (Hill); Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!* (Random); Martinez, *Mother Tongue* (Bilingual Review); Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* (Penguin)

**AIMS AND SCOPE**

In an age in which cultures and societies find themselves inescapably integrated into complex global networks of communication and trade, literary critics have been increasingly invested in thinking about the influence of global forces on aesthetic production. Resituating the study of literature of the United States within a wider Hemispheric context, American studies in particular has actively sought out new critical paradigms that not only challenge notions of North American exceptionalism, but also integrate U.S. literature with writings from other parts of America, including Canada, Mexico, Central America, and South America. This course will critically evaluate the benefits and liabilities of this new critical paradigm, often referred to as Hemispheric American Studies, and provide a broad survey of both literary and theoretical texts from and about America from 1776 to the present. While key critical works will help us establish the important debates of Hemispheric American Studies, primary texts will provide useful case studies for thinking through these issues.

The course will proceed primarily through lecture, classroom discussion, and an online discussion forum, and students will be assessed on the basis of the following: class participation, two short writing assignments, and a final research paper. Lectures will be brief and will focus on setting up the historical context for the literature to be discussed and other relevant background material that may illuminate our discussions. Class discussion will build off of responses to the online discussion forum and proceed with an eye towards developing the course theme. The short writing assignments will consist of the following: a) a one page abstract of an argument of the student’s choosing and related to the course theme in which students will be graded on how well they set up the critical context for the argument to be advanced, chart an original critical intervention, and concisely articulate a clear and persuasive argument; and b) a five- to eight-page paper developing the argument articulated in the abstract. Students will have the option of choosing any topic for their presentation so long as it relates to the course theme and will be evaluated in terms of how well the student has organized and integrated his or her material with the course aims and objectives. Finally, the final research paper will be ten to fifteen pages on any topic related to the course theme and will be judged on how well you incorporate my comments to the two short writing assignments, clarity of writing, substance of argument, and substantiality of research.

# **Grade Assessment:**

Participation: 50%

Final Paper: 30 %

Short Writings: 20 %

**Attendance:**

You may miss two classes without penalty. After the second unexcused absence, your grade is dropped by one degree (i.e., B+ becomes a B). Coming to class with all necessary materials is mandatory to be counted as present.

**Participation:**

Participation involves both an active involvement in class discussions and fulfillment of your short response responsibilities as described below.

**Short Responses:**

These responses consist primarily of answering discussion questions posted on the online discussion forum prior to attending class. I ask that you complete and post your response no later than 7 a.m. the day of the class. Responses should be thoughtful and relevant to the course theme. Posts following the first response should engage with those arguments that come before it to avoid repeating ideas already posted.

**Deadlines:**

All deadlines are final unless cleared with me prior to the class meeting on which the assignment is due. If you have special circumstances that prevent you from getting your work in on time, feel free to contact me and we’ll make arrangements.

**READINGS:**

INTRODUCTION:

9/23 Towards a Hemispheric American Literature

THEORETICAL BACKGROUNDS

9/28 Fernandez-Armesto, “Americas? America?” (*The Americas* 4-21)

Bender, “Introduction” (*Nation* 3-14)

9/30 Levander and Levine, “Introduction: American Literary History” (*E*)

Martí, *Nuestra América* (*E*)

THE “AMERICAN” CANON

10/5 Whitman, “Song of Myself” *Leaves of Grass*; “Spanish Element in Our Nationality” (E)

10/7 Emerson, “Self Reliance” (E); Thoreau, *On Civil Disobedience* (E)

SLAVERY, REVOLUTION, AND THE AMERICAS

10/12 Delany, *Blake: Or the Huts of America* (Part I)

10/14 Delany, *Blake* (Part II)

10/19 Delany, *Blake*

**SHORT WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE: one-page abstract**

THE GLOBAL SOUTH

10/21 Pickens, *The Free Flag of Cuba*

10/26 NO CLASS (READ LIKE CRAZY!!!)

10/28 NO CLASS (READ LIKE CRAZY!!!)

11/2 Pickens, *The Free Flag of Cuba*

11/4 Pickens, *The Free Flag of Cuba*

MEXICO AND THE AMERICAS

11/9 Burton, *The Squatter and the Don* (Chapter 1-18)

**SHORT WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE: 5- to 8-page paper**

11/11 NO CLASS (Veteran’s Day Holiday)

11/16 Burton, *The Squatter and the Don*

11/18 Burton, *The Squatter and the Don*

CANADA AND THE SOUTH

11/23 Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!*

11/25Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!*

11/30 Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!*

CENTRAL AMERICA

12/2 Martinez, *Mother Tongue*

12/4 Martinez, *Mother Tongue*

**ABBREVIATIONS:**

E = Electronic Reserve