

Contemporary Chicana/o Latino/a Literature

CES 353/ENG 345 [G,M]

Section 01

Fall 2012

T, Th, 10:35-11:50 am

CUE 409

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Mami had to quit her job to care for Raymond. For many months she ran from one doctor to another because Raymond's foot wouldn't heal. The doctors told her that so much bicycle grease had got into the wound that they couldn't be sure if they'd cleaned it all out. Raymond, Mami told Papi, would be plagued by all sort of problems with his foot for the rest of his life, and she went on to list diseases the doctors had told her he was likely to develop. Diseases that all ended with -itis.

—from *When I Was Puerto Rican* by Esmeralda Santiago

Our next workshop, no one understood what my sublimated love sonnet was all about, but Rudy's brought down the house. Suddenly, it seemed to me, not only that the world was full of English majors, but of people with a lot more experience than I had. For the hundredth time, I cursed my immigrant origins. If only I too had been born in Connecticut or Virginia, I too would understand the jokes everyone was making on the last two digits of the year, 1969; I too would be having sex and smoking dope; I too would have suntanned parents who took me skiing in Colorado over Christmas break, and I would say things like "no shit," without feeling like I was imitating someone else.

—from *How the García Girls Lost their Accent* by Julia Alvarez

My mother says that Abuela Celia's had plenty of chances to leave Cuba but that she's stubborn and got her head turned around by El Líder. Mom says "Communist" the way some people say "cancer," low and fierce. She reads the newspapers page by page for leftist conspiracies, jams her finger against imagined evidence and says, "See. What did I tell you?"

—from *Dreaming in Cuban* by Cristina García

Because after Fe died, she did not resurrect as La Loca did at age three. She also did not return ectoplasmically like her tenacious earth-bound sister Esperanza. Very shortly after that first prognosis, Fe just died. And when someone dies that plain dead, it is hard to talk about.

—from *So Far From God* by Ana Castillo

Here everything is black and white; there are no halftones or ambiguities; the manipulation is behind us, the hypocrisy, the deceit. Life or death. Kill or be killed.

—from *The Infinite Plan* by Isabel Allende

But the Fukú ain't just ancient history, a ghost story from the past with no power to scare. In my parents' day the fukú was real as shit, something your everyday person could believe in. Everybody knew someone who'd been eaten by a fukú, just like everybody knew somebody who worked up in the Palacio. It was in the air, you could say, though, like all the most important things on the Island, not something folks really talked about.

—from *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* by Junot Diaz

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES:

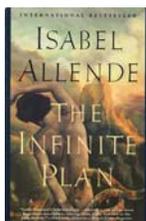
This course provides a glimpse into contemporary Chicana/Chicano and Latino/Latina literatures by examining selected texts and authors with the intent of making connections between the written text and the context from which it emerges. That is to say, we will examine

the messages embedded in the works of Chicana/o Latino/a authors, as producers and reproducers of ethnic and community identity, as well as reflections of a broader political consciousness and broader social dynamics. Moreover, we will study these texts as testimonies of material conditions, struggles, and resistance and, ultimately, as potential agents for social change. Even though Chicana/o Latino/a history in the United States extends beyond literature, we can find articulated in it clues that may help us understand the intricacies of (a) specific community(ies) within the bigger structures of US society. Although four of them are fiction, and another is a fictionalized account of real lives/events (the sixth—the first book we will actually read—is a memoir), I hope you engage with these texts (written by a Puerto Rican woman, a Dominican woman, a Cuban woman, a Chicana, a Chilean woman and a Dominican man, respectively) and look at them as documents articulating the triumphs and tribulations of different groups of people labeled “Latinos(as)/Chicanas(os),” as well as their interactions with other groups of people in and out of the US.

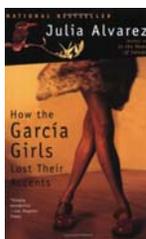
Note: As a Writing in the Major course [M], this class complies with the requirements of this particular designation by: (1) assigning a considerable amount of writing; (2) distributing the writing throughout the term; and (3) allowing room for revisions. Because of its [M] status, this course requires both an inordinate amount of reading and writing.

REQUIRED TEXTS AND SUPPLIES:

Books—listed in alphabetical order by author: (available at The Bookie)



Allende, Isabel. 1991. *The Infinite Plan*. New York: Perennial.



Alvarez, Julia. 1992. *How the García Girls Lost their Accent*. New York: Plume.

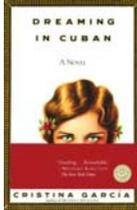


Cisneros, Sandra. 2002. *Caramelo*. New York. Alfred A. Knopf Inc.

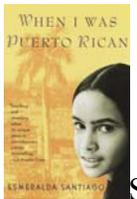
The Brief
Wondrous
Life of
Oscar Wao

Junot Díaz

Díaz, Junot. 2007. *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*. New York: Riverhead Books.



García, Cristina. 1992. *Dreaming in Cuban: A Novel*. New York: Ballantine Books.



Santiago, Esmeralda. 1998. *When I was Puerto Rican: A Memoir*. Cambridge: Da Capo Press.

Note: Having access to the books is crucial. In order to be able to succeed in this class, you need the books. There is no way around it. And, given the world of hyper-connectivity we live in, “The Bookie ran out of books” will not constitute an excuse for not having your reading summaries ready when they are due.

Articles: The articles listed below are all available on Angel. They will also be available online through the WSU libraries articles and indexes function. Make sure you get them on time and do not wait until the very last minute, as the university system is sometimes off line or gets overloaded. I would recommend you spend a couple of hours and get all articles at once. In other words, “I wasn’t able to get a hold of the article” cannot be used as an excuse for not having your reading reflection done on time (information on reading reflections below). The articles will be listed in the schedule by title and author’s last name.

Céspedes, Diógenes and Silvio Torres-Saillant. 2000. “Fiction Is the Poor Man's Cinema: An Interview with Junot Díaz.” *Callaloo*, 23: 3, 892-907.

Duany, Jorge. 2000. “Nation on the Move: The Construction of Cultural Identities in Puerto Rico and the Diaspora.” *American Ethnologist*, 27:1, 5-30.

Gough, Elizabeth. 2004. “Vision and Division: Voyeurism in the Works of Isabel Allende.” *Journal of Modern Literature*, 27:4, 93-120.

Heredia, Juanita. 2007. “Voyages South and North: The Politics of Transnational Gender Identity in *Caramelo* and *American Chica*.” *Latino Studies*, 5:1, 350-357.

Herrera, Andrea O'Reilly. 1997. “Women and the Revolution in Cristina García's ‘Dreaming in Cuban’” *Modern Language Studies*, 27: 3/4, 69-91.

William, Luis. 2000. "A Search for Identity in Julia Alvarez's: How the García Girls Lost Their Accents." *Callaloo*, 23:3, 839-849.

Miscellaneous Supplies:

1. Access to a Spanish to English dictionary.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Class Attendance and Participation: Attendance and participation at every class are **required** and valuable. Class will mostly consist of a discussion of the texts, and I will expect you to come to class having completed the readings and willing to engage with the material. Your contributions to class discussion will become part of your participation points. It is also to your advantage to listen closely and take copious notes during our discussions, since I'll expect you to apply key concepts and ideas discussed in class in your in-class assignments.

You are allowed up to **two absences (excused or otherwise)**, after which you will **lose ten (10) points** for every regular lecture class missed. Only approved and documented university excuses will be exempted from this rule (for athletes, this means forms from the Athletic Department handed in **before** the absence; for students traveling to conferences or competitions, I will expect a letter from the professor with whom you are traveling **before** you leave town).

I will be looking for both quantity *and* quality in your contributions to class discussion. Finally, disruptive behavior will make you lose points for attendance and participation. The following are examples of disruptive behavior: (1) arriving late to class and/or leaving early, (2) talking to classmates during lecture, (3) reading the newspaper, (4) playing with your laptop computer, (5) texting, etc. If you engage in any of those behaviors during class (or in any other behavior that I deem disruptive), you will lose points from attendance and participation at my discretion and without any warning. Attendance and participation will be **worth a total of 100 points**.

Note: I will take attendance every day. If you come to class after I am finished taking attendance, you will be marked absent.

Reading Reflections: You are required to keep typed reflections of the readings assigned for each day (there is a total of 29 entries). In order to get full credit, each entry must be prefaced with the following information in the following strict order: (1) your first and last name, (2) date the entry is due (not the date you are writing the entry), (3) title of the book (in bold letters), (4) pages in the text where the reading is found, and (5) entry number (entries should be numbered consecutively, and the number of the entry in your summary should correspond to the number of the reading in the schedule). For instance, the heading for the first entry of the semester, which is due on August 28th, should have the following information:

Name

5/05/08

When I Was Puerto Rican

Pp. 3-60

Entry #1

I will deduct 2 points for every item missing from or misplaced in the heading. Each entry (reading) should include its own heading and entry number (as they appear in the schedule). Each entry should include two paragraphs: one including a summary of the readings for the day,

and another paragraph including an analysis. On days when you also have journal articles assigned, you need to write and turn them in as separate entries. The analysis for the entries may be theoretical, social and/or political (personal “feelings” and ideas must be backed with information from the reading). **I will collect the reflections every day in class.** At the end of the week, I will grade one random entry from the readings for that time period (note that you will usually have several entries per day, as there will be several readings assigned). Each graded entry will be worth 15 points for a total of **210 points** at the end of the semester (14 entries). Although I will not read and grade the additional entries, they will still be worth up to 4 points each for a total of **60 points** (15 entries) at the end of the semester. The maximum score for the reading summaries is **270 points**.

- ✓ What constitutes an entry? If you go to the schedule toward the end of the syllabus, you will notice that I have assigned readings for each day. Each reading is numbered and will tell you the text where you will find it. The entry number in the heading must correspond to the reading number in the schedule. Each reading listed constitutes an entry and must have its own heading.
- ✓ You will sometimes have more than one entry due, but you do not need to have each entry on a separate piece of paper. They can appear consecutively **as long as each is separated by its proper heading (as described above)**.
- ✓ The reading summaries will be collected in class. If you miss class one day and your entry is not with those of your classmates, you will lose your points for that day’s reading summary(ies).
- ✓ I will not accept late reading summaries, nor will I accept reading summaries brought to my office, sent over e-mail, or left in my mail box. Check your printer for ink, your computer for bugs, and your brain for memory ahead of time. **Late entries are equivalent to no entries at all.** You may, however, turn in your entries early by bringing them to class on the day before they are due. **I will NOT accept entries on electronic mail or left in my office mailbox (regardless of whether they are early, on time or late).**
- ✓ Here are a few goofs that will make you lose points in your graded entries:
 1. Calling the authors by their first name. Always use their full name or their last name, and **never** their first name alone.
 2. Misuse of the following words:
 - a. affect/effect
 - b. dominate/dominant
 - c. for/four
 - d. its/it’s
 - e. quite/quiet
 - f. there/they’re/their
 - g. then/than
 - h. to/too/two
 - i. weather/whether
 - j. woman/women
 - k. your/you’re
 3. Made up words like irregardless (it’s irrespective or regardless) or supposedly (it’s supposedly); misspelled words like ethnicities (spelled ethnicities) or privilege (spelled privilege); and incongruent pairing of words like “should of” (it’s should’ve or should have).

Each one of these offenses (or offenses like them) will make you lose 2 points every time they appear in your work.

- ✓ Key for corrections: I have designed a system to let you know why you had points taken out. When I return your papers after being graded, they will have codes instead of corrections, here is the key to decipher what I am telling you:

▪ Awk	→	Awkward sentence structure
▪ IH	→	Incomplete/inaccurate Heading
▪ SP	→	Spelled wrong
▪ Huh?	→	I have no idea what you are trying to say
▪ WW	→	Wrong word
▪ IS	→	Incomplete Sentence
▪ IT	→	Incomplete Thought
▪ ISum	→	Incomplete Summary
▪ Ram	→	Rambling, beside the point, not relevant to reading in question
▪ PS	→	-2 points as specified in syllabus (goofs in previous check point)

Bottom line: (1) Turn in all your entries; (2) Turn them in on time; and (3) Mind your grammar.

In-class Assignments: The purpose of the in-class assignments is twofold: first, on a basic level, they are designed to synthesize your interpretation of the readings with our class discussions. On a broader level, they are also designed to make you reflect on issues of migration, economic inequality and ethnic identity in the Chicana(o)/Latina(o) communities. You will have the opportunity to re-write one assignment after I grade it, in order to attain a higher score. You can choose which assignment to re-write and turn in a typed re-write along with the original, graded write up no later than November 29th. The re-write must incorporate the feedback I give you when I graded it. There will be a total of five assignments, and each is worth 100 points for a total of **500 points combined**.

Final Essay: A week before the semester ends, I will hand out two questions. You will choose one and write a 7-10 page essay answering the question (not counting attachments, and not including the reference page), using at least two academic sources dealing with the role of literature in exposing and documenting ethnic inequalities. Only books, journal articles, or a combination of the two shall serve as academic sources. Your essay must be typed, double-spaced, and the pages must be numbered. It must also, of course, include an introduction and a conclusion. A title (other than “Final Essay” or anything along those lines) is also necessary to get full credit. You will be expected to turn in your paper on the assigned due date (December 6) in class. **As with the reading reflections, I will not accept final papers brought to my office, sent over e-mail, or left in my mail box.** The essay is worth **130 points**.



COURSE POLICIES:

Cellular Phones and other Communication/Electronic Devices: Turn your cell phones and electronic devices off before coming to class (that includes laptop computers—even if your computer lacks an internet connection, and any other electronic device utilized to communicate with the world outside our classroom). Of course, iPods and other gadgets used for

entertainment are also prohibited. The world can survive without getting a hold of you for an hour and fifteen minutes. And you will also survive without knowing what's going on outside the classroom for a few minutes. If, for a reason I cannot fathom at this point, you forget to neutralize your communication device, and it does go off during class, you will annoy the heck out of me, and will have the option of (1) turning it off immediately, or (2) handing it to me and letting me answer it. You will take full responsibility for what happens when/if you allow me to answer your phone. If your device goes off more than once during the semester, I will deduct points (at my discretion and without notifying you) from your attendance and participation points. I may also ask you to leave the classroom.

- ✓ If I catch you “texting” during class, and in addition to taking points off, I will confiscate your phone and will make you stand in front of the entire class to share with your classmates why you were texting, who you were texting, and the content of your message. You will also lose points for attendance and participation (see explanation above). Finally, under those circumstances, I reserve the right to keep your phone in my office until one of two things happens: (1) you drop the class, or (2) the semester ends.
- ✓ But what if I want to take notes using my computer?—you may ask. Here is my standard answer: for over a century now, students have been able to take notes using a pad of paper and a pen or a pencil. This method has worked for generations of students, so it will work for you as well. Only students with a documented disability are exempted from this rule.

Academic Etiquette Policy: Class will begin promptly at 10:35 am. Arriving late and leaving early is not tolerable. Do not attempt to carry on private conversations with other students during lectures or discussions. Finally, toleration for diverse opinions voiced in class is essential, and I expect all students to treat each other respectfully. Name calling and other forms of verbal harassment will not be tolerated and will result in either the student being asked to leave the class or in receiving penalty points at my discretion.

Disability Accommodation: Reasonable accommodations are available for students with a documented disability. If you have a disability and may need accommodations to fully participate in this class, please visit the Access Center (Washington Building, Room 217). All accommodations MUST be approved through the Access Center.

Campus safety plan/emergency information: In the interest of campus safety and emergency procedures, please become familiar with the information available on the following WSU-provided websites:

- ✓ <http://safetyplan.wsu.edu> (Campus Safety Plan);
- ✓ <http://oem.wsu.edu/emergencies> (Emergency Management Website); and
- ✓ <http://alert.wsu.edu> (WSU Alert Site).

Academic Integrity Policy: In all instances, you must do your own work. Otherwise, you are being dishonest. There is no excuse for plagiarism, for submitting another person's work, ideas, or wording as your own, or for not doing your own work. In simple terms, plagiarism is the act of using another person's words or work without giving them credit for it. Relatedly, academic dishonesty involves not doing the work you are supposed to do on your own and claim you did. If you do not understand the seriousness of plagiarism and/or academic dishonesty, and the importance of avoiding those behaviors, I would recommend that you read *WSU's Academic Integrity Policy* (WSU Student Handbook, WAC 504-26-202—Acts of Dishonesty and WAC 504-26-010--Definitions). Plagiarism and academic dishonesty, whether intentional or

unintentional, may result in a grade of "F" for the assignment in question, or a grade of "F" for the entire course, at my discretion. Should there be any suspicion of plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty, I will discuss the situation with you first and then with the Chair of the Department of Critical Culture, Gender, and Race Studies. I will then alert the Office of Student Conduct, which may result in a conduct hearing and university sanctions against you. If you are at any time unclear about what constitutes plagiarism, cheating, or academic dishonesty, contact me and I will clarify it for you.

A Few Points about Earning your Grade: As you may have been able to gather from the detailed syllabus I have provided for you, the only thing you can do to get a passing grade in the class is complete the work assigned in the syllabus on time and without excuses. In order to pass the class (i.e., obtaining at least a C-) you need to do two fundamental things: (1) follow the syllabus, and (2) do the assigned work **well**. In order to do better (i.e., obtaining at least a B), you need to follow the syllabus and do the assigned work **very well**. And in order to receive an excellent grade in this class (i.e., at least an A-) you need to follow the syllabus and **excel in your work**. Thus, only the quality of your work will guarantee your grade. What does this mean? I am basically warning you that the level of effort you put into the class, may not correspond to the quality of your work (which is what ultimately matters in obtaining a grade). That is, sometimes a person's best effort grants him/her a C. I will, then, tolerate no drama at the end of the semester about how (1) you worked really hard in this class and therefore deserve a better grade; or (2) you "wanted an A in this class" and are actually getting a C- and can I do something to help you "improve your grade." My standard response to the first point is that effort is not necessarily correlated to a "better grade," and my response to the request embedded in the second point will always be: "sorry, but you had an entire semester to work on improving your grade." Thus, always bear in mind that the grade you obtain in this class will depend entirely on (1) having followed the syllabus to the letter, and equally important, (2) the quality of your work.

Last but Not Least (or the "How is that my problem" clause): I am a pretty busy person, and as a professor, my role in this class is to teach you about Chicano/a Latina/o literature and to generally prepare you for the professional world. I feel the need to warn you, then, that often times I will have a standard response to many of your requests or "conflicts." The response will usually be a variation of: "How is that my problem?" For instance, if you tell me that your parents are going on a vacation to Cabo San Lucas during the week your final paper is due, and they want you to come along (and already bought your tickets), I will ask you: How is that my problem? Similarly, if your best friend is getting married in California and you want to go to the wedding a day you are supposed to be taking an in-class assignment: How in the world is that my problem? Or, if your roommate/friend needs a ride to the Spokane airport and you decide to take him/her and miss class: not my problem! Thus, before you raise any issue with me, understand that your personal matters should bear no effect on me or on how this class is conducted. It is your responsibility to conform to and abide by the schedule and the syllabus. Ultimately, you need to consider that if you decide to bask under the Mexican sun, or eat wedding cake in "sunny California," or go to Spokane during class time, the activity will come with a cost to your grade. It is ultimately up to you to make your own decisions, but decisions, even in college, have consequences attached to them. Keep that in mind.

FALL 2012 SCHEDULE

- ✓ Though I will try to remain as faithful as possible to this syllabus, I still reserve the right to make changes. These will be announced in advance.
- ✓ This syllabus tells you the dates by which you need to have the material read.

TUE AUG 21: **Introduction to the Course.**
 Note: Read your syllabus carefully today.

THU AUG 23: **Latinos in the U.S. and Latino Literature: A Few Important Points**

TUE AUG 28: **When I was Puerto Rican**
 Read 1. From “Prologue” to “Someone is Coming to Take your Lap” (pp.3-60).

THU AUG 30: **When I was Puerto Rican**
 Read 2. From “The American Invasion of Macún,” to “Mami Gets a Job” (pp. 63-130).

TUE SEP 04: **When I was Puerto Rican**
 Read 3. From “El Mangle” to “Casi Señorita” (pp. 133-185).

THU SEP 06: **When I was Puerto Rican**
 Read 4. From “Dreams of a Better Life,” to “Epilogue: One of these Days” (pp. 187-270).
 5. Duany’s “Nation on the Move: The Construction of Cultural Identities in Puerto Rico and the Diaspora.”

TUE SEP 11: **In-class assignment #1**

THU SEP 13: **How the García Girls Lost their Accent**
 Read 6. From “Antojos,” to “Joe” (pp. 3-85).

TUE SEP 18: **How the García Girls Lost their Accent**
 Read 7. From “The Rudy Elmenhurst Story” to “Trespass,” (pp. 86-165).

THU SEP 20: **How the García Girls Lost their Accent**
 Read 8. From “Snow” to “The Human Body” (pp.166-238).

TUE SEP 25: **How the García Girls Lost their Accent**
 Read 9. From “Still Lives” to “The Drum” (pp. 239-290).
 10. William’s “A Search for Identity in Julia Alvarez’s: How the García Girls
 Lost Their Accents.”

THU SEP 27: **In-class assignment #2**

TUE OCT 02: **Dreaming in Cuban**
 Read 11. From Ocean Blue to “A Grove of Lemons” (pp. 3-74).

THU OCT 04: **Dreaming in Cuban**
 Read 12. From “The Fire Between Them” to “Baskets of Water” (pp. 75-160).

TUE OCT 09: **Dreaming in Cuban**
 Read 13. From “Celia’s Letters: 1950-1955,” to “Celia’s Letter: 1959” (pp. 161-
 245).
 14. Herrera’s article “Women and the Revolution in Cristina Garcia’s
 ‘Dreaming in Cuban.’”

THU OCT 11: **In-class assignment #3**

TUE OCT 16: **Caramelo**
 Read 15. From Chapter 1 to Chapter 23 (pp. 1-110).

THU OCT 18: **Caramelo**
 Read 16. From Chapter 24 to Chapter 48 (pp. 111-213).

TUE OCT 23: **Caramelo**
 Read 17. From Chapter 49 to Chapter 63 (pp. 214-323).

THU OCT 25: **Caramelo**
 Read 18. From Chapter 64 to “Pilon” (pp. 324-434).
 19. Heredia’s article “Voyages South and North.”

TUE OCT 30: **In-class assignment #4**

THU NOV 01: **The Infinite Plan**
 Read 20. Part One (pp. 5-104).

TUE NOV 06: **The Infinite Plan**
Read 21. Part Two (pp.107-179).

THU NOV 08: **The Infinite Plan**
Read 22. Part Three (pp. 183-276).

TUE NOV 13: **The Infinite Plan**
Read 23. Part Four (pp. 279-382).
Read 24. Gough's article "Vision and Division: Voyeurism in the Works of Isabel Allende."

THU NOV 15: **In-class assignment #5**

TUE NOV 20: **THANKSGIVING BREAK**

THU NOV 22: **THANKSGIVING BREAK**

TUE NOV 27: **The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao**
Read 25. Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 (pp. 1-75).
26. Cespedes' article "Fictions is the Poor Man's Cinema."

THU NOV 29: **The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao**
Read 27. Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 (pp. 77-201).

TUE DEC 04: **The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao**
Read 28. Intro to Part II and Chapter 5 (pp. 205-261).

THU DEC 06: **The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao**
Read 29. Chapter 6, Intro to Part III, Chapter 7, Chapter 8, and "The Final Letter" (pp. 263-335).

Reminder Final essay due today

KEEP TRACK OF YOUR CLASS GRADE POINTS BELOW**FINAL ESSAY (130 PTS)** _____**IN-CLASS ASSIGNMENTS (500 PTS)**

#1 _____

#2 _____

#3 _____

#4 _____

#5 _____

Total for In-class Assignments _____**READING REFLECTIONS (270 PTS)**

#1 _____ #7 _____

#2 _____ #8 _____

#3 _____ #9 _____

#4 _____ #10 _____

#5 _____ #11 _____

#6 _____ #12 _____

Total for Reading Reflections _____**ATTENDANCE (100 PTS)** _____**Total points accumulated** _____**FINAL GRADING SCALE**

A 950 points and above

A- 900-949 (90-94%)

B+ 870-899 (87-89%)

B 840-869 (84-86%)

B- 800-839 (80-83%)

C+ 770-799 (77-79%)

C 740-769 (74-76%)

C- 700-739 (70-73%)

D+ 670-699 (67-69%)

D 600-669 (60-63%)

F 599 and below