

ENG140 (Section 001) - Literature & Society Negotiating Personal & Societal Boundaries

Instructor: Philip U. Effiong, PhD

Meeting Times & Room: Tu Th 4:10 – 6:00 p.m. (351 Natural Sciences Bldg.)

Office: Auditorium 225

Office Hours: Mon 12:00 - 1:00 p.m., Tue 2:00 - 3:00 p.m.

Contact: effiong@msu.edu

Office Phone: 517-884-7802

Introduction: America's diversity, often viewed as a source of cultural richness and strength, has also created social, religious, individual and sexual boundaries. Focusing on selected novels, short stories and plays by American writers, this class examines how these boundaries are crisscrossed, celebrated, resisted and even invented. Subsequently, we will determine the extent to which American culture is often complicated, even threatened, by clashes between conventional rules and unconventional (or subcultural) demands.

We will apply our readings to key sociopolitical trends, past and present, as well as our personal and collective experiences.

Course Goals

- Explore themes of acceptance, rejection, inclusion and exclusion
- Identify the complexity and implications of survival in diverse settings
- Show how subgroups preserve values that make exclusive demands on their members
- Recognize how identity is shaped by both typecasting and personal decisions
- Reexamine prejudice as a threat to individual and collective security
- Analyze literary styles adopted in recommended texts
- View and discuss videos that highlight texts and/or authors studied in this class

Student Input

- Pay attention, take notes and ask pertinent questions
- Do all required assignments
- Attend lectures and contribute to discussions
- Do one class presentation based on material covered in class (details will be provided and presentation topics should be chosen no later than September 17)

Required Texts

- Sandra Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street*, Vintage, 1991
- Alice Walker, *The Color Purple*, Mariner Books, 2003
- David Henry Hwang, *M. Butterfly*, Plume, 1993
- Kathryn Stockett, *The Help*, Berkley, Reprint edition, 2011
- Dale Wasserman, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1963), Samuel French 2010

Short Stories

- Learkana Chong, "Entropy 20:12"
- Glendaliz Camacho, "Noelia and Amparo"
- René Saldaña Jr., "Popeye Was an American Citizen and So Am I"
- Asadulla Abubakr, "The Irony of Life and the Survival of the American Dream"
- Zohra Saed, "A Week Later"
- Barbara Kingslover, "Homeland"
- Robert Conley, "The plastic Indian"
- Alice Walker, "Everyday Use"

Articles

- Kirk Jognson, "Once a 'Cuckoo's Nest,' Now a Museum"
- H. Steven Moffic, "We are still flying over the cuckoo's nest"

- David A. Rochefort, "Reimagining the Cuckoo's Nest"
- Robin Ganz, "Sandra Cisneros: Border Crossings and Beyond"
- Jacqueline Bobo, "Sifting Through the Controversy: Reading *The Color Purple*"

Other Resources

- Videos to be watched in class and recommended for viewing outside class

Reading, Discussion and Assignment Schedule

Aug. 29: Introduction to course

Sep. 3: Sandra Cisneros (immigrant communities)

- Video: Quest for Homeland (<https://msu.kanopy.com/video/chicano-episode-1-quest-homeland>), (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eYfiCnHW_NU)
- Video: *Sandra Cisneros with Dorothy Allison, Conversation* (<https://vimeo.com/9241859>) (stop 8:42, continue 14:31, stop 17:49, continue 19:00, stop 19:48)

Sep. 5: Sandra Cisneros

- Read "Sandra Cisneros: Border Crossings and Beyond" by Robin Ganz" (available on D2L)
- Watch video: *House on Mango Street – The Story* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Pyf89VsNmg>)
- Discuss *The House on Mango Street*

Sep. 10: Conclude *The House on Mango Street*

Sep. 12: Quiz on *The House on Mango Street*

Sep. 17: Living on the "border," cultural expectations

- Read "Entropy 20:12" by Learkana Chong (available on D2L)
- Read "Noelia and Amparo" by Glendaliz Camacho (available on D2L)

Sep. 19: David Henry Hwang (negotiating sexual identity)

- Watch *M. Butterfly* video

Sep. 24: Discuss *M. Butterfly*

- Read "Afterword" to play (available on D2L for texts without "Afterword")

Sep. 26: Quiz on *M. Butterfly*, "Entropy 20:12" and "Noelia and Amparo"

Oct. 1: Alice Walker (internal conflicts)

- Watch movie version of *The Color Purple*

Oct. 3: Alice Walker

- Conclude movie version of *The Color Purple*
- Read "Sifting Through the Controversy: Reading *The Color Purple*" by Jacqueline Bobo (available on D2L)
- Watch video: *BookTV: Alice Walker, The Color Purple 30 Years Later* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O2PgIJRYXC0>)
- Discuss *The Color Purple*

Oct. 8: Conclude *The Color Purple*

Oct. 10: Xenophobic trends

- Read "The plastic Indian" by Robert Conley (available on D2L)
- Read "Popeye Was an American Citizen and So Am I" by René Saldaña Jr. (available on D2L)

Oct. 15: Midterm (quiz and short answers on *The Color Purple*, "The Plastic Indian" and "Popeye Was an American Citizen and So Am I")

Oct. 17: Religion—Islam

- Watch video: Islam is a Religion of Peace (Intelligence Squared debate)

Oct. 22: Religion—Islam (cont.)

- Read "A Week Later" by Zohra Saed (available on D2L)
- Read "The Irony of Life and the Survival of the American Dream" by Asadulla Abubakr (available on D2L)

Oct. 24: Quiz on "A Week Later" and "The Irony of Life and the Survival of the American Dream"

Oct. 29: Confinement

- Read "Reimagining the Cuckoo's Nest" by David Rochefort (available on D2L)
- Read "We are still flying over the cuckoo's nest" by H. Steven Moffic (available on D2L)
- Read "Once a 'Cuckoo's Nest,' Now a Museum" by Kirk Johnson (available on D2L)
- Watch video: Bedlam Behind Bars: Mental Health Problems in American Prisons (<http://fod.infobase.com/PortalPlaylists.aspx?wID=106835&xtid=95045>)

Oct. 31: Confinement (cont.)

- Watch movie version of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* by Dale Wasserman

Nov. 5: Conclude movie and discuss *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*

Nov. 7: Quiz on *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*

Nov. 12: Kathryn Stockett

- Watch movie version of *The Help*

Nov. 14: Kathryn Stockett

- Conclude movie version of *The Help*
- Watch video: Kathryn Stockett on Novel's Success (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jGzmd0q5rTg>)
- Discuss *The Help*

Nov. 19 & 21: No class

Nov. 26: Conclude *The Help*

Nov. 28: Thanksgiving, no class

Dec. 3: Heritage

- Read "Homeland" by Barbara Kingslover (available on D2L)
- Read "Everyday Use" by Alice Walker (available on D2L)

Dec. 5: Quiz on *The Help*, "Homeland" and "Everyday Use"

Final Project: Wednesday, Dec. 11 at 11:00 p.m. (details on D2L)

Attendance Policy: You are required to attend and participate in every class meeting. Otherwise, you will need to provide proof and/or documentation for unavoidable absences. The latter would be the result of unavoidable or unexpected circumstances like illness, court appearance, job interview, death, religious holiday, birth of a baby and so forth. For excused absences, arrangements will be made to make up for missed work. Each unexcused absence will result in a deduction of one point from your

final score. If you accumulate a total of five or more unexcused absences, 2.0 will be deducted from your final grade, which means you will not be able to earn a grade higher than 2.0, regardless of your final score. It is my prerogative to accept or reject excuses given for absences.

Assignments and Quizzes

- Final exam (30% of final grade)
- Midterm exam (20% of final grade)
- Five Quizzes (36% of final grade)
- Class presentation/participation (14% of final grade)

Grade Scale

- 90—100% 4.0
- 85—89% 3.5
- 80—84% 3.0
- 75—79% 2.5
- 70—74% 2.0
- 65—69% 1.5
- 60—64% 1.0
- 00—59% 0.0

Course assignments will be graded on MSU's 4.0 grade scale as indicated above. Final course grades will be rounded to the nearest half grade, except that at least a 1.0 must be earned to receive a 1.0 final course grade. For example, a 2.74 could round to a 2.5 course grade; a 2.75 could round to a 3.0 course grade, and so on. Any final course grade below a 1.0, however, earns a 0.0; thus, a 0.75 would not round to a 1.0, but rather would earn a 0.0 (failure in the course).

Classroom Conduct: Students will interact respectfully with fellow students and the class instructor. The instructor will equally treat all class members with respect. This means that there will be no room for cursing, using foul language, making bigoted statements, interrupting a speaker, being loud or displaying any other form of rude and disruptive conduct. In addition, students should avoid using technological devices, including cell phones and laptops, which could be distracting and disruptive. For personal phone calls, bathroom breaks, etc., there will be a 5-10-minute break during each class.

Resources for Students:

- For assistance with writing research and other class papers, students may consult The Writing Center. This includes consultation on digital writing projects as well as a Grammar Hotline. The Writing Center is in 300 Bessey Hall. For further information, go to: <http://writing.msu.edu>.
- International students are encouraged to take advantage of the ESL Writing Lab, which assists with course readings, writing assignments, proofreading and revising papers. For more information on the Lab, visit: <http://elc.msu.edu/esl-lab>.
- Located in Room 332, MSU Union, the Student Success Collaborative (NSSC) offers a range of academic support services to students. These include seminars and workshops on skills enhancement, learning methods and effective time management. The NSSC also provides one-on-one tutoring on critical reading and related academic concerns. Further details on the NSSC's services can be accessed at <http://nssc.msu.edu>.

Students with Disabilities: Michigan State University does not discriminate against students with documented mental or physical disabilities. If you have a disability that requires accommodations in this or any other course, contact your instructor immediately as well as the *Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities* located in 120 Bessey Hall. To meet with a counselor, call 353-9642 (voice) or 355-1293 (TTY).

Academic Integrity: MSU prescribes specific guidelines to ensure that students maintain high standards of academic honesty and discipline. These are outlined under its policies on "Protection of Scholarship and Grades" and "Integrity of Scholarship and Grades," which charge students to refrain from any form of academic dishonesty, including cheating on tests or plagiarizing on written

assignments. This means that papers submitted by students will not have been copied from the Internet or other source, and will not be a replication of the works of other students. This also means that while students are expected to consult external sources during research, such sources are to be properly acknowledged using an acceptable form of citation. MSU policy cautions that the consequence for academic dishonesty and/or plagiarism is a failing grade on an assignment or course. In addition, failure resulting from dishonesty will be brought to the attention of the appropriate academic dean. More information on cheating and dishonesty can be accessed at the Office of the University Ombudsperson webpage: <https://msu.edu/~ombud/academic-integrity/index.html>.

Online SIRS Evaluation Policy: Michigan State University takes seriously the opinion of students in the evaluation of the effectiveness of instruction and has implemented the Student Instructional Rating System (SIRS) to gather student feedback (<https://sirsonline.msu.edu>). This course utilizes the online SIRS system, and you will receive an email during the last two weeks of class asking you to fill out the SIRS web form at your convenience. In addition, participation in the online SIRS system involves grade sequestration, which means that the final grade for this course will not be accessible on STUINFO during the week following the submission of grades for this course unless the SIRS online form has been completed. Alternatively, you have the option on the SIRS website to decline to participate in the evaluation of the course. We hope, however, that you will be willing to give us your frank and constructive feedback so that we may instruct students even better in the future. If you access the online SIRS website and complete the online SIRS form or decline to participate, you will receive the final grade in this course as usual once final grades are submitted.

Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct: Michigan State University is committed to fostering a culture of caring and respect that is free of relationship violence and sexual misconduct, and to ensuring that all affected individuals have access to services. For information on reporting options, confidential advocacy and support resources, university policies and procedures, or how to make a difference on campus, visit the Title IX website at www.titleix.msu.edu.

Limits to Confidentiality: Essays, journals, and other materials submitted for this class are generally considered confidential pursuant to the University's student record policies. However, students should be aware that University employees, including instructors, may not be able to maintain confidentiality when it conflicts with their responsibility to report certain issues based on external legal obligations or that relate to the health and safety of MSU community members and others. As the instructor, I must report the following information to other University offices if you share it with me:

- Suspected child abuse/neglect, even if this maltreatment happened when you were a child,
- Allegations of sexual assault or sexual harassment when they involve MSU students, faculty, or staff, and
- Credible threats of harm to oneself or to others.

These reports may trigger contact from a campus official who will want to talk with you about the incident that you have shared. In almost all cases, it will be your decision whether you wish to speak with that individual. If you would like to talk about these events in a more confidential setting, you are encouraged to make an appointment with the MSU Counseling Center.

Possible Course Amendments: Course Content may be changed or amended during the semester. Students will be notified of such changes.