**Master Syllabus**

**Course: POR 217 Portuguese-American Literature**

**Cluster Requirement: 3A**

**Course Overview:**

What is a diaspora? How do the social, political and economic pressures of transnational migration change the way people understand both their own cultural identities and those of others? How are conventional definitions of nationhood transformed through the cultural hybridity that results from mass migration? And as we begin the 21st century, an age in which patterns of migration in the U.S. and elsewhere often exhibit characteristic quite often distinct from those of the last turn of the century, is it still possible or worthwhile to speak of a Portuguese-American culture, both for now and for the future? And if so, how?

Through readings, screenings, class discussion and activities, and individual research, students will construct their own understanding of Portuguese-American culture with the broader context of 19th and 20th-century history, examining how Americans of Portuguese descent are represented in mainstream culture, and how literature, cinema and other creative works by and about Portuguese-Americans address the complex issues of community life, inter-ethnic relations, gender roles and racial stereotyping that have often characterized their experience in the United States.

This introductory course aims to develop practical academic skills in close reading, class discussion, basic research methodology and academic writing. It presents materials from the four major population centers of Portuguese-American culture: New England, New York/New Jersey, California, and Hawai’i. Coursework will consist of readings, class discussions, and most importantly, writing assignments that emphasize the development of skills both in intercultural communication and in original, critical thinking, and will be supplemented by research at the Ferreira-Mendes Portuguese-American Archives on the UMass Dartmouth main campus. Additional class assignments at the end of the semester will encourage students to consider Portuguese-American culture within a broader context of other Lusophone communities in the U.S. (e.g., Brazilian, Cape Verdean). Optional class activities may also include a field trip to a Portuguese neighborhood, a day trip to sites of cultural importance on Martha’s Vineyard, or a class dinner at a Portuguese restaurant, depending on student interest.

**Learning Outcomes:**

Course-Specific Learning Outcomes:

*By the end of the course students will be able to:*

1. demonstrate critical understanding of basic concepts of literary and cultural analysis applicable to Portuguese-American texts and other cultural products;

2. identify and describe a range of elements of Portuguese-American culture as depicted in literary works, cinema, music and visual objects;

3. apply in practical instances of interpretation the textual understanding and insights pertinent to literary and cultural studies, and discuss this interpretation effectively in writing (i.e., in college-level academic English);

4. relate forms, themes, and meanings of Portuguese-Amereican literature to culturally and historically situated forms of human and social experience;

5. convey their understanding of course content in a clear and effective manner through both oral and written communication.

University Studies Learning Outcomes (Cluster 3A):

*After completing this course, students will be able to:*

1. articulate how literature (fiction, poetry, drama and literary nonfiction) both reflects and helps shape culture, society and history;

2. explain how a text’s literary form, style and content express its meanings using appropriate disciplinary terminology;

3. evaluate the rhetorical and contextual elements of ideas presented by literary texts and respond to them critically and analytically;

4. explain the ways in which literature expresses the values that humans attach to their experiences.

**POR 217 Rationale Statement**

This course offers an introductory critical overview of major works of Portuguese-American literature that aims to impart a degree of cultural literacy about US literature by authors of Portuguese descent. The course content consists of representative literary readings drawn from different periods, which are examined critically in their respective social and cultural contexts. It thereby aligns with Outcome 1 of the University Studies cluster 3A, in that it seeks to “articulate how literature (fiction, poetry, drama and literary nonfiction) both reflects and helps shape culture, society and history.” For example, students reading a novel such as *Charles Reis Felix’s novel Through a Portagee Gate* will examine the author’s depiction of Portuguese-American life, while at the same time comparing his representation of cultural elements to those of the present day. Viewing the text through the prism of such broadly contextual perspectives will be predicated, however, on in-depth textual exploration, thus enabling precise and focused understanding of “how the text’s literary form, style and content express its meanings” (Outcome 2). In order to promote such understanding, “appropriate disciplinary terminology” (Outcome 2) will be introduced; for example, students may discuss how the feminist concept of “women’s writing” applies to the work of Portuguese-American author Katherine Vaz or poet Jarita Davis. The above-described directions of contextualizing (Outcome 1) and formal (Outcome 2) analysis will be accompanied by an ethical/political reflection on “the ways in which literature expresses the values that humans attach to their experiences” (Outcome 4). Thus, for example, an analysis of the work of contemporary poet Frank X. Gaspar may be read as a subtle philosophical inquiry into the effectively gendered nature of human values held to be universal Western cultural tradition.

Through targeted course assignments, students will learn to “evaluate the rhetorical and contextual elements of ideas presented by literary texts and respond to them critically and analytically” (Outcome 3). In order to achieve such actively constructive approach to literary readings, assignments are based on the principle of engaged learning, which requires students to make informed connections and hypothesize critically about the meanings embedded in literary texts instead of passively absorbing and reproducing the information conveyed by the instructor. For instance, the lists of questions addressing key points of the week’s readings (which the students answer individually in writing and which also provide the springboard for classroom discussion) offer varied opportunities for such critical engagement with course material. The longer written assignments (take-home exams and essays) incorporate all of Cluster 3A outcomes, in that they require incorporating formal (rhetorical) and contextualizing (sociocultural and historical) elements of analysis in an extended, multi-paragraph format that calls for formulating and sustaining a logically developed argument based on an autonomous understanding of the literary texts explored in the course.

**Examples of Texts and/or Assigned Readings**

#### Required Readings and Viewings

Dos Passos, John. Selections from *The Portugal Story* and other short texts on Portuguese history.

Miguéís, José Rodrigues. *Steerage and Ten Other Stories.*

Lewis, Arthur. *Sixty Acres and a Barn.*

Gaspar, Frank X. *Leaving Pico.* Poems from the following collections: *The Holyoke. A Field Guide to the Heavens. Night of a Thousand Blossoms. Late Rapturous.*

Felix, Charles Reis. *Through a Portagee Gate.*

Vaz, Katherine*. Fado and Other Stories. Saudade.*

Petrie, Donald, dir. *Mystic Pizza.*

Carminati, Roberto, dir. *A fronteira.*

Feldman-Bianco, Bela, dir. *Saudade.*

Andrade-Watkins, Claire, dir. *‘Some Kind of Funny Porto Rican?’*

Davis, Jarita. *Return Flights.*

**Supplementary/Recommended Readings**

Almeida, Onésimo. “Two Decades of Luso-American Literature: An Overview.” *Global*

*Impact of the Portuguese Language*. Ed. Asela Rodriguez de Laguna. New

Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2001. 231-54.

**---.** “A Profile of the Azorean.” *Issues in Portuguese Bilingual Education*. Ed. Donaldo Macedo. Cambridge, MA: National Assessment and Dissemination Center for Bilingual/Bicultural Education, 1980. 113-64.

McCabe, Marsha L. and Joseph D. Thomas, eds. *Portuguese Spinner: An American*

*Story*. New Bedford, MA: Spinner Publications, 1998.

Moniz, Miguel. “Introduction.” *Azores*. World Bibliographical Series. Vol. 221. Oxford, England: Clio Press, 1999. xxiii-xl. (Photocopies)

Pap, Leo. “Portuguese-American Literature.” *Ethnic Perspectives in American*

*Literature*.” Eds. Robert J. Di Pietro and Edward Ifkovic. New York: The Modern

Language Association of America, 1983. 183-96.

Sollors, Werner. “Ethnicity.” *Critical Terms for Literary Study*. Eds. Frank Lentricchia

and Thomas McLaughlin. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990. 288-305.

Williams, Jerry. *In Pursuit of Their Dreams: A History of Azorean Immigration to the United States.* Dartmouth, Mass.: Center for Portuguese Studies and Culture, 2005. (2nd ed.)

**Example Assignments**

*Questions on Current Readings*: Each student will be required to respond in writing to a set number of weekly discussion questions based on current readings. These assignments will be posted on the course’s online learning platform (if the course is taught in a web-enhanced or blended format) or distributed in class and/or by email. They will be graded on a scale determined by the individual instructor; the sample grading rubric below assumes that each completed assignment can earn from 1 to 10 points. [Addresses Learning Outcomes #2 and #3 from Cluster 3A.]

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 0 points | 1-6 points | 7-8 points | 9-10 points |
| Assignment not turned in. | |  | | --- | | Assignment completed with minimal effort; some points not addressed at all, others addressed superficially. Does not demonstrate basic-level understanding of the text. Appropriate disciplinary terminology (if required) not used or applied haphazardly. Writing abounds in errors, lacks coherence, and is difficult to follow. | | Assignment addresses most or all points, but in little depth. Basic-level understanding of the text evidenced. Some use of appropriate terminology present. Writing mostly error-free in spelling and syntax, but expression poorly developed (some lack of clarity and/or coherence). Overall satisfactory but could be strengthened with greater effort. | Assignment addresses most or all points with well-developed and insightful analysis. Writing is nearly or completely error-free, fully comprehensible, and stylistically elaborate. Appropriate terminology is used. Ideas are presented clearly and their expression is logically developed and connected. |

*Critical Essays*. Students will write two or three (depending on instructor) short papers in the course of the semester. The papers will discuss one or more literary texts studied in the course from a focused perspective, which will incorporate a combination of rhetorical/formal and contextual approaches, although any given individual paper may be predominantly formal or predominantly contextual in its direction. [Addresses Learning Outcomes #1-4 from Cluster 3A.]

*Exams*. Students’ learning will be tested in this course, with the precise number, format and timing of the tests to be determined by individual instructors. Testing assessment instruments may include short (unannounced) quizzes, non-cumulative tests given during the semesters (e.g., a midterm), and a cumulative final exam. Tests will typically require short-paragraph answers, but may incorporate other assessment techniques, such as multiple-choice questions or essays. Regardless of their precise number and format, overall the tests given in the course will require students to demonstrate their ability to interpret literary texts from the multiple perspectives described above in the POR 217 Course Rationale Statement and summarized in the list of Cluster 3A Learning Outcomes. [Addresses Learning Outcomes #1-4 from Cluster 3A.]

*Course Artifacts for Assessment*:

1. Discussion Questions

2. Critical Essays

3. Exams

**Sample Course Outline**

Week 1:

Introduction to Portuguese-American literature. Reading and analysis of selections from the work of John dos Passos’ *The Portugal Story* to prepare for the discussion: Who qualifies as a Portuguese-American author? What does it mean to write ‘Portuguese-American’ literature?

Week 2:

Monday-Friday: Finish *The Portugal Story.* Examination of Portuguese history of exploration, discovery and overseas colonization as a point of departure for later narratives of immigration and integration.

Week 3:

Miguéis, *Steerage and Other Stories* (selections). Mon.: “Foreword,” “Steerage.” Wed.: “Miguéis on Miguéis,” “A Portuguese Home,” “Cosme.” The Azores and traditional testimonies of immigration. The Salazar Regime or Estado Novo (1932-1974), political opposition and exile, and their effect on later waves of Portuguese immigration to the U.S. Friday: Begin reading and discussion of Lewis’ *Sixty Acres and a Barn.*

Week 4:

Mon., Wed. and Fri. Finish reading and discussion of Lewis’ *Sixty Acres and a Barn.*

Week 5:

Monday: Visit to the Ferreira-Mendes Portuguese-American Archives in preparation for papers over the course of the semester. Meet in the library lobby.

Wednesday: First paper due at the beginning of class on one of the following topics (or an original topic subject to the professor’s approval):

1. examine Dos Passos’ depiction of Portuguese history, examining the possible relationship to his own and a more general conception of Portuguese-American ethnic identity;
2. discuss the critical tone in Miguéis’ short stories (perhaps even in connection to his own political exile, life in New York, or opposition to the Salazar regime);
3. consider Lewis’ *Sixty Acres and a Barn* against a broader backdrop of Portuguese-American traditions, immigrant fantasies and traditions.

Wed.- Fri. Reading and discussion of Frank Gaspar’s *Leaving Pico*, Chaps. 1-3, 4-6.

Week 6: (no classes on Columbus Day, Tuesday follows Monday schedule).

Tues.-Fri.: *Leaving Pico*, Chapters 7-10, 11-14, 15-18.

Week 7:

Monday: Review for midterm exam through discussion of course materials.

Wednesday: Midterm exam on the readings, key terms and main ideas presented in the first half of the course.

Friday: Poems from Gaspar’s *The Holyoke.*

Week 8:

Mon.: Gaspar’s *The Holyoke.*

Wednesday. Second paper due on one of the following topics (or an original topic subject to the professor’s approval):

1. depictions of immigrant identity, community, family life and/or traditions in *Leaving Pico*;
2. tension between ethnic identity and other artistic concerns (e.g., fascination with other cultures, life in the present moment, stylistic, aesthetic or ‘transcendental’ questions) in Gaspar’s poetry.

Wed.-Fri.: Begin reading and discussion of Charles Reis Felix, *Through a Portagee Gate.*

Week 9:

Readings: Fri.: Begin reading and discussion of Charles Reis Felix, *Through a Portagee Gate.* (read up to page 58 for discussion on Friday).

Week 10:

**Mon.,Wed., Fri.** Charles Reis Felix, *Through a Portagee Gate*. Topics: family biography, work culture, education, interethnic relations and the possibilities for social mobility in the U.S. (read to page 125 for Mon., p. 191 for Wed., p. 257 for Fri.)

Week 11:

Wednesday: Second paper due. A few suggested topics:

1. memory of the family in the novel by Charles Reis Felix;
2. the role of art, music and/or nature in the construction of reality in Vaz’s short stories;
3. depictions of immigrant identity, community, family life and/or traditions in *Leaving Pico*;
4. tension between ethnic identity and other artistic concerns (e.g., fascination with other cultures, life in the present moment, stylistic, aesthetic or ‘transcendental’ questions) in Gaspar’s poetry.

Wed. Discuss final presentations.

Fri.: Continue reading and discussion of *Through a Portagee Gate* (Read to p. 347 by Fri.)

Week 12:

Mon. and Wed.: Finish *Through a Portagee Gate* (read to p. 420 by Mon. and the end of the book by Wed.)

Week 13:

“Portuguese America Goes To Hollywood”: Viewing and discussion of the films *Mystic Pizza* and *Passionada*  in the context of other Hollywood representations of Portuguese-Americans. Finish video presentations.

Week 14:

Mon.-Wed.: Cape Verdeans in the U. S.: discussion on the formation of race, ethnicity and citizenship. Discussion of the film *‘Some Kind of Funny Porto Rican?’* Friday: Review for Final Exam; turn in final paper on one of the following topics (or an original topic, subject to the professor’s approval):

1. the reconstruction of 20th-century American history within a framework of immigrant memory in the works of Charles Reis Felix;
2. the role of art, music and nature in the construction of reality in Vaz’ *Saudade* (and/or her short storie*s*);
3. mainstream representations of Portuguese-American culture in the films *Mystic Pizza* and *Passionada*;
4. the possibilities of a hybrid Lusophone-American identity and/or alternative models of transnational citizenship through a discussion of the films *A fronteira, Saudade* and/or *Some Kind of Funny Porto Rican?*

**Exam week: Final exam** on the readings, main concepts, and other information presented in the course (TBA).