



Thursday, November 3, 2011

# General Education and I-Series Course Submission and Review

[Home](#)[Submissions](#)[Review/Sign-Off](#)[Learning Outcomes](#)[Charts](#)[Approved Courses](#)[Instructions](#)[FAQ](#)[Announcements](#)[Tutorials](#)Logged in as: [tmoser](#)[Logout](#)

## CMLT277 Literatures of the Americas

[General Information](#)[Questions](#)[Learning Outcomes](#)[Syllabus](#)[Review/Sign-Off Status](#)

### General Information

Title Literatures of the Americas

Course Number CMLT277

College ARHU - Arts and Humanities

Department English

Submitted By Thomas Colborn Moser Jr

### CORE Information

CORE Fundamental Studies No

CORE Distributive/Advanced Studies (HL) - Literature

CORE Diversity Yes

### General Education Information

Fundamental Studies None

Distributive Studies Humanities

Diversity Understanding Plural Societies

## Course Questions

---

## General Questions

---

---

**Please give a brief description of the course:**

In this course, students comparatively study the literatures of several North, South, and Central American cultures with a focus on the specificities, similarities, and divergences of their literary and cultural texts from the fifteenth century to the present. Some of the topics that will be considered include the literatures of the European discovery and conquest, the cultural encounters in the early Americas, colonialism and colonial cultures, the independent movements, and the neo- and post-colonial American nation states.

---

**Please list any pre- or co-requisites for this course:**

None

---

**If there are pre- or co-requisites, please justify them with respect to their appropriateness for a General Education course:**

---

**Please list any restrictions (e.g. majors only) placed on this course:**

None

---

**What is the approximate course size (students/academic year)?**

140

---

**Please describe how student learning will be assessed (i.e. exams, homework, papers, group projects, etc.):**

A) Papers: There will be two 5-7 page papers of literary analysis. Each paper will account for 20% of your final grade. For paper deadlines and topics, see the class syllabus. Each paper will involve one preliminary draft and one final draft, due two weeks apart from one another. The preliminary draft is not graded but required in order to receive a comment. COMMENTS WILL BE GIVEN ON PRELIMINARY DRAFTS ONLY. NO COMMENTS WILL BE GIVEN ON FINAL DRAFT. Your final draft will only contain your grade. B) a one-page, single-spaced response paper to one of the movies we will be watching as part of this course. The response paper is due twelve days after the movie is shown (10%). C) Short Response Exercises. There will be frequent short response exercises during lectures and discussions. These exercises will not be individually graded but figured in collectively with your participation grade. D) midterm exam (10%). E) final exam (20%). The questions from the final exam will be selected from a study hand-out, which will be distributed one week before the exam. F) Participation (20%). You will be expected to participate in class discussions frequently. In both lecture and discussion sections, there will be brief writing exercises in which you will be asked to reflect on your reading. (See "Short Response Exercises").

---

**Comments on the course that you feel may be useful for the review process. Also, if this is an existing course that you are planning on making changes to via VPAC (i.e. changing the title), please list those proposed changes here:**

This is the first submission of a long-standing and popular course that currently fulfills CORE HL and D requirements. It has not been significantly modified. We do not plan to submit a VPAC proposal.

---

## Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes are phrased as "*At the completion of this course, students will be able to...*". Answers are expected to demonstrate how the course will (1) give students the ability to meet the learning objective and (2) determine that students were successful in meeting the learning objective.

Learning outcomes in **this color** are **REQUIRED**

---

### Humanities

---

*Courses in the humanities disciplines study history and the genres of human creativity, and they include courses in the practice of architecture and the visual, literary and performing and creative arts. Under "Humanities," students will find courses in cultures and literatures in any language, creative writing, art, architecture, art history, classics, history, linguistics, philosophy, and the performing arts (dance, music, theatre) and their histories.*

---

Must address **at least 4** of the following Learning Outcomes

---

**At the completion of this course, students will be able to...**

---

**...demonstrate familiarity and facility with fundamental terminology and concepts in a specific topical area in the humanities.**

---

CMLT277 introduces students to the basic vocabulary and concepts of the literatures, histories, and cultures of the Western hemisphere, as well as of the legacies of the colonial encounters between multiple cultures in the Americas from the late fifteenth to the twenty-first century. The course begins with readings and discussions relating to European Renaissance utopianism and primitivism, as well as the inter-connections between the age of discovery and the re-birth of classical learning; the relationship between early modern European expansionism, global economic development, as well as medieval religious messianism, prophecy, and millenarianism. From there, the course moves on to readings and discussions about the cultural encounters between Judeo-Christian monotheism and polytheistic Native American religions, between alphabetic and non-alphabetic textualities; religious syncretisms, inter-culturalism, as well as cultural and racial mixtures (mestizaje) in the emerging colonial societies of the Americas; and the rise of slavery and imperial economies in the colonial Atlantic world. Finally, the course arrives at the diverse literatures, cultures, and histories of the modern creole (neo-European) nation states in the Americas, the legacies of slavery, the (post-) colonial resistance to the neo-European social order in the Americas, the rise of the United States as a new hegemonic neo-colonial power in the hemisphere. Other important terms and concepts that will be considered include cultural relativism, cultural absolutism, ethnocentrism, and cultural hybridity. Throughout, the focus will be on questions of comparison of the diverse cultures of the Americas. This learning outcome will be assessed a mid-term and final exam, which asks students to identify critical terms and concepts, as well as to provide examples from the course readings/materials that demonstrate their ability to use them (see Appendices D and E with the syllabus).

---

**...demonstrate understanding of the methods used by scholars in a specific field in the humanities.**

---

CMLT 277 introduces students to the ways in which scholars in the Humanities understand and make sense of textual evidence, in the broadest sense of the term (including alphabetical as well visual, archeological, and other cultural objects).

---

More specifically, the aim of this course is to cultivate comparative analytical faculties and vocabularies in students and to teach them to think and write about both cultural similarities as well as differences. Besides introducing students to the use of textual evidence in argumentation in the Humanities in general, the course focuses on the cultivation of comparative methodologies in research and writing, including the structure of comparative arguments, the identification of comparative 'third terms', and so on. The learning outcome for this goal will be assessed by way of paper assignments that ask students to respond to comparative topics/questions. (For examples, pls. refer to Appendices B and C below with the syllabus).

---

**...demonstrate critical thinking in the evaluation of sources and arguments in scholarly works, or in the evaluation of approaches and techniques in the visual, literary, or performing arts.**

CMLT277 encourages students to think critically about textual media in the broad sense of the term. To that end, the course develops a cross-cultural and broadly historical perspective on multiple forms of textuality, including alphabetical writing ("literature"), as well as visual, oral, and other media. Apart from reading archival materials from the various historical periods and geo-cultural locations, students will also be exposed to modern films dealing with historical issues relating to the Americas. Generally, the goal is to teach students to appreciate that European (and neo-European) forms of expression are, while dominant and important, only one among many forms of media and expression used historically by the peoples and cultures of the Americas. The focus of the course is on how these multiple media and forms of expression have historically interacted, competed, and merged with one another in ways that both unite as well as distinguish the various cultures of the Americas. This learning outcome will be assessed by (a) the short response paper to a film screening (see Syllabus, item 3 [Assignments and Grading], "Movie Response Paper;") (b) the critical papers (see Appendices B and C with the syllabus); and (c) essay questions included in midterm and final exams (see Appendices D and E with the syllabus).

---

**...describe how language use is related to ways of thinking, cultural heritage, and cultural values.**

---

**...conduct research on a topic in the humanities using a variety of sources and technologies.**

---

**...demonstrate the ability to formulate a thesis related to a specific topic in the humanities and to support the thesis with evidence and argumentation.**

CMLT 277 is a writing-intensive course, with two 5-7 page papers on the readings and a one-page single-space response to a movie screening. For each of these assignments, students are required to use formal analysis in the service of a larger argument about the effects of the technique on audiences. Assessment of these assignments puts particular emphasis on the students' ability to devise a compelling argument and to support that argument with specific evidence from the films. Criteria for evaluation include the following (pls also refer to Syllabus, section "Resources"): 1. does the paper closely engage and work with the primary readings and/or movie screenings? 2. does it articulate an original and interesting idea, thesis, or claim about the primary reading? 3. does it develop a coherent and persuasive argument? 4. does it support its points with specific textual evidence? 5. does it pay attention to literary/rhetorical form, style, and language? 6. does it display awareness of the text's historical context? 7. does it provide a critique of authorial perspective? 8. does it scrutinize the text's strategies of representation? 9. does it use language effectively, lucidly, and grammatically? 10. does it accurately document its sources?

---

**...demonstrate understanding of the creative process and techniques used by practitioners in a specific field of the visual, literary, or performing arts.**

---

## **Understanding Plural Societies**

---

*Life in a globally competitive society of the twenty-first century requires an ability to comprehend both theoretical and practical dimensions of human difference. From that perspective, Understanding Plural Societies is the centerpiece of the University's Diversity requirement. Courses in this category speak to both the foundations—cultural, material, psychological, historical, social, and biological—of human difference and the operation or function of plural societies.*

---

Must address **at least 4** of the following Learning Outcomes

---

**At the completion of this course, students will be able to...**

---

**...demonstrate understanding of the basis of human diversity: biological, cultural, historical, social, economic, or ideological.**

---

CMLT277 emphasizes both the commonalities of and the differences between various historical experiences in the New World. For example, it explores the role that biological differences between Old and New World peoples (i.e. asymmetrical immunity to disease due to diverse lifestyles) played in the Columbian encounters. Also, it explores how and why, despite some basic thematic unities in the history of the New World such as the European invasion, the cultural encounter between radically different cultures and religions, colonial economic exploitation of the Americas by global imperial systems, unfree labor, national independence, continuing occupation of indigenous America, etc., there developed distinct national cultures in the Americas, with their distinctive economic and social developments. For this purpose, students will demonstrate their understanding of human diversity by responding to paper assignments that ask them to compare texts from various cultural traditions dealing with similar historical experiences, such as narratives about slavery written by Afro-British and Afro-Cuban (ex-) slaves by Olaudah Equiano and Juan Francisco Manzano respectively; texts written by such early modern Reformation and Counter-Reformation ('Baroque') women poets as Anne Bradstreet and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz respectively; and twentieth-century American "Indian" writers in the US and Guatemala such as Leslie Marmon Silko and Rigoberta Menchú respectively. (Pls. refer to Appendices B and C with syllabus.)

---

**...demonstrate understanding of fundamental concepts and methods that produce knowledge about plural societies.**

---

CMLT277 exposes students to authors, from the late fifteenth century to the present, who write about (often radical) cultural difference. In other words, the course is, in part, a history of ethnographic writing since the early modern period. As such, it exposes students to some of the insights, concepts, and methodologies of modern, postcolonial anthropology (primitivism, co-evalness, cultural relativism, cultural absolutism, familiarization, de-familiarization, etc.) that problematize and de-naturalize normative ethnological (ethnocentric) ways of thinking while yet encouraging students to contemplate and articulate their own positions on which cultural values they hold to be relative and which cultural values they hold to be universal. Thus, students engage with the debate, emerging during the sixteenth-century Spanish conquest of the New World, about the possibility of a 'just war', international law, natural law, and so on (see Appendix F: Role Play: "The Valladolid debate of 1551"). Also, students are exposed to readings that de-familiarize apparently familiar narratives and concepts of Western history from the point of view of the experiences of 'marginal' subjects in the cultural geography of modern Western economic and social development—the 'discovery' of the 'New World' from the point of view of Native American writers; the 'industrial Revolution' from the point of view of African slaves; or nationalism and global capitalism from the point of view of mid-twentieth century Latin America. Students will demonstrate their understanding of these fundamental concepts and methods of modern cultural anthropology and geography by identifying terms and giving examples from the readings in mid-term and final exams, as well as by using these terms, concepts, and methodologies in their paper assignments. (See Appendices D and E with syllabus.)

---

**...explicate the processes that create or fail to create just, productive, egalitarian, and collaborative societies.**

---

---

**...analyze forms and traditions of thought or expression in relation to cultural, historical, political, and social contexts, as, for example, dance, foodways, literature, music, and philosophical and religious traditions.**

---

CMLT277 exposes students to a variety of textual traditions, some of which (like the Romantic novel) will be familiar to the Comparative Literature student focusing on European literary history, while others (such as the natural history, the testimonio, or magico-realist fiction) are more specific to the literary histories of the New World, given the special burden that alphabetical writing had to bear since the sixteenth-century literature of exploration in translating or transporting exotic subjective New World experience to an audience located an ocean away. Thus, the course focuses on the special role that notarial rhetoric (the appeal to eye-witness experience) plays in New World writing, as (post-) colonial authors from Bernal Díaz del Castillo to Rigoberta Menchú, though non-traditional literary authors, are able to insert themselves as authorities on the political and social controversies of state and empire. Also, the course explores the roles that distinct religious traditions, such as Catholicism and Protestantism played in the ways in which writers from the Americas apprehended different cultures and non-Christian religions, as well as how they interpreted questions of 'natural law' and how they rationalized colonial possession. Students will demonstrate their ability to analyze form and traditions of thought and expression in paper assignments I and II (see Appendices B and C with syllabus; also see "Expectations and Standards for papers under "Resources" in syllabus).

---

**...articulate how particular policies create or inhibit the formation and functioning of plural societies.**

---

**...use a comparative, intersectional, or relational framework to examine the experiences, cultures, or histories of two or more social groups or constituencies within a single society or across societies, and within a single historical timeframe or across historical time.**

---

CMLT277 exposes students to multiple comparative and relational frameworks, mainly across societies and literary traditions, both within a single time frame and across time. Not only does it place the literary histories of the various modern American nation states (US, Canada, Mexico, Peru, etc.) in a comparative framework that reaches back the late fifteenth century, but it also emphasizes neo-colonialist history of inter-American relations, mainly between the US and Latin America, in such texts as Rubén Darío's "To Roosevelt," José Martí's "Our America," Gabriel García Márquez's One Hundred Years of Solitude, and Leslie Marmon Silko's Almanac of the Dead. Students will demonstrate their ability to use comparative, intersectional, or relational frameworks in paper assignments I and II (see Appendices B and C with syllabus; also see "Expectations and Standards for papers under "Resources" in syllabus).

---

**...use information technologies to access research and communicate effectively about plural societies.**

---

## Course Syllabus

View the course syllabus [here](#).

Note: Your browser may download the syllabus, in which case you will have to open it in a separate program, i.e. Adobe Acrobat or Microsoft Word, in order to view it.

Another Note: Some people are uploading Word .docx files (newer Word format). If your