

LIBRLST 702/ **Border Crossings in 20th-Century American Im/migrant Art, Literature,
and Thought**

Kristie Hamilton, Associate Professor of English
Curtin Hall, 939, 6:00-9:00

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Required Texts (Will be available at Panther Books, 3132 N. Downer Avenue, pho: 414-967-1111:

Castillo, Ana. *So Far From God*. WW Norton & Co.(orig. pub. 1992)

Chin, Frank. *Donald Duk*. 1991. Minneapolis: Coffee House Press, 1997.

Diaz, Junot. *Drown*. NY: Riverhead Books, 1996.

Garcia, Cristina. *Dreaming in Cuban: A Novel*. NY: Ballantine Press, 1992.

Kogawa, Joy. *Obasan*. NY: Doubleday, 1994.

Yang, Kao Kalia, *The Latehomecomer: a Hmong Family Memoir*, Minneapolis: Coffee House Press

Yeziarska, Anzia. *Bread Givers*. 1925. NY: Persea Books, 1999.

Online texts: literary and visual text links will be sent via email. Course packet, will become available at Clark Graphics, Milwaukee, WI.

Course Description:

In *Dreaming in Cuban*, one of Cristina García's characters Celia del Pino writes: "If I was born to live on an island, then I'm grateful for one thing: that the tides rearrange the borders. At least I have the illusion of change, of possibility"(99). Defined and imagined territorially, modern nations, including the United States, can seem like islands, and so Celia may have something to teach us. In the texts we shall study, a group of 20th- (and 21st-) century authors and artists "rearrange the borders" of North American culture to make room for the more complicated story their diverse experiences tell. These stories are, by turns, lyrical and grave, magical and humorous, sensual and heartrending.

Our touchstone for the semester will be the theme of border crossings—of moving over and between physical borders, crossroads or contact zones, of inhabiting multiple cultures, neighborhoods, and nations, and of the mixings within individuals and communities of ancestry and of ethnic, racial, religious and national inheritances, identifications, and desires. Among the seven stunning books (fiction and memoir), the short essays, poems, and stories, and the artwork and films, many are rooted in the experience of im/migrants and their children crossing and re-crossing national borders (from Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Ireland, Germany, Eastern Europe, Mexico, Laos, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, India, Japan and China to the United States, and from Japan to Canada, and back again). Some stories and art are located in homelands from which characters or artists have emigrated, some are set in the U.S. or Canada; several traverse these settings. Ana Castillo's novel describes communities (Chicano, Native American) who have long travelled the same roads together while national boundaries changed or were created around them.

The boundary-crossings we will be interested in are not only geographical. In all of the works we will study, notions of selfhood, belonging, and community are shown to be always complicated and dynamic. Characters in these stories and the artists who depict them are acted upon, to be sure, by external forces (political, economic, historical, social), subject to the pain of displacement and fracturing (spatial, temporal, cultural, psychological) whether people move by choice or necessity or force, but they are also actively reimagining themselves and others. The borders that might limit their movement are themselves destabilized literally and figuratively, as a result. New concepts of self and new collectivities emerge, including, perhaps, what postcolonial theorist Arjun Appadurai describes as “a de-localized transnation” (Appadurai, 532, Course Pkt.). Other crucial “borders” opened to questioning include generational differences and the symbolic and material social boundaries of race, class, gender, and sexuality. As we shall see, these often discussed categorizations of identity have different histories within specific cultures and times and, so, shape and affect people differently, in different settings and situations. We will also think about the prying open of aesthetic categories and thematic presumptions here, as when a series of watercolors becomes autobiography, when a comic novel morphs into a history, when fiction blends into poetry and documentary, when performance art produces an embodied “real,” when photographic stereotype emerges as meditation, when silence becomes action, when in-between is home.

According to Garcia’s character Celia del Pino “To survive is an act of hope” (*Dreaming* 99). There is a kind of hope to be taken from the collective vitality of the texts we will study this semester, for all of them, singly and together, ask us to seriously examine and re-imagine not merely the nation but also the world.

Schedule of Classes

Note: There is a possible second field trip that would be scheduled outside of class, as was the case in Libr1St 701. Stay-tuned.

January

Week 1	23	Introduction to course. *Ronald Takaki, “A Different Mirror” (online) *Coco Fusco, “Migration Interrupted: Rights, Freedom, Opportunism, and the Controversy over Immigration Policy,” 2012, ASU Institute for Humanities Research, vimeo video. *Martín Espada, “Imagine the Angels of Bread,” 1996 (poem, xerox)
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Week 2	30	*Ishmael Reed, “America: The Multinational Society” (Course Pkt.) *Arjun Appadurai, from “The Heart of Whiteness” (Course Pkt.) *In-Class Screening: Film “Chan Is Missing” dir. Wayne Wang (1982)
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[Also, get a head-start reading *Donald Duk* for next week!]

February

Week 3	6	*Chin, <i>Donald Duk</i> , 1991
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Week 4	13	*Yeziarska, <i>Bread Givers</i> , 1925 *Ewen, Elizabeth, “Sweat Shops and Picket Lines: European Immigrant Women” (Course Pkt.)
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Art:

*Maurice Sievan, Illustration in FORWARD, 1914, "A Scene from Hester Street"

*Maurice Sievan, "Newsboy," 1914

*Max Weber, "Sabbath," 1919

*Mike Rothko, (Untitled, Portrait of Edith Sacher), 1932

Week 5 20 *Kogawa, *Obasan*, Prologue through 149
*Chizuko Judy Sugita de Queiroz, "Camp Days, 1942-1945," 2012, watercolors 1-30: http://www.artbychiz.com/campdays_index.html

Week 6 27 *Kogawa, *Obasan*, pp. 150-300
*Chizuko Judy Sugita de Queiroz, "Camp Days, 1942-1945," 2012, watercolors 30-61: http://www.artbychiz.com/campdays_index.html

March

Week 7 6 *Díaz, *Drown*, selected stories (tba) *Drown*, 1996
*iliana emilia garcía, "El Patio de Mi Casa," 2008, "My Home Is My Home," 2008, "Unknown Distances/Undiscovered Islands," 2006
*Smithsonian American Art Museum column, "Preparing for Our America: Imagining Migration: iliana emilia garcia's Chairs" (<http://eyelevel.si.edu/2013/08/preparing-for-our-america-imagining-migration-iliana-emilia-garcas-chairs.html>)

Week 8 13 *Castillo, *So Far From God*, 9-129;
*Martín Ramírez, [Courtyard](#), 1953 (ink and crayon on paper, Petullo Collection, Milwaukee) and other paintings and collages available online
*[Skim biographical essay] Victor and Kristin Espinosa, "The Life of Martín Ramírez," 2007 [Course Pkt.]

SPRING BREAK—16TH THROUGH 23RD OF MARCH

Week 9 27 *Castillo, *So Far From God*, 130-252,
*Guillermo Gómez-Pena, "Mexterminator," 1998, "Mexarcane International" with Coco Fusco (1994-95)

April

Week 10 3 ***Field Trip**: Meet at **Milwaukee Public Museum**
Reading assignment:
*Theodore Dreiser "Old Rogaum and His Theresa," 1901 & 1918 [Online text]
*James T. Farrell, Chapters one and two from the *Studs Lonigan* trilogy, 1932-1934 (Course Pkt.)
*Mary Louise Buley-Meissner, "Stitching the Fabric of Hmong Lives: The Value of Studying *Paj Ntaub* and Story Cloth in Multicultural Education" (Course Pkt.)

Week 11	10	*Yang, <i>The Latehomecomer: a Hmong Family Memoir</i> , 2008 (1 st half)
Week 12	17	*Yang, <i>The Latehomecomer: a Hmong Family Memoir</i> , 2008 (2 nd half)
Week 13	24	*Joseph Geha, "Monkey Business," 1990 [Course Pkt.] *Laila Halaby "The Bastard of Salinas," 2011 [Online text] ; "Amman, 1989, <i>for my father</i> ," 2011 (Online poem) *Jhumpa Lahiri, "Mr. Pirzada Comes to Dine" 1999 [Course Pkt.]
		In-Class screening: Shirin Neshat "Art in Exile," TED Talk, 2011 [***Be prepared to describe aloud, in a few sentences, the topic of your final paper. ***] Recommended: Pauline Kaldas, "Airport," 2010 [Course Pkt.]

May

Week 14	1	*Cristina García, <i>Dreaming in Cuban</i> , 1992, pp. 1-144. *Excerpt from film <i>Buena Vista Social Club</i>
Week 15	8	*C. García, <i>Dreaming in Cuban</i> , 1992, pp. 145-245 *Coco Fusco, "Two Undiscovered Amerindians" with Guillermo Gómez-Pena, 1992-94; "El Evento Suspendido," 2000; "Bare Life Study #1, 2005

[May 14th: No class. Final Paper due by 6:00 p.m.]

Course Requirements:

1. Three Short Papers: At each seminar meeting, beginning with the second week, short papers (one page **single spaced**—*NORMAL* type size) will be read aloud. [I will distribute a schedule after the drop-add period.] The purpose of these papers will be to define an aspect (literary, aesthetic, philosophical, historical, sociological, psychological, religious, political, etc.) of the literary or visual text under examination as this aspect helps interpret the assigned texts for the day and as it relates to the central issues of the course. You may certainly take into account contextualizing material, but your primary object of analysis should be the literary or artistic text. A copy of the paper should be handed to me at the beginning of the class meeting. (The exception will be those writing in the 2nd week, when you may write a commentary about one or both of the essays assigned.)

2. Report (2 per student): Twice during the semester, students will research and write a one-page, single-spaced report that provides information on one of the following: 1) pertinent facets of the ethnic or national culture or cultures being described in the literary or visual text *under discussion on that day*, or 2) the historical context or events that are part of the plot of the novel or artwork, or 3) the biography of the author/artist, or 4) the aesthetic style or form of the visual or literary text 5) the critical assessment of the text by scholars (literary critical articles, art historical articles or serious book/art reviews).

It is up to you to decide what kind of research you want to do. You may use the internet, articles or books on literary or visual text, histories or studies of specific cultures by recent specialists or substantial accounts in magazines and newspapers (e.g., *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The New York Times*). [Articles in literary criticism are indexed online in the MLA Bibliography; scholarly journals are online through the Golda Meier Library website, art historical essays may be found using Google Scholar by searching for the artwork or artist, and some online archives (like JSTOR) are accessible through a link provided to your UWM login) You may be inventive in your search if you must! Whatever you do, leave a trail for us to follow by documenting your sources fully—name of source, date, volume # if applicable, page numbers, or website address, etc. Provide a copy of your report for each member of the class including me!

Your report will provide the rest of us with a context for helping us understand the stories we will read and the art we examine. Context is important, as the authors of these stories will impress upon us.

3. Participation: Members are expected to attend class, special lectures, and field trips. They must also complete all readings and other assignments on schedule and participate regularly in classroom discussions.

3. Final Project:

The final assignment will be a 10-12-page (double-spaced) seminar paper, due no later than 14 **May, 2014**. [Note: Paper topic should be selected by **April 24th** when you will be asked to tell the class what you will be writing on!]

One of your short essays can be the germ for this longer paper if you wish. Your essay should interpret one or more literary texts and/or artworks we will have studied during the semester in light of one or more of the major questions we have posed in the course. Your primary aim in this final paper is to argue and support your interpretation of the text(s) in its cultural context (and in relation to our own, if appropriate)—built upon concrete evidence from the text(s) and drawn from knowledge you have gained this semester. However, I also want you to incorporate the research of other scholars who have written about the works you examine (at least 5 articles or book chapters, or more if needed) and specifically to use these articles, citing them correctly, as background about the critical debates that have shaped past discussions of the issue you will address. You may select articles that offer interpretations different from your own, so that you can summarize briefly other authors' arguments and then move on to show what you have seen that they are not able to account for. You may select articles that are compatible with your interpretation of the text's or artwork's import and use their claims to establish a framework within which you can then offer *your own* explanatory analysis (which should not be identical with theirs). Or you may simply draw useful factual information from the articles to provide background on the artist/author or the historical context as a way of preparing to launch your own argument. Remember, your use of secondary material in interpretive analysis should remain just that—secondary—with your own interpretation remaining the main focus of your essay. This assignment will give you experience in how to argue your own ideas effectively in relation to the work of other scholars.

Note: Once, in either LIBRLST 701 or 702, you may propose an alternative kind of project that is similarly researched and rigorous but that uses a different medium of expression than the formal, written essay. Please meet with me if you wish to discuss this option. It is important that you also practice and master the formal written analytical/interpretive essay form in at least one of the two Liberal Studies core courses' final projects.

Course Grading: Note: The percentages for Short Papers and Reports are Cumulative.

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| 1. Attendance/Participation: | 20% |
| 2. Four Commentaries: | 25% |
| 3. Reports on historical magazines: | 20% |
| 4. Final Essay: | 35% |

Course Policies:

- **Attendance:** Regular attendance is expected, of course, at the graduate level. Recurrent absences will affect the student's final grade.
- **Incompletes:** Incompletes will not be given except in extraordinary circumstances and must be approved by Hamilton in advance. I strongly advise against stepping onto this slippery slope. If a student must take an incomplete, a deadline will be agreed upon, and if she or he misses this deadline the final course grade will be penalized.
- **Scholastic Dishonesty**, i.e., plagiarism or inappropriate collusion, is taken very seriously at the graduate level and has serious consequences. Instances of academic misconduct will be handled according to University of Wisconsin policies and procedures. These may be found by "searching" the UWM website for "Academic Misconduct."

***** For a good online resource on documentation using the MLA Style Sheet, go to http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_mla.html.

If you are uncertain (or need a refresher!) about what is and is not plagiarism, **check out this website called "How Not to Plagiarize."** It is clear and helpful:

<http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize>

For UWM Policies concerning students, go to
<http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/SyllabusLinks.pdf>