

**Contemporary Chicana/o Latino/a Literature**  
**CES 353/ENG 345 [G,M]**  
**Section 01**  
**Summer 2008**  
**Time M, T, W, Th, F 9:00-10:15**  
**Room: Avery 102**

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Office Hours: M, T, W, and Th 10:30-12:00 noon and by appointment

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 group identity, as well as reflections of a broader political consciousness and social and structural dynamics. Moreover, we will study these texts as testimonies of material conditions, struggles, and resistance against already-established notions of who/what is Latino 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 these texts clues that may help us understand the intricacies of these specific groups 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 woman, 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 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:** (available at both The Bookie and Crimson and Grey)

1. Allende, Isabel. 1991. *The Infinite Plan*. New York: Perennial.
2. Alvarez, Julia. 1992. *How the García Girls Lost their Accent*. New York: Plume.
3. Castillo, Ana. 1994. *So Far From God*. New York: Plume Book.
4. Diaz, Junot. 2007. *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*. New York: Riverhead Books.
5. García, Cristina. 1992. *Dreaming in Cuban: A Novel*. New York: Ballantine Books.
6. Santiago, Esmeralda. 1998. *When I was Puerto Rican: A Memoir*. Cambridge: Da Capo Press.

**Note: You will need access to these books immediately. So make sure you do anything you can to obtain a copy. Otherwise, your grade will suffer.**

**Articles:** The articles listed below are all 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 (info 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.

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

Rodriguez, Ralph E. 2000. "Chicana/o Fiction from Resistance to Contestation: The Role of Creation in Ana Castillo's So Far from God." *MELUS*, 25:2, 63-82.

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. Spanish to English dictionary.

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

#### Class Attendance and Participation:

There will be a total of 80 points for class participation and attendance. Thus, attending every class period is **required**. Because life happens, you are allowed up to **two absences**. **Every additional absence will reduce your final Attendance and Participation Score by 10 points. If you are absent more than 10 times (that is, more than a third of the summer session), you will get an automatic F in the class.** Only approved and documented university excuses will be accepted (for athletes, this means forms from the Athletic Dept. handed in **before** the absence; for serious illness or family emergency, this means a phone call to your instructor **before** class and followed up with a note from Student Health or your family doctor). However, **keep in mind that even if justified, absences do take a toll on your performance in class, and thus, on your grade.** Regarding class participation, since class will consist almost exclusively of discussion, I will expect you to come to class 1) having completed all the readings assigned for that day, and 2) with a willingness to respond thoughtfully and respectfully to the topics discussed, to your professor, and to your peers. I will be looking for quality and quantity in your contributions to class discussion. Finally, you will lose points for attendance and participation by engaging in disruptive behavior. The followings are examples of disruptive behavior: (1) arriving late to class and/or leaving early, (2) talking to classmates during lecture, (3) reading the newspaper, etc. **If you engage in any disruptive behaviors during class, you will lose points from attendance and participation at my discretion and without any warning.**

**Reading Reflections:**

You are required to keep typed reflections of the readings assigned for each day. In order to get full credit, the entries must be prefaced with the following information: your name, date, book/article, pages, and entry number. For instance, the first entry should have the following info:

Name  
5/05/08  
When I Was Puerto Rican  
Pp. 3-60  
Entry #1

Each entry should include two paragraphs: one including a summary of the readings for the day, and another paragraph including an analysis. On Fridays, when you also have journal articles assigned, you need to write and turn in two separate entries. The analysis for the entries may be theoretical, social and/or political (any personal “feelings” or “ideas” must be backed with information from the reading). **I will collect the reflections everyday in class.** At the end of each week I will grade two random entries from the week. Each entry will be worth 10 points (X 2 = 20 points a week) for a total of 120 points at the end of the semester

**Note: The reading reflections will be collected in class. If you miss class one day and I choose to grade the entries from that day, you will lose your points for that day’s reading reflection. If I do not choose the entries for that day, you will still lose 10 points for each missing entry.**

**Note 2: I will not accept late reading reflections, nor will I accept reflections brought to my office, sent over e-mail, or left in my mail box.**

**Note 3: Although I will only grade two reading reflections, I will deduct 10 points for every missing entry. That is to say, in order to get full credit on the two random entries I select to grade that week, you must turn in an entry for every reading assigned for that week. Otherwise, it is conceivable that you will end up with a negative number for the week.**

**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 your assignments after I grade them, in order to attain a higher score. The re-write must incorporate the feedback I give you when I grade them the first time. You will have the opportunity to do one re-write for each assignment. There will be a total of five assignments, and each is worth 120 points for a total of 600 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 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 (June 13) 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 200 points.

## COURSE POLICIES:

### **Academic Etiquette Policy:**

Class will begin promptly at 9:00 am. Arriving late and leaving early is not tolerable; if you have class, job, or childcare conflicts, please see me as soon as possible. Please 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. In order for us to learn from each other, we have to allow each other to make mistakes, and/or to offer unpopular positions for debate. 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.**

### **Cellular Phones and other Communication/Electronic Devices:**

Turn your cell phones and communication devices off before coming to class (that includes laptop computers—even if your computer lacks an internet connection, blackberries, and any other electronic device utilized to communicate with the world outside our classroom). Of course, iPods and other gadgets used for entertainment and fun 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. Trust me, it will be ok. 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.

### **Academic Dishonesty:**

In all instances, you must do your own work. Otherwise, you are being dishonest. There is no excuse for plagiarism, or for submitting another’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. If you do not understand the seriousness of plagiarism and 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. I will then alert the Office of Student Conduct, which may result in an academic integrity 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.

**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 Disability Resource Center (DRC). All accommodations **MUST** be approved through the DRC (Admin Annex Bldg, Room 205). Please stop by or call 509-335-3417 to make an appointment with a disability specialist.

**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 Latino/a 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 Cancún for a week 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 the last day of class: 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 her/him and miss class (and an in-class assignment): not my problem! Thus, before you raise any particular 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 (in other words, the schedule is not meant to conform to you and your circumstances). Ultimately, you need to keep in mind 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.

## SUMMER 2008 SCHEDULE

NOTE 1:	Though I will try to remain as faithful as possible to this syllabus, I reserve the right to make changes. These will be announced in advance.
NOTE 2:	This syllabus tells you the dates by which you need to have the material read and the reflection entries turned in.

MON MAY 5: Note:	<b>Introduction to the Course.</b> Read your syllabus carefully today.
TUE MAY 6: Read	<b>When I was Puerto Rican</b> “Prologue,” “Jíbara,” “Fighting Naked,” and “Someone is Coming to Take your Lap” (pp.3-60).
WED MAY 7: Read	<b>When I was Puerto Rican</b> “The American Invasion of Macún,” “Why Women Remain Jamona,” and “Mami Gets a Job” (pp. 63-130).
THU MAY 08: Read	<b>When I was Puerto Rican</b> “El Mangle,” “Letters from New York,” and “Casi Señorita” (pp. 133-185).
FRI MAY 09: Read  Read	<b>When I was Puerto Rican</b> “Dreams of a Better Life,” “Angels on the Ceiling,” “You Don’t Want to Know,” “A Shot at It,” and “Epilogue: One of these Days” (pp. 187-270). Duany’s “Nation on the Move: The Construction of Cultural Identities in Puerto Rico and the Diaspora.”
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MON MAY 12:	<b>In-class assignment #1</b>
TUE MAY 13: Read	<b>How the García Girls Lost their Accent</b> “Antojos,” “The Kiss,” “The Four Girls” and “Joe” (pp. 3-85).
WED MAY 14: Read	<b>How the García Girls Lost their Accent</b> “The Rudy Elmenhurst Story,” “A Regular Revolution,” “Daughter of Invention,” and “Trespass,” (pp. 86-165).
THU MAY 15: Read	<b>How the García Girls Lost their Accent</b> “Snow,” “Floor Show,” “The Blood of the Conquistadores,” and “The Human Body” (pp.166-238).
FRI MAY 16: Read Read	<b>How the García Girls Lost their Accent</b> “Still Lives,” “An American Surprise,” and “The Drum” (pp. 239-290). William’s “A Search for Identity in Julia Alvarez’s: How the García Girls Lost Their Accents.”

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MON	MAY 19:	<b>In-class assignment #2</b>
TUE	MAY 20:	<b>Dreaming in Cuban</b>
Read		“Ocean Blue,” “Going South,” “The House on Palmas Street,” and “Celia’s Letters: 1935-1949” (pp. 3-55).
WED	MAY 21:	<b>Dreaming in Cuban</b>
Read		“A Grove of Lemons,” “The Fire between Them,” and “The Meaning of Shells” (pp. 57-126).
THU	MAY 22:	<b>Dreaming in Cuban</b>
Read		“Enough Attitude,” “Baskets of Water,” “Celia’s Letters: 1950-155,” and “A Matrix Light” (pp. 127-181).
FRI	MAY 23:	<b>Dreaming in Cuban</b>
Read		“God’s Will,” “Daughters of Changó,” “Celia’s Letters: 1956-1958,” “Six Days in April,” and “Celia’s Letter: 1959” (pp. 183-245).
Read		Herrera’s “Women and the Revolution in Cristina García’s ‘Dreaming in Cuban.’”
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MON	MAY 26:	<b>Holiday</b>
TUE	MAY 27:	<b>In-class assignment #3</b>
WED	MAY 28:	<b>So Far from God</b>
Read		“An Account of the First Astonishing Occurrence,” “On Caridad’s Holy Restoration,” “On the Subject of Doña Felicia’s Remedios,” and “Of the Further Telling of Our Clairvoyant Caridad” (pp.19-93).
THU	MAY 29:	<b>So Far from God</b>
Read		“An Interlude,” “The Renewed Courtship of Loca’s Mom and Dad,” “Caridad Reluctantly Returns Home,” “What Appears to be a Deviation of Our Story,” “Sofía, Who would Never Again Let her Husband have the Last Word,” and “Wherein Sofía Discovers La Loca’s Playmate by the Acequia,” (pp. 94-169).
FRI	MAY 30:	<b>So Far from God</b>
Read		“The Marriage of Sofía’s Faithful Daughter to her Cousin,” “Of the Hideous Crime of Francisco el Penitente,” “The Final Farewell of Don Domingo,” “Doña Felicia Calls in the Troops,” “La Loca Santa Returns to the World,” and “Sofía Founds and Becomes the First Presidenta” (pp. 170-252).
Read		Rodriguez’s “Chicana/o Fiction from Resistance to Contestation: The Role of Creation in Ana Castillo’s So Far from God.”
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MON	JUNE 02:	<b>In-class assignment #4</b>
TUE	JUNE 03:	<b>The Infinite Plan</b>
Read		Part One (pp. 5-104).
WED	JUNE 04:	<b>The Infinite Plan</b>
Read		Part Two (pp.107-179).
THU	JUNE 05:	<b>The Infinite Plan</b>
Read		Part Three (pp. 183-276).
FRI	JUNE 06:	<b>The Infinite Plan</b>
Read		Part Four (pp. 279-382).
Read		Gough's article "Vision and Division: Voyeurism in the Works of Isabel Allende."
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MON	JUNE 09:	<b>In-class assignment #5</b>
TUE	JUNE 10:	<b>The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao</b>
Read		Chapter 1 and 2 (pp. 1-75).
WED	JUNE 11:	<b>The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao</b>
Read		Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 (pp. 77-201).
THU	JUNE 12:	<b>The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao</b>
Read		Intro to Part II and Chapter 5 (pp. 205-261).
FRI	JUNE 13:	<b>The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao</b>
Read		Chapter 6, Intro to Part III, Chapter 7, Chapter 8, and "The Final Letter" (pp. 263-335).
Read		Céspedes and Silvio Torres-Saillant's "Fiction Is the Poor Man's Cinema: An Interview with Junot Díaz."
Reminder		Final essay due today
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**KEEP TRACK OF YOUR CLASS GRADE POINTS BELOW****FINAL ESSAY (200 PTS)**

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**IN-CLASS ASSIGNMENTS (600 PTS)**

#1 \_\_\_\_\_

#2 \_\_\_\_\_

#3 \_\_\_\_\_

#4 \_\_\_\_\_

#5 \_\_\_\_\_

**Total for In-class Assignments**

\_\_\_\_\_

**READING REFLECTIONS (120 PTS)**

#1 \_\_\_\_\_ #7 \_\_\_\_\_

#2 \_\_\_\_\_ #8 \_\_\_\_\_

#3 \_\_\_\_\_ #9 \_\_\_\_\_

#4 \_\_\_\_\_ #10 \_\_\_\_\_

#5 \_\_\_\_\_ #11 \_\_\_\_\_

#6 \_\_\_\_\_ #12 \_\_\_\_\_

**Total for Reading Reflections**

\_\_\_\_\_

**ATTENDANCE (80 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