Course Description

This course examines cultural diversity through memoir, historical fiction, and autobiographical poems and essays. We will study the intersections of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, race, class, religion, and nation as we explore our own and others' cultural identities by reading and writing personal stories. Readings include Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, Khaled Hosseini’s *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Edwidge Danticat's *Brother, I’m Dying*, and Joy Harjo’s *Crazy Brave*. Within and across diverse social, historical, national, and global contexts, we will explore manifestations of universal themes such as power, solidarity, alliance, resistance, vulnerability, survival, and love. This course emphasizes written and oral communication skills to enhance critical self-reflexivity and empathy as methods for engaging dialogue and creating an entry point into understanding one’s own self within cultural contexts. This course teaches the value of story—our own and others’ personal stories—as a way of sharing and preserving our unique identities while forging connection and compassion across differences.

Student Learning Objectives

- Develop transnational and global awareness by encountering personal stories from across cultures
- Introduce theories of intersectionality and narrative as methods of critical inquiry
- Increase understanding of the intersections of cultural identity markers including but not limited to gender, sex, sexuality, ethnicity, race, class, religion, and nation
- Understand the cultural and personal value of narratives and the art of crafting narratives.
- Contextualize empathy as foundational to the dynamic relationship between self and other, the personal and the universal
- Practice critical self-reflexivity to enhance communication skills
- Participate in the creation of a safe learning environment emphasizing ethical communication, open dialogue, and respect for one another

Required Texts


Course Assignments

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Forum (4 @ 50 points)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>200</td>
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<tr>
<td>1-page Responses (4 @ 25 points)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quizzes (4 @ 25 points ea)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essay (4-6 pages)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>500</td>
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Final Grading Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Points Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
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<td>C</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>300-349</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>0-299</td>
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Assignment Descriptions

For this course we will be reading and discussion 4 novels. We will spend approximately two weeks on each novel. During that two weeks you will post in the discussion forum, take a quiz, and write a 1 page response paper. The deadline for discussion, quiz, and response paper is the Friday of each two-week unit.

Discussion Forum

For the discussion forum, you are expected to dialogue with one another to explore themes and concepts as you deepen your understanding and insights into the novels.

Here’s how it will work:
For each of the four novels, there will be a set of questions and video clips designed to initiate a dialogue between the participants in this course. You are required to read the novels, view the video clips and additional materials. You are required to contribute a response in the form of critical commentary, observation, or analysis to each post. Your responses might prompt a dialogue, and I encourage all students to pursue this dialogue. Each discussion forum is worth 50 points. You must respond to at least 5 of the posted questions, including the question about the videos/interviews. You will be graded on your responses to the questions, your responses to classmates’ posts, and your responses to posted video clips or articles related to our readings. Your responses will be graded on quality, insightfulness, thoroughness, and relevance to topic. You will also be graded on ethical, respectful, self-reflexive and thoughtful participation in the dialogue. You must complete your responses before the close of each
**discussion.** In other words, please be good conversational partners with one another. Do not be inflammatory, do not be a troll. You must use standard English grammar with appropriate punctuation. Please do not use internet language, abbreviations, symbols, and punctuations. This is an academic environment.

**Response Paper**
For each of the four novels, you will be expected to write a response. Each response is required to be one single-spaced page. The response will explore a theme(s) and concept(s) that you identify in the readings. Name the theme or concept that you are exploring, and then offer specific examples from the novels that support your opinions and insights. For example, if for your response, you are exploring the theme of “endurance” you will explain why this theme is significant to the novel and you will offer specific examples (with page numbers cited) from the novel that illustrate “endurance”. You will be graded on your critical and creative analysis. Writing must have a clear thesis and be well-organized, skillfully crafted, and free from grammatical mistakes. You will email your responses to me privately. (They will not be viewed by your classmates.) Response papers are due at the end of the two week unit, by 11:59 pm that Friday as indicated on the calendar below.

**Quizzes**
There will be 4 quizzes asking you objective questions about the novels. The quizzes will be posted when each novel opens, and the quiz session closes at the end of the second week of each novel, at 11:59pm that Friday. Quizzes cannot be accessed after close, so be sure to take the quiz during that 2 week window for each novel.

**Essay**
For the essay assignment, you have a choice between 2 options:

**Option 1:**
Write a 4-6 page personal story that incorporates a theme or themes we encountered in our readings. Through critical self-reflexivity, your story needs to show awareness of the relationship between you and the larger social context, and provide examples from one or more of the novels to demonstrate and analyze a clear relationship to the theme. Your story should reveal a particular event, moment, theme, memory, etc. from your life that is significant to who you are. The story needs to be vivid and evocative, rich with descriptive details and cultural elements. The story will be self-reflexive and will tie themes and examples from the novels and of your personal experiences to that of the larger cultural context within which you participate.

**Option 2:**
Write a 4-6 page critical analysis of a particular theme or themes occurring across and within the novels. The essay needs to connect the themes with concrete
examples from the novels. Essay should have a clear thesis with strong organization.

Policies:

***Late papers and quizzes are not accepted.***

Academic Honesty:

Students are expected to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. You should know that presenting another’s work as your own, even if by accident, is a serious violation of the Student Conduct Code. The Student Conduct Code identifies the following as acts of academic dishonesty: “Plagiarism, representing the work of another as one’s own work; preparing work for another that is to be used as that person’s own work; cheating by any method or means; …soliciting, aiding, abetting, concealing, or attempting conduct in violation of this code” (p. 18). Whether quoting or paraphrasing (or even summarizing) someone else’s work, you should cite your sources; failure to do so constitutes an act of plagiarism. Suspected cases of plagiarism will be investigated following Article V of the Student Conduct Code; if plagiarism is substantiated, the perpetrator may face failing the assignment, failing the course, disciplinary censure, and/or suspension from the university, depending on the details of the case (see Article III of the Student Conduct Code). As a rule of thumb: when in doubt, cite where the information is coming from. If you are uncertain whether you are citing sources sufficiently and appropriately enough to avoid plagiarism, please consult with me or a tutor at the Writing Center. Academic dishonesty is very serious and will result in a penalty.

Accessibility:

In the spirit of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), I wish to make this course as accessible as possible to students with disabilities, temporary medical conditions, or mental health issues that may affect any aspect of course assignments or participation. I invite you to communicate with me at the beginning of the semester or at your discretion about any accommodations that will improve your experience of or access to the course. We can create an agreement to document accommodations. The Disability Support Services (DSS) office provides support and various services for students with disabilities and can be reached at (618) 453-5738 or DSSsiu@siu.edu. To best serve the student population, DSS requests that students contact the office at the beginning of the semester or at their earliest convenience. The Achieve Program also offers support (for a fee) to students with learning disabilities and can be reached at (618) 453-2369 or achieve@siu.edu.

Title IX and Violence: Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender is a Civil Rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, etc. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find the appropriate resources here: http://safe.siu.edu and here:
Course Calendar

Unit 1 The Color Purple
Week 1: Personal Introductions
Read *The Color Purple*
Introduction to Terms and concepts
**Discussion Forum Opens:** *The Color Purple*
**Video, audio, and article links**
“Personal Introductions” session closes

Week 2: **Quiz 1 The Color Purple**
**Response #1 Due:** *The Color Purple*
Read *A Thousand Splendid Suns*

Unit 2 A Thousand Splendid Suns
Week 3: **Discussion Forum Opens:** *A Thousand Splendid Suns*
**Video, audio, and article links**
*The Color Purple* Discussion Forum Closes
**Quiz 2:** *A Thousand Splendid Suns*

Week 4: **Response 2 due:** *A Thousand Splendid Suns*
*Splendid Suns* Forum closes
Read *Brother I’m Dying*

Unit 3 Brother I’m Dying
Week 5 *Brother I’m Dying* Discussion Forum Opens
**Video, audio, and article links**
**Quiz 3:** *Brother, I’m Dying*
Forum cont’d

Week 6 **Response 3 Due:** *Brother I’m Dying*
Read *Crazy Brave*

Unit 4 Crazy Braze
Week 7 *Crazy Brave* Discussion Forum Begins
**Video, audio, and article links**
**Quiz 4:** *Crazy Brave*
*Brother I’m Dying* Discussion Forum Closes
**Response 4 Due:** *Crazy Brave*

Week 8 Wed May 11 **Final Essay Due**