

FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR
MULTICULTURALISM AND THE POLITICS OF REVISION

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THE IDEA OF THIS COURSE

All writing and speaking has political, social, and cultural implications. Sometimes these implications are obvious, and sometimes they aren't, but one thing is for sure—how we go about representing other people matters to the people we are representing, and how we go about representing ourselves affects how others see us. This course proposes that we think carefully about how representation works with the goal that we become better writers. This course also proposes that writing occurs in a very complex world that is rapidly changing and whose economy and social organization is often hard to understand. The economy is more global than ever before, and the tools of communication and media (such as iPhones and Facebook) are faster and more prevalent. Consequently, as the societies of small towns are increasingly linked to the economies of faraway places, local cultures are increasingly transformed by global politics. In this context, the attitude of openness to the other cultures you may encounter is called multiculturalism, and the practice of rewriting old stories so that they are more attentive to the diversity of cultures and the realities of history is called revision. Hence, multiculturalist revision is an ethical practice that leads not only to a better and more human understanding of others but also a better and more divine understanding of oneself.

We will read and discuss imaginative literature and history that raises questions about the practice of writing and its relationship to the world in which we find ourselves. As we consider the concepts of multiculturalism and revision, we will focus attention on how the same story gets repeated and revised, starting with William Shakespeare's famous play, *The Tempest* and its revisions by Caribbean writers Aimé Césaire and Elizabeth Nunez and in the science fiction movie *Forbidden Planet*. We will then learn the histories of two cultures that have recently become a significant and important part of Minnesotan society, the Hmong and the Somali. Finally, we will think about how people tell stories about their cultures in the context of a diverse, changing world by comparing and contrasting the play *Real Women Have Curves* with the significantly different version by Hollywood. As we read, we will engage in active discussions about the literature and the questions it raises, and—most importantly—we will practice writing. At the end of the semester, your final project will be to imagine your own revision of a novel or movie of your own choosing. As you do all of these assignments, you will meet the general goal of all FYS classes, which is to develop your writing, critical thinking, and academic discussion skills.

BOOKS IN BOOKSTORE

- William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*
- Elizabeth Nunez, *Prospero’s Daughter*
- Chia Youyee Vang, *Hmong in Minnesota*
- I. M. Lewis, *A Modern History of the Somali*, 4th edition
- Josefina Lopez, *Real Women Have Curves*

WEBSITES

Some of the course content and your assignments will be posted on on-line through Moodle. In addition, useful websites such as the Writing Center and a citation style guide will be on Moodle. The Moodle can be found by going to the CSBSJU Current Students page or this URL here: <<https://moodle.csbsju.edu/login/index.php>>.

EVALUATION

Essay on race and gender	10%
Essay comparing ethnic histories	10%
Revision of Essay comparing ethnic histories.....	10%
Essay on ideology and storytelling.....	15%
Presentation and essay on revising	15%
In-class writing and worksheets	15%
In-class discussions	15%
Attendance, participation, and attitude.....	10%

ASSIGNMENTS

Essay on Race and Gender

In this essay, you will think about how modern revisions of Shakespeare’s *Tempest* draw attention to the problems of racial stereotypes and gender stereotypes that emerged during Europe’s colonization of America and enslavement of Native Americans and Africans. Why might you think such stereotypes were created during the colonial period? Is there a relationship between gender stereotypes and racial stereotypes?

Your essay should be 3-5 pages long, double-spaced, in 12 point Times New Roman font with 1.25 inch margins. You must follow the MLA style guidelines, but you do not need a Works Cited page. I expect you to demonstrate close reading of all the texts assigned. You will be graded on (1) how well you raise and answer a question about the texts, (2) how well you organize your ideas and support them with textual evidence, (3) how well you follow the rules and conventions of good writing, and (4) how well you consider the assigned reading.

Come to class on September 30th with three copies of your paper. In class you will work with classmates to improve your work. After class, you will have 48 hours to revise your paper and then upload your final draft electronically on Moodle.

Essay Comparing Ethnic Histories

In this essay, you will think about how the history of a people gets told. What gets included? What doesn't? What is the purpose of telling a specific history? What is the meaning of history? Your task is to compare and contrast the two history books—Vang's *Hmong in Minnesota* and Lewis's *History of the Somali*. In addition, you must bring in some of your own research, including book reviews, magazine and newspaper articles, and scholarly articles.

Your essay should be 4-6 pages long, double spaced, in 12 point Times New Roman font with 1.25 inch margins. You must follow the MLA style guidelines, including a correctly formatted Works Cited page. Your works cited should include at least one book review, one newspaper or magazine article, one scholarly article, and one website. I expect you to demonstrate a careful reading of all the texts assigned as well as your own research. You will be graded on (1) how well you raise and answer a question, (2) how well you organize your ideas and support them with evidence, (3) how well you follow the rules and conventions of good writing, and (4) how well you consider the assigned reading.

Come to class on November 3rd with three copies of your essay. In class you will work with classmates to improve your paper. After class, you will have 48 hours to revise your paper and then upload your final draft electronically on Moodle.

Revision of Essay Comparing Ethnic Histories

Later in the semester, you will rewrite your essay comparing ethnic histories in which you do two things: (1) make revisions according to my comments and suggestions, and (2) create three versions of the same essay, one according to MLA style, one according to APA style, and one according to Chicago style. You will come to class on November 11th with just one copy in each style. In class, you will work with your classmates to double-check your citations. After class, you will have 48 hours to revise your three versions and then upload them electronically on Moodle.

Essay on the Ideology of Story Telling

In this essay, you will think about how the way a story gets told might assert or replicate an ideology (e.g., cliché's, stereotypes, political biases, one group's values or way of life over another's, economic interests, etc.). Using the essay by Lalami, the satire by Wainaina, and one of the short stories assigned, you will consider the difference between dominant (or hegemonic) ideologies and alternative (or counter) ideologies. You will consider not just the content of a story, but also its form. Your primary task is to compare and contrast the two versions of *Real Women Have Curves*—the original theatrical production and the Hollywood movie.

Your essay should be 3-4 pages long, double spaced, in 12 point Times New Roman font with 1.25 inch margins. You may follow the MLA, APA, or Chicago style guidelines.

You will bring three copies of the paper to class on November 23rd. In class you will work with classmates to improve your paper. After class, you will have 48 hours to revise your paper and then upload your final draft electronically on Moodle.

Presentation and essay on revising

This is meant to be a fun, creative assignment in which you apply all that you've learned this semester. You will imagine your revision of a story. You can use any novel or movie that you like; it's up to you. You have two tasks for this assignment. The first is to imagine a revision. You don't actually have to finish the revision, because you won't have time to write a

whole novel or movie script, but you should imagine what the whole thing might look like. The second task is to explain why and what you are doing in your revision. I expect you to do some outside research, but you may also draw upon the assigned reading from earlier in the semester.

Your presentation should be only 5 minutes long, with 2 minutes for question and answer. Time will be strictly enforced. (FYI, it takes about 2 minutes to read a single double-spaced page.) Your essay should be longer, about 3-6 pages, double spaced, in 12 point Times New Roman font with 1.25 inch margins. You may follow the MLA, APA, or Chicago guidelines. Half your grade for this assignment will be based on your presentation and half will be based on your essay. You will bring three copies of the essay to class on December 10th. In class you will work with classmates to improve your paper. After class, you will have 48 hours to revise your paper and then upload your final draft electronically on Moodle.

In-class Writing and Worksheets

From time to time, you will be assigned a worksheet for homework, an essay to complete in class, or a pop quiz. Some of these are announced on the syllabus, but some are not. These are designed to facilitate discussion and your learning process in class, and thus they are part of the day's lesson plan. Therefore, late homework will not be accepted and in-class work cannot be made up at a later time if you were absent. Most worksheets and in-class essays are graded according to a check, check-plus, and check-minus scale. If you did satisfactory work, you get a check. If you did it very well, you get a check-plus. If you did unsatisfactory work, you get a check-minus. If you did not turn it in or were absent, you get a zero. At the end of the year, check-pluses essentially mean A or AB, a check means a B or BC, a check-minus means a C or D, and a zero means an F.

In-Class Discussions

An important component of the FYS class is discussion skills. I expect you to participate in class all of the time, and I always welcome your input, questions, and opinions, but that general sort of participation is graded in the "attendance, participation, and attitude" below. More specifically, several times throughout the semester there are times set aside for sustained discussion. These are always announced in the syllabus, and they will be graded.

We will come up with a way for how to grade the discussion at the beginning of the semester. In other words, you will create the rubric and the method for grading yourselves. After we brainstorm and formalize this rubric, I will post it on the class's Moodle site.

Attendance, Participation, and Attitude

You are expected to come to class everyday having done all the assigned reading and prepared to discuss it. I also expect you to be generous with your classmates, because participation does not just mean talking; it also means listening respectfully and engaging in genuine conversation.

If you miss more than three classes, your attendance and participation grade will be reduced by 20% for each day beyond the three that is missed.

POLICIES

Any act of plagiarism can result in an F for the course and can go on your permanent academic record. Please see The College of St. Benedict and St. John's University's official policy on plagiarism here: <http://www.csbsju.edu/catalog/2003-2005/Academic_Programs/Rights_and_Responsibilities/002.htm>.

All students have the right of non-discriminatory access to the programs at the colleges. If you have a disability and require special consideration, you must inform me as soon as possible.

I reserve the right to change this syllabus at any time during the semester and will inform you of all changes in a timely manner.

CALENDAR

- Aug. 26 (Thu) introductions
- Aug. 30 (Mon) Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, preface and act 1
Strachey, "Storms... Bermuda," in Norton edition of *Tempest*, p. 110-15
- Sept. 1 (Wed) *Tempest*, act 2-3
in-class, short essay on Shakespeare's *The Tempest*

Thursday, 7:30 pm, Kip Fulbeck at Escher Auditorium in the BAC

- Sept. 3 (Fri) *Tempest*, act 4-5
Ien Ang, "Multiculturalism" (Moodle)
Writing Center's website (Moodle)
in-class discussion on Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and Kip Fulbeck
presentation by Writing Center

Sept. 6 LABOR DAY

- Sept. 8 (Wed) Montaigne, "On Cannibalism" in Norton edition of *Tempest*
Lamming, "A Monster... a Slave," in Norton edition of *Tempest*, p. 148-68
Césaire, excerpt from *A Tempest* in Norton edition of *Tempest*, p. 321-25
worksheet due (Moodle)

Wednesday or Thursday night screening of movie, *Forbidden Planet*

- Sept. 10 (Fri) IT Services's website (Moodle)
class meets with Cathy Robak in SJU Quad's IT training room

Sept. 14 (Tue) Elizabeth Nunez, *Prospero's Daughter*, p.1-67
Tropica, "Busha's Song" (Moodle)
J. E. Clare McFarlane, "The Fleet of Empire" (Moodle)
worksheet on *Forbidden Planet* and *Prospero's Daughter* due (Moodle)

extra credit: essay relating Flo Oy Wong's art (FAE) to this class

Sept. 16 (Thu) *Prospero's Daughter*, p. 68-102
Eric Froner, "The White Side of History," *Harper's Magazine* (Moodle)
in-class discussion on racism

Sept. 20 (Mon) *Prospero's Daughter*, p. 103-68
Namjoshi, "Snapshots of Caliban," in Norton edition of *Tempest*, p. 342-3
Johnson, "Calypso for Caliban," in Norton edition of *Tempest*, p. 343-46

Sept. 22 (Wed) *Prospero's Daughter*, p. 169-222
St. John's Arboretum's website (Moodle)
Tour of SJU's Arboretum—meet in front of the Abbey bell banner

Wednesday or Thursday night screening of *Good Hair* by Chris Rock

Sept. 24 (Fri) *Prospero's Daughter*, p. 223-274
two in-class discussions, one on ecology and one on gender

Extra credit: Sunday and Monday, Peace Studies conference

Sept. 28 (Tue) *Prospero's Daughter*, p. 275-finish

Sept. 30 (Thu) **due: essay on race and gender in the context of colonialism**
Writing Center's website (Moodle)
peer review with writing center tutors

Oct. 4 (Mon) Vang, *Hmong in Minnesota*, p. v-38

Oct. 6 (Wed) *Hmong in Minnesota*, p. 38-76

Oct. 7—10 FALL BREAK

Oct. 12 (Tue) movie: *Gran Torino* (watch on your own before class)
Hmong in Minnesota, p. 77-80
excerpts from Kao Kalia Yang, *The Late Homecomer* (Moodle)
in-class discussion on ethnicity in the context of empire

Extra credit: Kao Kalia Yang on campus in Gorecki 204-B at 9:30, 11:20, and 1:00

Oct. 14 (Thu) Steven Thomas, "Somalis... Public Schools," *Theory Teacher's Blog*
Minnesota Bankers Association, "African Immigrant Resource Guide"
K'Naan's MySpace page
Lewis, *A Modern History of the Somali*, Preface, p. vii-xi
in-class discussion topic: how Minnesotans understand Somali immigrants

Extra credit: essay relating CSBSJU play "The Ugly One" (FAE) to our class

Oct. 18 (Mon) *History of the Somali*, ch. 1-2

Oct. 20 (Wed) *History of the Somali*, ch. 3-4
worksheet on ch. 1-4 (Moodle)
Academic Advising's website (Moodle)
guest speaker from Academic Advising, John Clarkson

Oct. 22 (Fri) **meet in Alcuin library, room AV-2, with librarian Mollie Ewing**
library's power point on plagiarism and the university's plagiarism
policy here: <<http://www.csbsju.edu/library/help/citing.htm>>.
History of the Somali, ch. 5-6

Oct. 26 (Tue) *History of the Somali*, ch. 7-8
No class, individual meetings

Oct. 28 (Thu) *History of the Somali*, ch. 9-10
worksheet on chapters 5-10 (Moodle)
No class, individual meetings

Nov. 1 (Mon) *History of the Somali*, ch. 11

Nov. 3 (Wed) **due: essay comparing Hmong and Somali histories and experiences**
peer review workshop

Nov. 5 (Fri) Laila Lalami, "The Politics of Reading" (Moodle)
Binyavanga Wainaina, "How to Write about Africa," *Granta* (Moodle)
Doreen Baingana, from *Tropical Fish: Tales from Entebbe*

Nov. 9 (Tue) reading to be announced

Nov. 11 (Thu) reading to be announced
due: rewrite of essay comparing ethnic history

Nov. 15 (Mon) Josefina Lopez, *Real Women Have Curves*, act. 1
websites about immigration and sweatshops (Moodle)

Nov. 17 (Wed) Josefina Lopez, *Real Women Have Curves*, act. 2
websites about ideology (Moodle)

Wednesday or Thursday night screening of movie *Real Women Have Curves*

Nov. 19 (Fri) Hollywood movie version of *Real Women Have Curves*
in-class discussion comparing and contrasting play and movie

Nov. 23 (Tue) **due: essay on ideology and storytelling**
peer review workshop

Nov. 24—28 THANKSGIVING

Nov. 30 (Tue) workshop revisions

Dec. 2 (Thu) workshop revisions

Dec. 6 (Mon) presentations of revisions

Dec. 8 (Wed) presentations of revisions

Dec. 10 (Fri) **due: essay on revising**
peer review workshop