

Syllabus

English 415: Chicano/a Narrative

Instructor: Professor Lysa Rivera, Lysa.Rivera@wwu.edu



Rubén Ortiz Torres, "ESL"

Welcome to English 415, an advanced course on a cultural community not typically represented in literature best seller lists, mainstream Hollywood films (or indie films, for that matter), and television shows. When they are represented, their images tend to be stereotypically two-dimensional, farcical, and at times downright offensive. Yet, when we look at their literature -- the texts and stories they wrote about themselves -- we find what we always find when we look closely at cultures: complexity, fluctuation, contradiction, and layers of contexts. No previous knowledge of either Chicano/a literature or the Spanish language is required to succeed in this course.

We will delve into the literary history of Chicanos/as by surveying a range of texts from the early twentieth century to the present day. As we read texts from different genres and historical periods, we will work together to cultivate a deep appreciation for the rich, subversive, and varied ways that Chicanos/as have participated and intervened in the U.S. literary tradition. Some of the questions guiding this course are as follows:

Course Trajectory

We begin by reading an important historical document: the 1848 **Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo**, which is when many Mexican American intellectuals locate the origins of a Chicana/o cultural consciousness, (and which is when the U.S. purchased what is now the American southwest from Mexico). We end with contemporary works produced during what some have called the “post-Chicano” moment. To supplement and situate the literature, we will occasionally examine other forms of Chicana/o cultural production, including music, performance, and visual art.

Student Learning Outcomes

By the end of this class, my students should be able to:

- **Identify, differentiate** and **explain** the major historical periods and aesthetic concerns in Chicano/a literature produced after 1848.
- **Conduct** library research in the discipline of literary studies.
- **Develop** and **present** critical interpretations of literary texts through formal academic writing.
- **Collaborate** in small groups to complete a self-directed, multimedia project.

Required Reading Material:

- José Antonio Villarreal, *Pocho* (1959)
- Tomás Rivera, *...y no se lo trago la tierra/...and the Earth Did Not Devour Him* (1971)
- Sandra Cisneros, *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories* (1991)
- Helena María Viramontes, *Under the Feet of Jesus* (1995)
- Selected short readings available on Canvas (C)

Grades:

- In-class assignments (ICA) **20%**
- Seminar participation **10%**
- Response papers **30%**
- Final paper **40%**