

Introduction to Multicultural Literature

Section One | WF 10:20-11:10

ENG 252

Spring 2021

<https://252section1.classroomcommons.org>

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What does it mean to read literature in the age of Black Lives Matter? What is the relationship between literature and social change? In this course, we will explore these questions through works of literature written by contemporary authors of color. In particular, we will consider how resources are unevenly distributed along embodied axes of race, class, gender, and sexuality and the roles that language, literature, and culture play in producing and altering these conditions. Students will learn to closely read literary texts in relation to different genres, historical moments, and literary and social movements, and as tools for making sense of the world. In addition, we will experiment with the artistic strategies we encounter by producing our own critical and creative texts. Thinking alongside Audre Lorde, we will work together to “envision what has not been and...make the reality and pursuit of that vision irresistible.” Note: this course emphasizes experimentation, creativity, collaboration, and student-centered learning. [Introduction to prose, poetry and drama that reflects the diverse ethnic, cultural and social worlds of North America and the Caribbean today. Fulfills: GE 4, GE 11; LASR; PRES.]

Required Texts

All additional readings will be available on our course website.

- Myriam Gurba, *Mean* (Coffeeshouse, 2017) 1566894913
- Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun* (Vintage, 2004) 0679755330
- Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior: A Memoir of Childhood Among Ghosts* (Vintage, 1989) 0679721886
- M. NourBeSe Philip, *Zong!* (Wesleyan, 2008) 0819571695
- Claudia Rankine, *Citizen: An American Lyric* (Graywolf, 2014) 1555976905

In order to do well in this class, I recommend that you obtain all texts prior to the beginning of the semester; we move quickly and those still scrambling to track down texts often fall behind. If possible, you should purchase a physical, hard copy of each book. You will need to annotate (underline, highlight, take notes in the margins) the texts in order to complete your assignments.

Learning Goals

In this course, you will learn...

- To closely read and analyze literary texts, especially in relation to the historical, social, and political conditions in which they were produced.
- To read critically and creatively and draw connections among a wide variety of texts.
- To make persuasive arguments that are organized and supported by sufficient evidence.
- To communicate effectively, with an emphasis on digital publishing.

Learning Amidst a Global Pandemic

We are currently living through a pandemic that impacts nearly every facet of our lives, from employment to housing, childcare, and both mental and physical health. This semester, we will prioritize community, care, and flexibility above all else as we attempt to learn amidst these unprecedented conditions. You should always feel free to reach out to me if you need anything or if anything impedes your ability to complete the assigned work. More likely than not, others in the class are facing similar situations, and we might need to adjust the course accordingly to accommodate the lived realities and experiences of all students.

Course Requirements

This course is organized around several small assignments, rather than exams. Work for this course will be evaluated on a point system. This means you can (roughly) calculate your grade at any point in the course.

25 points	In-class participation, quizzes, homework, course reflection
10 points	Blog post
10 points	Class facilitation
40 points	Blog comments
5 points	Collaborative close reading
10 points	Found poem and artist's statement

100 points	

Course Website and Technology

Class URL: <https://252section1.classroomcommons.org>

This semester, instead of Blackboard, our course will use a customized site built using the Wordpress.org content management system. Wordpress.org is the free, open-source software upon which 34% of the world's websites are built. This means that as you complete the assignments for this course (post blogs and comments, learn to incorporate multimedia, etc.), you are increasing your digital literacy and developing a transferable skill that is highly valuable to employers beyond the classroom. While it can initially be frustrating that our course isn't on Blackboard, students often come to appreciate WordPress and continue to use that platform to build personal and professional websites.

One-time registration: Before you are able to access readings and write blogs on our course site, you will need to register. For this course, you will be writing blogs that are publicly available. For that reason, I encourage you to sign up for an account with a username that will not disclose your identity. Often, students choose to use their first name and last initial.

From the homepage click "[Register.](#)" When adding your name, I recommend you set "Who is allowed to see this field?" to "All Members" so that only our class can identify you. If you choose

a pseudonym, let me know so that I can give you credit for your blog posts and comments.

Remember to save your username and password!

Once you are registered, you will be able to access readings and write blogs and comments by logging in to our class site using your username and password.

Course Policies

Academic integrity: Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Students who cheat or plagiarize will be disciplined according to the guidelines in [chapter 340 of the College Handbook](#). All students are expected to have read this chapter and to understand the Handbook's definitions of these terms.

Attendance: This course will meet for a virtual discussion every Wednesday and Friday. All students are given two absences. You do not need to provide an explanation or note. All subsequent absences will reduce your final grade by one-third of a letter grade. For example: if you earn a B+ but miss four classes, you will earn a B. Two late arrivals constitute an absence. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to contact other students and find out what you missed.

Disability resources: If you are a student with a disability and wish to request accommodations, you may do so online through [Student Disability Services](#) (Van Hoesen Hall B-1, 607-753-2066). Information regarding your disability will be treated in a confidential manner.

Diversity and inclusion: I believe that the different perspectives you bring to our readings, discussions, and assignments are a tremendous benefit to all. It is my intent that students from diverse backgrounds will be well served by this course and that the materials presented will respect differences of gender, sexuality, disability, age, class, ethnicity, race, and culture. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. For more info, see [chapter 130 of the College Handbook](#) and the [Institutional Equity and Inclusion Office](#).

Emails: The answers to most questions regarding the course can be found on our website. If you can't locate the answer to a question, please ask another student and/or a member of your small group before sending an email. When sending an email, make sure to include your section number. I try to answer most emails within 48 hours, but generally do not check email on weekends, so plan ahead!

Office hours: My office hours for Spring 2021 are Wednesday and Thursday, 2:00-4:30, and by appointment. Office hours will take place over Zoom ([click here](#) to access the Zoom link). To schedule an office hours appointment, please email me.

Respectful discussion: This semester, we will be analyzing works of literature as entry points into broader discussions of topics ranging from history and memory to questions of identity (race, class, gender, sexuality, etc.). These discussions will take place both online (through your

blog posts and comments) and in our virtual Zoom sessions. Discussion is encouraged but you must always be respectful of ideas shared by your peers; the classroom should be a challenging, fun, and positive place for all.

Small groups: At the beginning of the semester, you will be placed into a small group with other students in the course. These students will be your first point of contact if you have any questions related to the course.

Sources: We live in an era of fake news and misinformation. In this course, you are required to cite reliable, accurate sources in order to support your ideas. It's likely that you will look up definitions, statistics, or historical contexts related to the works of literature we discuss this semester. Keep in mind that not everything you encounter on the internet has been fact-checked. Sources you might consult in your research include news organizations like *The New York Times*, *NPR*, *The BBC*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Guardian*. If you find a fact or idea you'd like to use, make sure that the organization you're citing is reliable. Read the organization's "About" page and verify that the author is an expert on the topic. In addition, try to verify your information across multiple sources to confirm that it is true. If you have a question, please don't hesitate to contact a [Cortland librarian](#) or the professor.

Submission of work: All work in this class should be properly cited according to the Modern Language Association (MLA) specifications. Please refer to the [Purdue Online Writing Lab \(OWL\)](#) to ensure you are using proper in-text citations and that your Works Cited is correctly formatted. For blog posts you may use a combination of hyperlinks and MLA style citations. Unless otherwise stated, all formal writing assignments should use 12 pt, Times New Roman font, double-spaced, with one-inch margins, and your last name and page number in the upper righthand corner of the document. Your grade will decrease one step every day an assignment is late (ex. 1 day late a B+ becomes a B, 2 days late a B+ becomes a B-).

Title IX: Title IX, when combined with New York Human Rights Law and the New York Education Law 129-B, prohibits discrimination, harassment and violence based on sex, gender, gender identity/expression, and/or sexual orientation in the education setting. The federal Clery Act and NY Education Law 129-B provide certain rights and responsibilities after an incident of sexual or interpersonal violence. When a violation occurs, victims and survivors are eligible for campus and community resources. Where the College has jurisdiction, it may investigate and take action in accordance with College policy. If you or someone you know wishes to report discrimination based in sex, gender, gender identity/expression, and/or sexual orientation, or wishes to report sexual harassment, sexual violence, stalking or relationship violence, please contact the Title IX Coordinator at 607-753-4550, or visit cortland.edu/titleix to learn about all reporting options and resources.

Tutors: If you would like additional help with an assignment, I highly recommend you make an appointment to visit the [Writing Center](#) (Brockway Hall, rm. 216). You can also utilize the [Academic Support and Achievement Program](#) (A.S.A.P.) in Van Hoesen Hall B-205 and [NightOWL](#) online tutoring.

How To Do Well In This Course

- **Take notes on assigned readings.** This is called “annotating” a text, which we will go over during class. Your annotations will become the evidence and examples that you analyze in your blog posts and essays. The more notes you take as you read, the easier it will be for you to participate in class discussions and complete formal writing assignments.
- Because this is a discussion- rather than lecture-based course, it is crucial that you **take notes in class**, not only on material presented by the instructor, but on our class discussions and your peers’ presentations as well. This will help you write excellent blog posts and craft interesting projects.
- **Identify your intellectual investment in the course material.** Pay attention to what most interests and perplexes you each class. Take note of these. Try to make connections among them. These will help you craft interesting blog posts and essays.
- **Attend office hours.** If you want to come but aren’t sure what you’d like to talk about, start with your list of intellectual investments. I’m here as a resource for you.
- **Ask questions.** No question is too small. We are all learning and experimenting.
- Make an effort to connect our course discussions, readings, and activities to your experiences outside of the classroom. This is called **praxis**.
- **Be an active classroom participant.** Come to class ready to share questions and ideas. This includes reflections on the structure of the class itself. Be vocal about what does and doesn’t work for you, and suggest learning experiments you’d like us to try as a class.
- Because this class is structured around experiments, **take creative risks and be willing to fail**.
- **Care about your work as much as I do.** This means [editing](#) and proofreading your writing multiple times and finding people, such as peers and tutors, to help. I won’t proofread your papers but if you come to office hours we can talk specifically about your revising and editing strategies.
- **Plan ahead.** At the beginning of the semester, write all of your assignments down in a calendar, agenda, or planner. Include reminders two weeks, one week, and two days before each deadline.

Assignments

1. Active in-class participation, quizzes, homework, course evaluation (25%)

Class discussions are a vital part of our class and it is essential that all are actively involved. The more effort and energy you put into this course, the more we will all learn. In order to actively listen, participate, and learn you must not use electronics in class for anything unrelated to our course. Every class will involve some assortment of group discussion, note taking, quizzes, and in-class writing activities. In order to get full credit for participation, you should try to contribute at least one comment or question during each class. Most quizzes will be announced ahead of time. The frequency of quizzes will increase if students attend class unprepared, without readings and notes.

2. Blog Post (10%)

At the beginning of the semester, you will sign up to write one blog about the assigned reading and serve as a discussion leader for one of our course sessions. In order to receive full credit your blog must...

1. Be uploaded by **NOON** the day before class so other students have ample time to comment
2. Meet the minimum length requirement: **700 words** (most students aim for around 800 words, roughly 3 solid paragraphs)
3. Focus on analysis rather than summary
4. Draw our attention to something specific about the assigned reading, helping us to see it in a new way
5. Incorporate and analyze quotes from the assigned readings
6. Be thoughtful, organized, and carefully proofread
7. Include proper MLA in-text citations as well as a Works Cited at the bottom of the post
8. Conclude with two robust discussion questions. (We will go over how to ask excellent questions. NOT: what did you think about the reading? Did you like my blog post?)

Your blog does not have to address every aspect of the assigned readings; instead, the best posts will have a main argument (thesis), make 1-2 observations, and elaborate on these observations: exploring their implications and using these observations to raise new questions. The deliberate use of images, music, video, and supplementary materials is encouraged.

Some options for your blog post:

1. trace a significant pattern you see developing throughout a text.
2. illustrate an important connection between two texts, such as a common question they both take up.
3. provide historical context or a theoretical perspective that reveals something about a text.
4. connect an example from the text to something going on in the world beyond the classroom.
5. creative option: translate an excerpt from the reading into another medium — a drawing, poem, painting, short narrative, dialogue, collage, etc.

3. Facilitation (10%)

On the day of class for which you are blogging, you will also facilitate a class discussion based on your blog post and discussion questions. Similar to the blog posts, the goal of these facilitations is to help the class see a specific aspect of the readings in a more complex way. You may lead the class in a short activity (think-pair-share, a close reading exercise, a writing prompt, etc.), design a worksheet, give a presentation, introduce discussion questions for students to answer in small groups, or lead a discussion based on your post and students' comments. On the day you are facilitating, you will be made a co-host of our course session and can choose to share your screen and/or place students in breakout groups. Alternatively, you

may record an audio lecture or visual presentation that can be sent to the professor ahead of time.

Students can elect to work individually or as a group. Each student is responsible for a 10 minute facilitation. If you choose to work with other students, this time compiles (so two students would be expected to lead a 20 minute activity). Either way, you must coordinate ahead of time with the other blogger(s). If you need additional time for your activity, some exceptions can be made if you contact the professor at least **48 hours ahead of time**. You will receive feedback on your facilitation via email.

Facilitations should

- Teach us something: help the class see an aspect of the assigned reading(s) in a new way.
- Encourage class participation, engagement, and critical thinking.
- Be well-organized (not haphazardly thrown together) and stick to the time allotment of 10 minutes per person.
- Include every member of the group (if you elect to work as a group).
- Be creative and delivered with enthusiasm - this is your opportunity to teach the class in whatever way you want. Make it your dream lesson! The way every course should be taught!

4. Comments (40%)

For classes in which you are not responsible for writing a blog entry, you are expected to comment on someone else's post. These comments should demonstrate a respectful and collegial engagement with other students' ideas and/or questions. For this reason, commenters are expected to **quote at least once from the assigned reading**. For instance, you can answer one of the blogger's discussion questions or introduce an additional piece of textual evidence (a quote from the reading) that either supports or complicates the blogger's interpretation. Comments should be at least 150 words in length and must be posted before class. We will go over effective commenting strategies in class. Throughout the semester, you will receive feedback on two comments (each worth 5% for a total of 10%). The remainder of your comments will be evaluated collectively for an additional 30% of your final grade.

I will not accept any late blog posts, facilitations, or comments. These cannot be made up so remember to check your own schedule before signing up for response dates.

5. Collaborative close reading (5%)

In your small group, you will co-author a short analysis of a passage in the assigned reading. More details to follow.

6. Found poem and artist's statement (10%)

For this assignment, you will create a found poem inspired by M. NourBeSe Philip's *Zong!* Your poem will become part of our digital gallery and will be accompanied by a short artists' statement explaining your creative process and what you learned by making the poem.

Schedule

Dates designate the day on which readings will be discussed in class and the due dates of assignments. Dates and assignments are subject to change. Our class will meet for a virtual **Zoom discussion** every **WEDNESDAY** and **FRIDAY** unless otherwise noted.

Week	Date	Assignment
1	Wed 2/3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtain all books for class Read syllabus Watch video lecture on how to post to website Register for course website Post a blog introducing yourself to the class <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Options: name, something you're looking forward to, what you like to read, a fun fact, etc. Comment on one other post
	Fri 2/5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adichie, "The Danger of a Single Story" (transcript) Add one annotation to class copy Take syllabus quiz
2	Wed 2/10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> (Intro by Nemiroff and up to page 75 & end of Act I) Listen to <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> Lecture One (38 mins) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> View lecture slides <p>In class: explain small groups</p>
	Fri 2/12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read close reading handouts one and two Listen to lecture on close reading (30 mins) Sign up to blog <p>In class: co-author community guidelines</p>
3	Wed 2/17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen to Writing Skills Lecture #1 (38 mins) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> View lecture slides Contact your small group members Read Hansberry, <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i>, Act II Collins, <i>Black Feminist Thought</i> excerpt (55-60)
	Fri 2/19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blog posts (Katherine, Erin O., Justin) and comments In class: continue discussion of Act II
4	Wed 2/24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read Hansberry, <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> Act III Blog posts (Angelica and Erin C.) and comments
	Fri 2/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen to Writing Skills Lecture #2 (34 mins)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ View lecture slides and MLA citations handout ● Guinness, “How to Edit Your Own Writing” ● In class: continue discussion of Act III
5	Wed 3/3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Watch <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> (1961 film) (access through SUNY Cortland libraries, call number VideoD PN1997 .R34 1999.) ● Come prepared to discuss one scene from the film that changed the way you originally read the play ● Blog posts (Madison, Jenna H., Julia) and comments
	Fri 3/5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Watch <i>Race: the Power of an Illusion</i>, episode 3, “The House We Live In” (57 min) (access through SUNY Cortland libraries) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Take notes on key dates, terms, and legislation ● Badger, “Whites Have Huge Wealth Edge Over Blacks (but Don’t Know It)”
6	Wed 3/10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Kingston, <i>The Woman Warrior</i>, “No Name Woman,” (1-16) ● Blog posts (Caroline, Sydnie, Delayne) and comments
	Fri 3/12	<p>[Class will not meet - read and listen!]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Listen to The Woman Warrior Lecture #1 (31 mins) ● Read Kingston, <i>The Woman Warrior</i>, “White Tigers,” (17-54) ● Listen to The Woman Warrior Lecture #2 (30 mins)
7	Wed 3/17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Read Kingston, <i>The Woman Warrior</i> “Shaman” (55-110) <p>In class: Collaborative close reading part I (video with instructions)</p>
	Fri 3/19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Complete Mid-Semester Check In <p>In class: Collaborative close reading part II due by 6 pm</p>
8	Wed 3/24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Listen to The Woman Warrior Lecture #3 ● Kingston, <i>The Woman Warrior</i>, “At the Western Palace” (111-160) ● Watch “Orientalism and Power” (3 min vid)
	Fri 3/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Kingston, <i>The Woman Warrior</i>, “A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe” (163-209) ● Blog posts (Chloe and Sydney) and comments
9	Wed 3/31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Read Lorde, “The Uses of Anger” ● Rankine, <i>Citizen</i> part I (1-19) ● Wing Sue, “Microaggressions: More than Just Race” ● Listen to lecture on The Woman Warrior & Citizen ● Blog posts (Christina and Jenna T.) and comments

	Fri 4/2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rankine, <i>Citizen</i> part II & III (20-55)
10	Wed 4/7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rankine, <i>Citizen</i> parts IV - VI (56-135) Rivlin, “White New Orleans Has Recovered from Hurricane Katrina. Black New Orleans Has Not” Horowitz, “Don’t Repeat the Mistakes of the Katrina Recovery” Bokat-Lindell, “Why is Police Brutality Still Happening?” Blog posts (Brianna and Scott) and comments
	Fri 4/9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen to lecture on <i>Citizen</i> (material through 135, 42 mins) Rankine, <i>Citizen</i> Part VII (136-end) Blog posts (Logan and Khaleah) and comments
11	Wed 4/14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Philip, <i>Zong!</i> (xi-20, 183-207) Blog posts (Alaina and Emma) and comments
	Fri 4/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Philip, <i>Zong!</i> (20-76) Watch video of Philip reading (follow along pages 29-34) “Interview with Maria Preziuso”
12	Wed 4/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen to short lecture (11 mins) on found poem assignment Post found poem and artist’s statement to course website by Tuesday at 12 pm Read all found poems and comment on at least one other post Come prepared with found poems you would like to discuss
	Fri 4/23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gurba, <i>Mean</i> (1-36) Listen to lecture on <i>Mean</i> (30 mins)
13	Wed 4/28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gurba, <i>Mean</i> (37-100) Listen to Mean lecture #2 (44 mins) Blog posts (Greta and Lindsey) and comments
	Fri 4/30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gurba, <i>Mean</i> (101-144) Listen: Racho, “Myriam Gurba’s Mean: A Memoir of Hurt and Humor” (7 minute interview) Brainstorm questions you’d like to ask Gurba! Blog posts (Caitlin N. and Skylar) and comments
14	Tues 5/4 @ 6 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distinguished Voices in Literature: A Reading with Myriam Gurba (Zoom event @ 6 pm) - Register here
	Wed 5/5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen to short lecture on <i>Mean</i> and instructions for make-up blog comments (24 mins) Gurba, <i>Mean</i> (145-175)

		In class: Discuss reactions to Gurba's event, explain course reflection assignment
	Fri 5/7	Class will not meet <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Optional: make up missing blog comments by 11:59 pm. Email prof. once all comments are completed and ready to be graded
	Wed 5/12	Class will not meet <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Course reflection due via email by 11:59 pm on Wednesday, May 12.

- Complete **Course Teacher Evaluation (CTE)**
 - MyRed Dragon → Student tab → Cortland eLearning System → Course Teacher Evaluations

Thank you for an exciting, thought-provoking, and unforgettable semester!