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Course Proposal for Honors Composition II: Mexican Writers

Course Description

This is a composition course that will improve students' overall critical analysis and academic writing skills by developing their skills in literary analysis. This particular course is part of a National Endowment for the Arts program called "The Big Read." Austin Community College is sponsoring the program here in Austin. The text that everyone nationwide is reading is called: *Sun, Stone and Shadows: 20 Great Mexican Short Stories*. As the publisher describes, "This anthology presents a collection of twenty stories of extraordinary quality, written by the finest Mexican authors born during the first half of the twentieth century. Through these pages, readers will tour the real and the unreal, the faithfully rendered and the fantastic, as well as the tangible past of Mexican history. They will also travel between urban reflections on everyday life and intimate inventions that set Mexico apart from other landscapes, other cultures, and other literatures."

Thus, this course is designed to help students develop awareness and respect for Mexican literature and experience by taking into consideration the cultural, political and historical contexts of the stories in the book. This broader approach to literary analysis will make these Mexican short stories more intriguing for students to discuss and analyze, while also developing students' research skills.

In each of these works of short fiction, students will identify and analyze seven specific elements of literature: central idea, character, conflict, point of view, setting, language, and tone. In their writing, students will present their analysis with a clear thesis, supporting evidence, and solid conclusions. In two of their four papers, students will conduct research, effectively employ sources in their analysis, and document those sources using the MLA style. The end result of this course is that students will develop their critical reading and analytical skills, produce a clean, efficient style of writing, and edit their own and others' writing.

Class Activities and Assignments

Class assignments and activities are designed to enhance students' education and develop their skills in research, critical analysis, academic writing, collaborative work, and oral presentations.

Students will conduct two research projects. One will be an individual research paper and the other will be a collaborative production. In both cases students will research the biographical, historical, and literary contexts of authors. In the collaborative research project, small groups will present their research to the class and guide the class through a literary analysis of the texts. Students will be encouraged to conduct their research of primary source material at various collections in Austin that specialize in Mexican studies.

Class activities will include an opportunity to tour the Mexic-Arte Museum in Austin. Students will also be encouraged to attend and volunteer at activities sponsored by the ACC Latino/Latin

American Studies Center. Students will also have opportunities to attend activities sponsored by the Center for Mexican-American Studies at the University of Texas.

Assignments

Daily assigned readings
Four papers
Reading responses and quizzes
Class presentations

Grading

Reading responses and quizzes (20%)
Two Analytical Papers (30%).
Group Presentation, which includes a 4-6 page researched paper from each student (30%).
Individual Final Project and Presentation, which includes a 4-5 page analytical paper (20%).

Required Texts

Sun, Stone, and Shadows: 20 Great Mexican Short Stories, edited by Jorge Hernández
Drink Cultura: Chicanismo, by José Antonio Burciaga

Distinguishing Characteristics of This as an Honors Course

This Honors Composition II course involves inquiry, open discussion, and critical analysis that includes integrity in research, sound reasoning, the confident expression of ideas in both oral and written form, and revision in response to criticism and new discoveries. Students who are willing to participate in the writing process as readers, writers, and thinkers, can expect to improve their analytical and academic writing skills. These skills will prepare students not only for upper-division English courses, but also other college courses that demand critical thinking and the written and oral expression of it.

In addition to the research and application of biographical, historical, and literary contexts to the literary analysis of the stories that they read, students will apply various other analytical approaches to the texts including cultural, mythological, psychological, feminist, and reader-response.