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LATINO/A THEATRE & DRAMA OF NORTH AMERICA
TA 471/571 ~ T/Th 12-1:50 pm ~ VIL 201

Overview: TA 472 Latino/a Theatre & Drama of North America is a survey of contemporary drama both as literature and as blueprint for performance. Students will emerge from this class with a greater understanding and appreciation of drama written by Mexican-American, Cuban-American, and other authors who self-identify as Latino/a/x, Chicano/a, and/or Hispanic. Students will develop tools and skills for analyzing and discussing dramatic literature, and for critically evaluating differences across texts. We will study how cultural traditions and political histories have informed the many different ways in playwrights represent American communities. We will also read associated critical and theoretical articles to illuminate how the works of these authors expose race, class and gender stereotypes, and call into question the universalizing idea of the nation-state. We will look closely at how these playwrights use theatrical form (such as magical realism, parody, song, ritual, multi-media, mash-ups) to critique and/or enlighten contemporary North American culture. Because we live in the western US, much of our reading will focus on the concerns and work of playwrights of Mexican-American identity. But we will also read plays from across North America that demonstrate a variety of literary and performance styles, themes and viewpoints. We will read these texts not merely as literature, but as civic documents that illuminate diverse lives, perspectives and concerns of Americans.

Objectives:

- a) Become conversant regarding the achievements of a number of prominent Latinx playwrights and performance companies from the 1970s to present day, and to identify and discuss some of the various theatricalities used by Latinx playwrights such as: magical realism, storytelling, song, ritual, and parody.
- b) Understand some of the political-historical “back-story” of these artists, plays and performances, and to reflexively understand your own position in relation to these histories, cultures and politics.
- c) Explore in oral, visual, and written discussion how these texts work as socio-cultural and political documents, and to develop a critical and theatrical vocabulary for writing and speaking about these works and the human experiences they illuminate.
- d) Strengthen oral and written communication skills through classroom discussion, presentations, and written assignments, and to strengthen theatrical skills of visual representation, storytelling, dramatic writing, and presentation.

Readings/Texts

You are welcome to share books with someone else in the class. However, you are responsible for having the reading done on the day it is assigned, and for having the play in hand for discussion. All of these have been ordered through the UO Duckstore coursebooks section. You may also find many of them used or less expensive at Smith Family bookstore, or online.

Ordered through the bookstore as Required

Primary Texts

- José Cruz González & Jennings, (editor). *Nine Plays by José Cruz González.*
- Gloria Anzaldúa. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza.*
- Luiz Valdez. *Zoot Suit and Other Plays.*
- Cherríe Moraga. *Heroes and Saints & Other Plays.*

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- José Rivera. *Marisol and Other Plays*.
- Nilo Cruz. *Two Sisters and a Piano and Other Plays*.
- Milcha Sanchez Scott. *Roosters*.
- Richard Montoya & Culture Clash. *American Night: The Ballad of Juan Jose*. (also available on CANVAS)

Additional Plays and readings on CANVAS include –

- Guillermo Verdecchia's *Fronteras Americanas* (also available for check out in TA 216)
- Excerpt from...Jorge Huerta. *Chicano Theater: Themes and Forms*.
- Excerpt from...Jorge Huerta. *Chicano Theater: Performance, Society and Myth*.
- Excerpt from...Elizabeth C. Ramirez. *Chicanas/Latinas in American Theatre*.
- Excerpt from...Diana Taylor. *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*
- Excerpt from *Pocahontas and the Blue Spots*, by Monque Mojica
- Excerpt from *The Tenth Muse* by Tanya Saracho
- Various Articles

Also Recommended:

A Spanish to English pocket dictionary

A blank (no lines) notebook for collecting your Scrapbook assignments

A set of colored (water-based please!) markers or wax pastels for drawing

CANVAS – please check regularly for updates, readings and assignments.

Assignments/Course Requirements

Reading Assignments

Reading is the heart of this course. Please read the plays and articles thoroughly and come prepared to discuss them in some depth. I will often provide questions ahead of time for you to think about while reading.

Discussion Questions/Class Participation – 100 pts

Post one discussion question per week that relate to the readings, and help the class related the articles to the plays we read. These questions will form the basis of our class discussion for that day. Discussion questions are counted as part of your Participation points. Much of class will be discussion requiring close reading of the plays and articles. A significant portion of your grade will depend on active, engaged participation in class.

Memos – 10 pts each

The memo is a tool to help me gauge how the class is affecting your thinking and perhaps your feelings and world view. It is an informal message (like a journal entry) to me about how you are responding to the material and/or class discussion, how the class is affecting your every perspectives, and/or how it is challenging your previous understanding of your society, self, or art. At least one Memo is due in a 3-wk period. Please use the memo freely and honestly.

Scrapbook – in paper form – 100 pts (50 at mid-term, and 50 at end of term)

Including image responses to plays, vocabulary notes, free writes, and found poems.

Response images/collages/art: The art of theatre is a visual art; while it used words in the form of dialogue, it only comes alive in space. We will read many plays that make use of “magical realism” in which visual, aural and tactical images carry the central themes and meanings of the play. Rather than always responding to these plays verbally or intellectually, this assignment allows you to respond through the language of images. Each week you will bring to class a visual/image response to one of the plays

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assigned that week. This can be in the form of a collage of images, an original work of art you make, photographs or video that you shoot, music that you compose or collect. Your response should communicate what for you were the primary feelings, moods, issues, events, and meanings of the play. The response is not an illustration, and it is not a scenic design; rather it is a work of art that speaks about and back to the play. Your images should be accompanied by some written collection of lines, words, or phrases from the play text. **You only need to do ONE image response per week**, not one for each play.

Vocabulary notes: you will encounter many terms that are familiar as well as terms new to you. Spanish terms; slang; invectives; stereotypes; place names; mythic terms. You should keep a running list of terms that come up in the readings as well as discussion and makes notes about the sometimes layered and complex meaning of these terms.

Found Poems/Reading Responses: sometimes I will ask you to respond to a reading by writing freely in response, or by composing a poem of your own using words and phrases from the reading. The purpose is similar to the image responses – to engage your imagination and heart, your associative mind, as well as your intellect.

Artist Report & Discussion – 40 pts

Working in pairs with one other person from class, you will research one of the artists/playwrights that we are reading and provide a presentation to the class about the artist's work. As part of this, you will also read the day's readings and provide discussion questions that link the theoretical readings with the plays. I am available to help you with resources, media, etc. You may be creative in this venture, and are not limited to power-point/presi. For example, you might want to perform, or ask the class to read aloud portions of the script; or you might find other inventive ways to engage the material.

Final Paper and Creative Presentation – 75 pts

Read, research, write about and create something using a play we have not read in class. This assignment has two components: an essay and a creative presentation. This is your opportunity to research and write about a play or performance of your choosing. A more detailed Assignment Sheet will follow. Advice: choose your play and begin your research early – see Theresa for ideas. The calendar has interim deadlines for peer-reading and feedback on drafts. Papers are due and presentations done in Week Ten.

- 1) Analytical essay – after critical and dramaturgical research on the play you've chosen, write a 5-7 page double-spaced analytical essay in which you argue the meaning and significance of the play. You should apply the ideas and theories we have read and discussed in class, as well as additional material (historical, theoretical, critical) that you have researched.
- 2) Creative aspect – you may fulfil this part of the assignment in several ways, including acting or directing a scene from your play; presenting your analysis in some interesting way, such as a large informational poster; or developing a visual or aural design concept. I am open to additional ideas. (5 pts extra credit for being part of another student's final project)

Essays One & Two – 50 pts each

An analytical take-home essay every three weeks. I will provide a series of prompt questions and you will choose one to write about. Essay One covers readings from Weeks 1-3; Essay 2 covers readings from Weeks 4-6 (the Final Exam functions as 'essay three' - see below).

Final Exam – 50 pts

An analytical essay covering readings from Weeks 7-9. Same format as Essays 1 & 2 with a selection of prompt questions.

Additional Course Expectations/Requirements:

- Demonstrated preparation (i.e., doing reading and active contribution to class)
- Active class discussion and participation
- Collaborative approach to learning and respect for others' viewpoints and experience
- Demonstrated growth in critical thinking and self-reflexivity

Please see the Course Calendar for all Due Dates. All requirements must be fulfilled in order to receive a passing grade in the course.

Grading

- ❑ 100 pts (roughly 5 pts per class for active class participation, posting discussion questions, demonstration of preparation, contribution to class)
 - ❑ 90 pts Scrapbook (roughly 10 pts per week; weekly sharing & collected at mid-term and end of term)
 - ❑ 40 pts Artist Report and discussion
 - ❑ 30 pts Memos
 - ❑ 75 pts Critical/Analytical Essay and Presentation on a play we have not read in class
 - ❑ 50 pts Essay One (on readings weeks 1-3)
 - ❑ 50 pts Essay Two (on readings weeks 4-6)
 - ❑ 50 pts Final Exam (on readings weeks 7-9)
- 485 points total

After all points earned are entered into CANVAS and will automatically translate into percentage for your letter grade in the course:

A+ 100 – 97 ; A 96.9 – 93 ; A- 92.9 – 90 ; B+ 89.9 – 87 ;B 86.9 – 83 ;B- 82.9 – 80 ;C+ 79.9 – 77; C 76.9 – 73 ;C- 72.9 – 70 ;D+ 69.9 – 67 ; D 66.9 – 63 ; D- 62.9 – 60 ; F Below 60

Grading rubric:

A Displays a thorough understanding of course concepts and is able to utilize these concepts in creative ways. Writing and oral work is clear, well-crafted, and insightful. Makes statements or asks questions in discussion that shape the class period in meaningful ways.

B Written and oral work displays a concerted effort to grapple with the course ideas and shows a good factual understanding of material. Discussion participation is active and thoughtful.

C Written and oral work meets the basic demands of the assignment but achieves no more. Some confusion or lack of facility in the attack of course concepts. Discussion attendance is good, but active participation is sporadic.

D Written and oral work lacks accuracy and focus. Discussion attendance is poor and participation rare.

F Written and oral work is incomplete, not addressed to the assigned topic, or not turned in at all. Discussion attendance and participation are extremely poor.

Misc. Policies

- **Communication** – I hope to get to know each of individually and to learn about your intellectual and artistic perspective. Please feel free to visit me during office hours listed at the top of the syllabus, or make an appointment. Please email me if you have questions or concerns about anything that comes up in class. College can be emotionally challenging in many ways. There are resources to help you on campus. Please seek advice from your faculty, or contact the Division of Student Life at 541 346-3216; ‘drop ins’ welcome M-F 1-5 pm at 164 Oregon Hall. 24 hr. student emergency/crisis line: 541 346-3227. 24 hour hotline: 541 346-SAFE (7233), or safe.uoregon.edu.

- **Attendance** – Absences will be excused for documented illness, school-sponsored activities, true emergency situations, and required participation in significant cultural responsibilities in student’s community. Documented illness requires a doctor’s or health center statement and does not include appointments that can be made at other times. Missing class for either excused or unexcused absences may adversely impact the overall grade in the course based on the percentage of grade or points earned by attendance and participation in class as identified in the course syllabus. More than 2 unexcused absences will lower your final grade by a half grade point (an A drops to a B+) for each absence.
- **Cell phones** – please turn your cell phone off before class begins. Text-messaging during class is a sign that you are not mentally present for class, and will be counted as an absence.
- **Lap-tops** – laptops or other reading/texting devices are NOT permitted; this is an engaged learning environment; bring paper copies of your readings and assignments for that day. Studies show that taking notes on a laptop actually decreases your participation in, and comprehension of, course material. (Even Steve Jobs, founder of Apple Computers, did not allow his own children to use Ipads, iPhones – he believed the devices would stunt his children’s’ creativity! They certainly stunt lively, engaged interaction.)
- All work must be completed according to directions, on time, and presented in a professional manner. If you have a problem meeting a deadline, please talk to me about options.
- I expect you to treat one another in a professional manner, and to treat our class as a professional association. I expect you to articulate your point of view within a context of mutual respect for another's views and experience. If you are a person who participates easily, think about how you can help to make this class a safe and welcoming space for everyone to express her or his thoughts. Your classmates are a primary source of your learning.
- UO is a **drug-free, non-smoking** campus. Please consult the University Student Handbook for regulations regarding smoking, alcohol, drugs, etc. Recreational use of substances before or during class or rehearsal is cause for a failing grade.
- **Plagiarism**: Theatre often makes use of the work of others – newspaper articles, blogs, songs, family stories, etc. Using these sources if find, however you must give credit to the source/author/s of words, images or songs that are not your own. Plagiarism means using the written, spoken, or electronic words of someone else without giving them credit. **This includes all information on the internet including open-source or non-identified author information. Plagiarism is grounds for failure** on the assignment and/or a failing grade in the course.
- I work hard to create an inclusive learning environment for all. Please let me know if there are aspects of this course that do not support the way you learn. I want to work with you so that you get the most from this course! Please let me know if you need additional time for exams, or a note-taker for a documented accessibility reason. You may also find helpful resources by contacting the Accessible Education Center at 164 Oregon Hall / 541 346-1155, or uoaec@uoregon.edu.