

ENG 129 Spring 2011

English 129 Ethnic Literatures of America: Multicultural Memoirs

TENTATIVE SYLLABUS. Finalized reading schedule available on first day of class.

Dr. Christy A. Cannariato

Group 2: Sat 10-12, Sun 10-12, 3:20-5:20

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-or- ccannariato@msmc.la.edu (delayed response)

Course Description: In this course we will read contemporary autobiographical works written by a selection of Americans* of various ethnic backgrounds. Although each author variously wrestles with family, national, and world history in a form and voice that is uniquely individual, ultimately all ask themselves, and their readers, similar questions: What does it mean to be American? Is my experience unique or representative of my ethnic group? Can I ever be viewed by people outside my ethnicity as not merely a hyphenated American but as a full-fledged American, and to some even more important, an Artist? In other words, they wonder, can Art ever wrest free of history and politics and our obsessive need to label and contextualize? The course also studies the genre of autobiography and memoir more generally, plus additional concepts and issues important to American ethnic studies: the literary canon, marginalization, popular culture, stereotyping, and the debate about bilingual education and ethnic studies, to name just a few.

*Imran Ahmad is actually not American, but his work is a fun read, and his experience of America is useful for our purposes.

Required Texts:

Barack Obama, *Dreams from My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance*

Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts*

Richard Rodriguez, *Hunger for Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez*

N. Scott Momaday, *The Way to Rainy Mountain*

Imran Ahmad, *Unimagined: A Muslim Boy Meets the West*

Maria Mazziotti Gillan and Jennifer Gillan, Eds, *Growing Up Ethnic in America*

****FIRST ASSIGNMENT DUE WEEKEND 1: Read N. Scott Momaday's *The Way to Rainy Mountain* carefully in its entirety (it's fairly brief but not necessarily a quick read). Take notes. Notice which objects, phrases, stories, etc repeat throughout the text and speculate on the reason for and effect of such repetition. Your first (open book) Reading Assignment will be written in class on Weekend 1.****

Description of Assignments

Reading Assignments: Every student will provide typewritten, single-spaced responses to prompts provided by the instructor with regard to a particular work on the syllabus. A high-scoring paper will demonstrate active engagement with the text, proper grammar and syntax but will not require research or a thesis. Answer should be formatted the same as the prompt, i.e. the answer to subpart (b) is prefaced with (b). Electronic submission via Angel is required. If Angel is unavailable, e-mail it to the instructor by the deadline and retain the reply e-mail as your receipt. Paper submissions are acceptable to make the due date if there is electronic failure but must be subsequently followed by electronic submission within 3 days.

This assignment requires individual work without the benefit of class discussion; therefore, to

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receive full credit the assignment is due at the start of class discussion of the assigned text, typically each Saturday at 10:00 a.m. of a school weekend. Partial (50%) credit is available for complete papers only that are turned in by the end of the last session of the corresponding school weekend (Sunday 5:20 p.m.) No credit is given for papers received after the close of the respective school weekend nor for partial answers. All numbered prompts and each of their lettered subparts must be addressed to receive any credit.

There is no word maximum or minimum to constitute a high-scoring response. Papers are graded predominantly on the student's demonstration that she/he has thoroughly read the text and has a good grasp of and engagement with the subject matter of the prompt. While most students typically can produce an excellent response in 200-300 words per numbered prompt, one should take as many words as necessary to give a complete and thoughtful answer. (6 @10% each)

Essay: A formal essay of 1250-1500 words due Weekend 5. Essay prompts will be provided to guide your topic. Essays must be typewritten, double-spaced, use proper grammar and syntax and contain a title and a thesis. Students are expected to have already passed one or more composition courses and to understand how to write a formal essay. Students are also expected to have read "Tips for Writing Better Essays" available on Angel and will be graded accordingly. (25%)

Final Exam: An in-class exam on Weekend 6 consisting of short answer and essay questions. Bring blue/green book. (15%)

COURSE POLICIES AND ETIQUETTE:

Attendance and Participation: This class is highly participatory; therefore, regular attendance in the Weekend College format is crucial for successful completion of this course. Attendance will be recorded as will tardiness. Although students are not directly graded on their attendance, an excellent attendance record and an imperfect attendance record are rewarded or punished indirectly. If a student's grade falls on the border between two grades, an excellent attendance record will be rewarded with the higher grade; an imperfect attendance record is given the lower grade.

Etiquette: Please be polite and observe the following:

- Arrive promptly for class. Class starts at the posted time.
- Limit use of personal electronics in classroom – by this I refer mostly to websurfing during class or otherwise keeping your eyes glued to your electronic device.
- No food unless you bring enough to share (beverages ok)
- No germs. If you have a contagious illness, please stay home. Seriously.

COMMUNICATION: All announcements, assignments, and course information will be regularly posted and updated on Angel, and important changes or updates to the course schedule or assignments will additionally be e-mailed to students. Students will be held responsible for making themselves aware of the information displayed online and in e-mails in a timely manner.

Note: For fast reply, direct all emails to the instructor's personal account christy.cannariato@google.com. E-mails sent to the instructor's MSMC account ccannariato@msmc.la.edu will be delayed both in receipt and in reply because of its inconvenient administration (no forwarding capability). E-mails sent within the Angel interface will be forwarded to my personal account, so those will be answered promptly.

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E-Course: This is a near-paperless course. All assignments and course material will be posted online or e-mailed. All student work will be uploaded to Angel (or e-mailed if Angel is down). Paper copies of assignments will not be accepted except as a temporary measure in case of electronic failure. Assignments and important announcements (such as class cancellations) are disseminated via e-mail. Students are responsible for regularly and timely reading such e-mails and responding in a timely manner, if applicable. See the instructor if technical support is needed to comply with this requirement.

Changes to Schedule or Syllabus

The instructor makes every effort to schedule assignments accurately but reserves the right to change assignments and/or deadlines as needed should unforeseen circumstances arise. Such changes are generally equitably resolved in consultation with the students.

Academic Integrity: Plagiarism and/or cheating is an act of academic dishonesty and is a serious offense. Please refer to the MSMC Catalog, page 39 for a complete definition of what constitutes academic dishonesty. Note that using one assignment for two different courses is also dishonest.

SCHEDULE: Come to the first session of class having completed the reading.

(As of this writing, this schedule is tentative. Excerpts of other works may be added. If so, the texts will be available for download on Angel. No further purchases will be necessary.)

Weekend 1, January 15-16 Native American Lit
N. Scott Momaday, *The Way to Rainy Mountain*

Weekend 2, February 5-6 African American Lit
Barack Obama, *Dreams of My Father*

Weekend 3, February 26-27 Asian American Lit
Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior*

Weekend 4, March 19-20 Latino/Chicano Lit
Richard Rodriguez, *Hunger for Memory*

Weekend 5, April 9-10 Middle Eastern Lit
Imran Ahmad, *Unimagined: A Muslim Boy Meets the West*
Essay uploaded on Angel by 6:00 p.m., Sunday, March 20

Weekend 6, April 30-May 1
Selections from *Growing Up Ethnic* TBA
Final Exam during final session of the weekend.