



LIT 328 — Course Syllabus
Multi-Ethnic American Literature: Describing the Hyphen
Prof. Constance Bracewell

Classroom:	Online (Blackboard)
Class Hours:	Asynchronous Class—No Set Class Hours
Instructor:	Constance Bracewell
Instructor Email:	c.bracewell@snhu.edu

Course Description:

Since the beginnings of American literature, writers have been concerned with defining and creating American identity through their art. Since the 1960s, during and after the Civil Rights movement, numerous writers have defined their American identity in relation to specific ethnic identities, writing works that explore how dual or multiple cultural identities coexist within themselves and within American culture, sorting through the stories they've heard and created about who they are. In this course, we will read fiction, poetry, and essays by twentieth-century American authors who identify with African American, Native American, Asian American, Jewish, Latino and Chicano heritages. In addition to race and ethnicity, we will discuss how class, native language, religion, gender, sexuality, and history figure into these writers' images of an American self and community.

Course Objectives:

- Learn about some of the histories of various ethnic-American groups.
- Develop a general understanding of some prominent issues that a variety of ethnic-Americans have in common.
- Develop a working knowledge of some issues and concerns specific to particular ethnic-American groups.
- Develop consciousness of the challenges of being both “American” in the general sense and in the sense of being an American of a distinct ethnic background.
- Begin to identify areas of continuing concern, growth, reform, etc. for various ethnic-American groups as their members seek to find productive ways of living—individually, within families, and within both the ethnic community and wider American society.
- Use individual and collaborative writing activities to explore these topics and formulate your own ideas about ethnicity in America.

Required Texts:

Alexie, Sherman. *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. New York: Little, Brown and Co., 2009.

Bellow, Saul. *Mr. Sammler's Planet*. New York: Penguin, 1995.

Nunez, Sigrid. *A Feather on the Breath of God*. New York: Picador, 2005.

Takaki, Ronald. *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America*. Little Brown & Co: Boston, 1994.

Viramontes, Helena Maria. *Under the Feet of Jesus*. New York: Penguin, 1996.

Various Electronic handouts (no purchase necessary)

Course Grading:

Please note that an A is an indication of outstanding scholarship. A grade of B indicates good scholarship, and a C indicates satisfactory scholarship.

Undergraduate Grading System:

Letter Grade	Suggested Numerical Equivalent	Points
A	95-100	4.00
A-	90-94	3.67
B+	86-89	3.33
B	83-85	3.00
B-	80-82	2.67
C+	76-79	2.33
C	73-75	2.00
C-	70-72	1.67
D+	65-69	1.33
D	60-64	1.00
F	0-59	0.00
I	Incomplete	
IF	Incomplete/Failure*	
W	Withdrawn	

Attendance Policy:

While online classes are generally asynchronous, they are **not** correspondence or self-paced. Although only a portion of student grades are tied to discussion, participation is MANDATORY. Students must attend (defined as logging in to the blackboard classroom and interacting; posting questions, thoughts, homework assignments, etc.) class during the first week, and at least **3** times, on **3 separate days** per week thereafter. Failure to attend during the first week will result in an automatic withdrawal. Extended absences, defined as failure to post into the Blackboard classroom for more than five days, must be coordinated with the instructor. Students who fail to coordinate any such absence with the instructor may be withdrawn at the instructor's discretion, and a tuition refund will be granted in accordance with university policy, based on the last date of login.

For more specific information, please access the official withdrawal policy for online classes, found at <https://www.snhu.edu/648.asp> and the [Student Handbook](#).

Administrative Withdrawal Policy:

Once a student has missed enough classes that the instructor believes that the student cannot meet the goals of the course within the remaining time frame, the student may be given a failing grade, withdrawn from the course, or be considered for an incomplete at the instructor's discretion. Faculty members may give a student a grade of incomplete (I) only if the student and instructor have agreed, in advance, to plan or schedule for completion. Withdrawal is allowed due to lack of attendance or unusual circumstances, not as a method to prevent failing grades. No withdrawals are permitted during the last week of the term.

Participation Policy:

As ongoing collaboration and dialogue are essential for effective online course delivery, it is imperative that students participate regularly. Those who do not participate regularly according to the guidelines outlined above may receive no credit for participation, and are **subject to course failure** at the discretion of the instructor.

Discussion:

Class attendance and participation will be determined by your use of Class Discussion. The minimal requirement for full points is at least 3 posts on 3 separate days of the week. Several other factors may lower your grade, namely under-developed or irrelevant posts, as well as rudeness or improper attitudes toward other posters (bad "netiquette").

Class Discussion cannot be “turned in” late or made up. Therefore, it might be a good idea to post most of your responses to these assignments as early in the week as possible. That way, if something suddenly comes up toward the end of the week, you’ll be mostly done already, and your grade won’t suffer more than it otherwise might.

For specific details concerning requirements for Discussion Board participation, please review the *Discussion Board Grading Rubric*, located in the Course Documents folder.

Academic Honesty Policy:

Southern New Hampshire University requires all students to adhere to high standards of integrity in their academic work. Academic dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated by the university. Students involved in such activities are subject to serious disciplinary action. This includes course failure, academic suspension, and expulsion from the university.

Technological tools (Turnitin, web searches, etc.) may be used to detect plagiarism or cheating at the instructor’s discretion.

Definitions of Academic Dishonesty

1. Cheating

- a) The unauthorized use of notes, textbooks, oral, visual or electronic communication, or other aids during an exam, quiz, or other related course assignment.
- b) The copying of the work of another student during an exam, quiz, or course assignment.

2. Plagiarism

- a) The use, whether by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another without full and clear acknowledgement through proper citation format.
- b) the submission of an assignment or parts of an assignment written by someone other than the student, including but not limited to, other students, commercial organizations, and electronic sources.

3. Misrepresentations

- a) The substitution of another student/individual for completion of a course, or during the taking of a quiz, examination or other assignment.

4. Unauthorized collaboration

- a) The sharing of quiz/exam questions or answers with another student without the instructors permission.
- b) The copying of another student’s papers, homework or any assignment without the instructor’s permission.
- c) Group collaboration on individual assignments without the instructor’s permission.

5. Alteration or fabrication of data

- a) The submission of data not obtained by the student during the course of research.
- b) The deceitful alteration of data obtained by the student during the course of research.

6. Duplication

- a) The submission of the same or similar paper in more than one course without the express permission of the instructor.

7. Participation in or facilitation of dishonest academic activities

- a) The stealing of quizzes or examinations.
- b) The alteration of academic records, including grades.
- c) The sabotaging of the work of another student.
- d) The distribution of materials for the purpose of cheating.
- e) The alteration, forging, or misuse of university-related documents.
- f) The intentional reporting of a false violation of academic integrity.
- g) The offer of a bribe to any university member in exchange for special consideration or favors.
- h) The misuse of university resources, including library resources (print and electronic) and facilities, computer labs, university equipment and networks, etc.

This list is by no means comprehensive, but is representative of any actions completed in the spirit of academic dishonesty for which the university's policy on Academic Integrity might apply. It is the student's responsibility to seek clarification from an instructor if the student has questions about what constitutes academic dishonesty.

ADA/504 Compliance Statement:

Southern New Hampshire University is committed to and concerned with meeting the needs of students challenged by physical, sensory, psychiatric and/or learning disabilities. At the beginning of each term, or as soon as you become aware of a disability, we encourage you to request those accommodations which you need to meet your academic goals. To ensure that all of your needs are met, the University recommends that you meet with one of the following individuals who will assist you in making contact with appropriate faculty members and support services staff regarding accommodations:

For questions concerning compliance matters, grievance or legal issues:

Ms. Jet Goldberg
Director of Wellness Center
603-645-9679
j.goldberg@snhu.edu

For questions concerning support services, documentation guidelines, or general disability issues:

Office of Disability Services
Exeter Hall, CLASS Office, Suite 101
Tel. (603)668-2211
Hyla Jaffe, Director, ext.2386, h.jaffe@snhu.edu
Lisa Langille, Disability Specialist, ext.2035, l.langille@snhu.edu

Assignments:

Discussion Board Assignments: 30%
Reading Response Papers: 20%
Formal Essay: 30%
Group Project: 20%

Submission of Assignments:

Discussion Board Assignments: Please type your work directly within a new discussion thread within the forum for each module assignment. Please see each specific DB forum for specific details and instructions.

Reading Response Papers/Formal Essay: Please submit these to the Digital Dropbox. Note that you must SEND each file in order for your work to be visible on the instructor's end of the dropbox.

Group Project: The deliverables (the written projects themselves) must be posted to both your *Group Discussion Forum* and also the class discussion forum titled *Final Group Projects*. Specific instructions will be located within your Group Discussion Forums.

Course Outline

Module Number	Module Title	Module Description	Module Learning Objectives	Assessments
1	Being a "Hyphenated" American: Ethnicity and Identity in Multicultural America	In order to read ethnic-American authors and gain a level of understanding of their texts, it is helpful to first think about the very concept of being what can be termed a "hyphenated American." Ethnic-Americans live a sort of doubled existence, in which they are	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read some of the histories of various ethnic-American groups. • Develop a general understanding of some of the prominent issues that many ethnic-Americans share. • Develop a working knowledge of some 	<p>Readings: Ronald Tataki's <i>A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America</i></p> <p>Written Assignment: 2-page reader response paper</p>

		simultaneously of a particular ethnic group (such as Native American, Chinese American, Latino/a American) and also part of the general American population as a whole. In this module, we will seek to learn some of the histories of ethnic groups in America, the cultural and historical implications of being part of or associated with a distinct ethnic group, and the challenges faced by persons who identify both as “American” and as an ethnic American.	<p><i>issues and concerns specific to particular ethnic-American groups.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Develop consciousness of the challenges of being both “American” in the general sense and in the sense of being an American of a distinct ethnic background.</i> • <i>Begin to identify areas of continuing concern, growth, reform, etc. for various ethnic-American groups as their members seek to find productive ways of living—individually, within families, and within both the ethnic community and wider American society.</i> 	<p>Discussion Board Assignment: 300-word Discussion Board response to assigned topic and minimum of four replies to classmate postings</p>
2	African American Literature	In this module, we will focus on contemporary African American literature and the manner in which African American authors incorporate a rich heritage that not only spans the experiences of African peoples in the Americas—from slavery, through the Jim Crow era, to the Civil Rights movement, to the contemporary era—but also harkens back to the home cultures of the African continent from which their ancestors came.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Explore the importance of African American authors such as Toni Morrison and Nella Larsen to the African American community and beyond.</i> • <i>Gain an understanding of how issues of skin color are complicated by parallel issues of class, social standing, and gender differences in the Americas.</i> • <i>Develop a general understanding of some of the prominent issues that many African Americans share.</i> • <i>Develop consciousness of the challenges faced by African Americans relative to personal freedom, class, education, religion, gender and sexual roles, and history, among others.</i> • <i>Begin to identify areas of continuing concern, growth, reform, etc. for contemporary African Americans as they seek to find productive ways of living—individually, within families, and within both the ethnic community and wider American society.</i> 	<p>Readings: Toni Morrison’s only short story--<i>Recitatif</i> Nikki Giovanni’s <i>Woman</i> Nella Larsen’s <i>Passing</i></p> <p>Short Video: “A Girl Like Me”</p> <p>Written Assignment: 2-page reader/viewer response paper on any of the readings or the short video (or any combination of the three)</p> <p>Discussion Board Assignment: 300-word Discussion Board response to assigned topic and minimum of four replies to classmate postings</p>
3	Native American Film & Literature	In this module, we will focus on contemporary Native American literature and the distinctly non-Western ontologies that permeate Indian-authored works. We will discuss specific differences between Western and Native American ways of thinking, living, and being and the way in which these differences are interrogated in contemporary Native American literature.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Explore the importance of Native American authors such as Sherman Alexie to the general Native American community and beyond.</i> • <i>Gain an understanding of the complexity and great number of distinct Native American cultures and how those cultural specificities are emphasized within Native American-authored literature.</i> • <i>Develop a general understanding of some of the prominent issues that many Native Americans share.</i> • <i>Develop consciousness of the challenges faced by Native Americans relative to personal freedom, class, education, religion, gender and sexual roles, cultural ways, languages, and history, among others.</i> • <i>Begin to identify areas of continuing concern, growth, reform, etc. for contemporary Native Americans as they seek to find productive ways of living—individually, within families, and within both the ethnic community and wider American society.</i> 	<p>Readings: Sherman Alexie’s <i>The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian</i></p> <p>Film: <i>Smoke Signals</i> (through SNHU streaming video)</p> <p>Written Assignment: 2-page reader/viewer response paper on reading, film, or any combination of the two</p> <p>Discussion Board Assignment: 300-word Discussion Board response to assigned topic and minimum of four replies to classmate postings</p>
4	Asian American Literature	In this module, we will focus on contemporary Asian American literature. Much like Native American cultures, Asian Americans often have distinctly non-Western ways of living, thinking, and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Explore the importance of Asian American authors such as Sigrid Nunez to the general Asian American community and beyond.</i> • <i>Gain an understanding of the complexity and great number of distinct Asian</i> 	<p>Readings: Sigrid Nunez’s <i>A Feather on the Breath of God</i></p>

		doing. Throughout this module we will attempt to locate some of these differences and see how contrasts between Eastern and Western ways of living are represented in the works of many contemporary Asian American writers.	<p><i>American cultures and how those cultural specificities are emphasized within the literature.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a general understanding of some of the prominent issues that many Asian Americans share. • Develop consciousness of the challenges faced by Asian Americans relative to personal freedom, class, education, religion, gender and sexual roles, cultural ways, languages, and history, among others. • Begin to identify areas of continuing concern, growth, reform, etc. for contemporary Asian Americans as they seek to find productive ways of living—individually, within families, and within both the ethnic community and wider American society. 	<p>Written Assignment: 2-page reader response paper</p> <p>Discussion Board Assignment: 300-word Discussion Board response to assigned topic and minimum of four replies to classmate postings.</p>
5	Jewish American Literature	In this module, we will focus on contemporary Jewish American literature. Jewish peoples have the distinction of being one of the first cultural groups to be widely studied in the academic setting, as their histories are closely linked to Western and Christian histories alike. We will attempt to place general Jewish history into context, followed by a reading from renowned Jewish American author Saul Bellow, winner of the 1976 Nobel Prize for Literature.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the importance of Jewish American authors such as Saul Bellow to the general Jewish American community and beyond. • Gain an understanding of the complexity and historical richness of Jewish peoples in world history. • Gain a working knowledge of the various types of “Jewishness” that can be identified, such as religious, ethnic, and lifestyle forms of Jewishness. • Gain a working knowledge of how those cultural, lifestyle and religious specificities are emphasized within the literature. • Develop a general understanding of some of the prominent issues that many Jewish Americans share. • Develop consciousness of the challenges faced by Jewish Americans relative to personal freedom, persecution, class, education, religion, gender and sexual roles, cultural ways, languages, and history, among others. • Begin to identify areas of continuing concern, growth, reform, etc. for contemporary Jewish Americans as they seek to find productive ways of living—individually, within families, and within both the ethnic community and wider American society. 	<p>Readings: Jewish history reading (handout) Saul Bellow’s <i>Mr. Sammler’s Planet</i></p> <p>Written Assignment: 2-page reader response paper</p> <p>Discussion Board Assignment: 300-word Discussion Board response to assigned topic and minimum of four replies to classmate postings.</p>
6	Latino/a American Literature	Latino, Latina, Hispanic, Spanish, Chicano, Mexicano, Mexican American—there are many, many ways to invoke this particular sort of cultural group. The term one goes with largely depends on when and where the term is being used. Sometimes a group may prefer the term Latino or Latina. Other groups may prefer a regionally-specific term such as Mexican American and reject the more general terms such as Latino/a or Hispanic. But whatever name you call them, the rich cultural histories of Spanish-speaking ethnic groups are as diverse as the groups that make deciding on a definitive cultural name a challenge. In this module, we will by default go with the term <i>Latino/a</i> to refer to literature by persons of Spanish-language related ethnicities in the Americas—but we will	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the importance of Latino/a American authors such as Helena Maria Viramontes to the general Latino/a American community and beyond. • Gain an understanding of the complexity and great number of distinct Latino/a American cultures and how those cultural specificities are emphasized within the literature. • Develop a general understanding of some of the prominent issues that many Latino/a Americans share. • Develop consciousness of the challenges faced by Latino/a relative to personal freedom, class, education, religion, gender and sexual roles, cultural ways, languages, and history, among others. • Begin to identify areas of continuing 	<p>Readings: Helena Maria Viramontes’ <i>Under the Feet of Jesus</i></p> <p>Written Assignment: 2-page reader response paper</p> <p>Discussion Board Assignment: 300-word Discussion Board response to assigned topic and minimum of four replies to classmate postings.</p>

		be challenged to encapsulate such a rich range of Americans in just one short course of study or with one general category name!	<i>concern, growth, reform, etc. for contemporary Latino/a Americans as they seek to find productive ways of living—individually, within families, and within both the ethnic community and wider American society.</i>	
7	Ethnic-American Voices: Confluences Across Ethnic American Communities Today	In this module, the focus will turn from me as instructor to YOU, as both student and voice of authority on a project that you will work on with several of your class members. Working as a group, you will select one of the ethnic American communities represented thus far in the course and prepare a group presentation on a contemporary issue relating to that ethnic community. Your group presentation may take the form of a group-written formal essay, a PowerPoint presentation, or an online web page or blog. Specific details will be given during Module 6.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Explore a contemporary issue within a specific ethnic American community.</i> • <i>Prepare an informative, interesting, and comprehensive presentation that will teach your classmates and me something new about the issue and ethnic community at hand.</i> • <i>Work with your group members to collaborate, share work responsibilities, and present a quality piece of academic work to your classmates and me.</i> • <i>Fill out and send to me a formal charter of agreement in which you spell out work requirements for each group member, suggest problems that may come up and solutions that would resolve those problems, and take personal responsibility for meeting deadlines and assignment requirements.</i> • <i>Present your work to the class as a whole, according to the instructions that will be given to you during Module 6.</i> 	<p>Readings: As determined by your group</p> <p>Group Assignment: A group presentation that takes the form of a group-written formal essay, a PowerPoint presentation, or an online web page or blog (I suggest the use of blogspot.com for any blog projects).</p> <p>Discussion Board Assignment: No formal DB assignment for this week! However, students are responsible for conducting all planning and discussion relative to the group projects within the group discussion forum that will be made available to you. The interactions that take place within your group forum will factor into your final group project grades—so make sure you offer me plenty of evidence of your hard work within your group forum!</p>
8	Wrapping it all up!	During this module, we will use the final Discussion Board assignment to tie together everything we have learned and discussed this semester. You will also complete a formal essay (instructions will be given on a separate handout) and complete a take-home final exam consisting of short essay questions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Evaluate the connections and similarities between various ethnic American communities and experiences.</i> • <i>Evaluate the challenges that are continued to be faced by various ethnic communities in America today.</i> • <i>Develop a summative evaluation of the importance of ethnic American literature and the benefits to the reader of such literature.</i> • <i>Demonstrate your mastery of content from this course in the form of a formal essay and a final exam consisting of comprehensive responses to short essay questions.</i> 	<p>Readings: Final reading from Takaki text.</p> <p>Written Assignment: 6-8 page formal essay</p> <p>Discussion Board Assignment: 300-word Discussion Board response to assigned topic and minimum of four replies to classmate postings.</p>