
ENG 133-1 | AMERICAN WRITERS: SPECIAL TOPICS | FALL 2026
U.S. LATINO/A LITERATURE

PROFESSOR JONATHAN DIAZ
CLASS MEETINGS: T-Th 1:15–3:05PM, REYNOLDS HALL 209
OFFICE: REYNOLDS HALL 105
EMAIL: JODIAZ@WESTMONT.EDU
OFFICE HOURS: M 1PM–3PM; T 11AM–12PM; TH 1–3PM
DATE OF FINAL EXAM: W 04/30, 3:00PM–5:00PM

We have hurled—like starlings, like Goths—through the castle of European memory.

—Richard Rodriguez, from *Days of Obligation*

i cannot hide from this man or the sag of his body. they say he is a god,
but I keep asking, “what keeps a god nailed to sticks?”

—Andrés Montoya, from *the iceworker sings*

When we say we are reading Latino/a literature, what group of books are we referring to? And does that body of literature change if we refer to it as Latine, Latinx, or Hispanic? Already, the name we use to refer to the peoples and cultures of Latin America and its diaspora raises fraught questions of race, language, and identity. This course will explore literature written by authors of Latin American heritage residing within the United States. Starting with writers of the Chicano movement of the 60’s and 70’s all the way to Afro-Latine poetry of the last several years, we will engage with authors such as Gloria Anzaldúa, Andrés Montoya, Julia Alvarez, John Murillo, and many others. By the end of this course, you will not only gain a working knowledge of the major figures and movements of Latine literary culture, you will be able to discuss the use of poetry and prose to engage vital questions of language, justice, race, and identity. We will examine how U.S. Latinos have written about their experiences of race and racism in light of God’s desire for “justice and reconciliation for every kind of person.”¹

Commented [JD1]: Criterion 2; SLO 1

Commented [JD2]: Criterion 1; SLO 2

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, you will not only be conversant in the major genres, movements, and themes of U.S. Latino/a literature: you will be able to form cogent and insightful arguments about this body of work and its connection to Biblical and Theological concepts of Justice, Reconciliation, and Diversity. Your writing and speech about these topics will exemplify Christian charity, rhetorical sensitivity, and intellectual precision.

Commented [JD3]: Criterion 2; SLO 1

Commented [JD4]: Criterion 2, 3; SLO 1

All of our activity, such as reading, lectures, and discussion, will help you to meet these outcomes. Your success in doing so will be evaluated by the use of short and long written assignments, reading evaluations, participation scores, and exams.²

REQUIRED MATERIALS

- *ENG 133JRD Coursepack*
- *Latino Poetry: The Library of America Anthology*. Ed. Rigoberto González. ISBN: 978-1-59853-783-3

¹ Westmont GE Combined Document, Page 19

² More precise definitions of course goals, divided into institutional categories, can be found in Appendix A. Assignments below are labeled by corresponding categories in Appendix A.

- Rudolfo Anaya, *Bless Me, Ultima*. ISBN: 978-0-446-60025-5
- Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. ISBN: 978-1-951874-02-5
- Andres Montoya, *the iceworker sings and other poems*. ISBN: 9780927534864
- Héctor Tobar, *The Tattooed Soldier*. ISBN: 978-1-250-05585-9
- Julia Alvarez, *Afterlife*. ISBN: 9781643750255
- Paper for annotations and notes; writing implement.

ASSIGNMENTS

- **Participation (10%)**

The benefit of our class sessions comes, not only from presence in the classroom, but from active engagement in class discussion, lectures, and exercises. In order to succeed in this class, you will be expected to complete assigned readings, take notes on the readings and on class lectures, bring physical copies of your texts to class, and join in on discussions. It is essential to success in this portion of the class that you approach our classroom conversations with respect and good faith efforts to learn from a diverse array of experiences. You will be assigned a daily participation score of between one and five points.

Commented [JD5]: Criterion 1, 2; SLO 1, 2

Commented [JD6]: Criterion 3; SLO 1, 2

(GELO 1; ILO 1, 2; PLO 1, 2)

- **Reading Evaluation: Annotations (10%)**

You will be required to bring a brief written annotation to every class session; an annotation should be handwritten and submitted physically. Each annotation should provide:

1. A quotation (with page number) from the assigned reading
2. A brief note on why the quotation was important to you
3. Several (2-3) questions about your quotation or the reading.

Commented [JD7]: Criterion 3; SLO 1, 2

(GELO 1, 2; ILO 1, 2, 3; PLO 1, 2)

- **Essays: 50%**

There will be four essays on the literature and themes we explore in this class. The first will be a **Close Reading Essay** (minimum 3 pages, 5% of the course grade), in which you offer observations and interpretations of a selected passage from our readings. The second will be a **Biblical and Theological Application Essay**, in which you use literary readings from the semester as example of principles from our Biblical and Theological readings by Crespo, Chao Romero, and Elizondo (minimum 4 pages, 12% of the course grade). The **Term Paper** (Minimum 6 pages, 25% of the course grade) will be a thesis-driven literary analysis essay, in which you offer an original argument about one or more of our texts. Your thesis will, in some way, respond to the question: "how does this text help or hinder people from living out God's vision for justice, reconciliation, and diversity?" The **Reflection Essay** (Minimum 3 pages, 8% of the course grade) will offer an opportunity to reflect on your experience of the course and how it impacted your personal attitudes and beliefs on issues of Biblical justice. For the Biblical and Theological Application Essay and the Term Paper, you will be required to submit process work in advance of the final submission: a proposal, outline, first draft, etc.

Commented [JD8]: Criterion 1; SLO 1

Commented [JD9]: Criterion 1, 2, 3; SLO 1, 2

Commented [JD10]: Criterion 1, 2, 3; SLO 2

(GELO 1, 2, 3; ILO 1, 2, 3; PLO 1, 2, 3)

- **Exams (25%)**

We will have two major exams in this class: a midterm and a final. These will be one-on-one oral exams with Professor Diaz. With the assistance of your texts, essay drafts, and annotations, you will carry on a brief, class-style discussion on a topic relevant to various texts from our semester. Successful students will demonstrate familiarity and facility and facility with navigating assigned readings from the semester, insightful analysis of course themes, and an ability to construct an argument from textual evidence.

Commented [JD11]: Criterion 1, 2, 3; SLO 1, 2

Commented [JD12]: Criterion 2

Commented [JD13]: Criterion 1, 3; SLO 1

(GELO 1, 2; ILO 1, 2; PLO 1, 2)

GRADING

A	93-100	A-	90-92	B+	87-89
B	83-86	B-	80-82	C+	77-79
C	73-76	C-	70-72	D	60-69

To earn an A or B in this class, you will need to demonstrate superior effort and produce writing that exceeds the minimum requirements. The grade of A is reserved for excellent work. Excellent work does not equate to showing up every day, participating occasionally, and turning in completed drafts on time. Those are the average requirements of any class setting, and average equates to a C.

COURSE POLICIES

- **Attendance**

Consistent attendance is crucial for success in this course. I expect you to attend class when able. In case of emergency, illness, or official school activities, please contact me via email in order to have the absence excused. In addition, you may use one week's worth of "freebie" absences (in this case, two absences) for any reason whatsoever without penalty. In normal circumstances, no more than two weeks' worth of absences (four absences) will be excused. After these have been used, each absence will result in a reduction of your participation grade (one percent out of the total ten). Two weeks' worth of *unexcused* absences (four unexcused absences) will result in a report to the registrar and possible removal from the course.

- **Technology and Distractions**

Our class will function as a no-technology zone. Students are not generally to use laptops or tablets in class, with the exception of students with documented accommodations from ARO. On select class days, I will notify you in advance when devices will be used for in-class writing or digital readings. Headphones should not be in your ears while in class. You may not work on homework for other classes or sleep during this class.

Cell phones are not to be used in the space of our classroom. You should free to leave the room if you need to briefly check a message or take a call.

- **Late Work**

Annotations, process work for the essay, and the essay itself are eligible for extensions on a case-by-case basis. A good rule of thumb to remember is that I am more likely to grant extensions if you have not asked for one before and if the extension is shorter. Major assignments, such as the essay, will lose up to a letter grade for each day they are late. All extensions must be requested by email before the assignment due date in order to be considered.

- **Academic Integrity**

When students join our college community, they are expected, as apprentice scholars, to search for truth with integrity and accuracy. This quest requires humility about our abilities, respect for the ideas of others, and originality in our thinking. Since Westmont is a Christian community, the integrity of our scholarship is rooted in the integrity of our faith. We seek to be followers of Christ in the classroom, in the library, and at the privacy of our computers. Violations of academic integrity are a serious breach of trust within the Westmont community because they violate the regard for truth essential to genuine learning and Christian consistency. Such deception also hurts those students who do their work with integrity. Violations of Academic Integrity may consist of cheating (the use of unauthorized sources of information on an examination or other assignment), falsification (misrepresentation of facts in any academic project or obligation) or plagiarism (the use of someone else's words or ideas without giving proper credit). Faculty and students should operate in an environment of mutual trust and respect. Faculty will expect students to act in ways consistent with academic integrity. However, for both scholarly and spiritual reasons, cheating, falsification, plagiarism and all other violations of academic integrity will not be tolerated in the Westmont community.

Please familiarize yourself with the entire Westmont College Academic Integrity Policy. This document defines different violations of academic integrity and their consequences. It also contains very helpful information on strategies to recognize violations of academic integrity before they occur.

- **Generative Use of Large Language Models, Frequently and Erroneously Called “Artificial Intelligence”**

Reading and writing are human activities: only writing produced by humans will be accepted in this course. All assignments should be your original work and should not be produced in part or in total with the assistance of artificial intelligence (for example, ChatGPT, Grammarly, or some other resource). Any use of artificial intelligence—including “brainstorming” or “outlining”—constitutes a violation of this course's policy and is cause for failure of the assignment in question. Repeated violation of this policy is cause for a failing grade in the course.

- **Honor and Respect**

Westmont's Community Life Statement calls us to treat each other according to two commands from Jesus: "Love one another as I have loved you," and "Love your neighbor as yourself." Further, our *Diversity Matters* document indicates that as we abide by these commandments, we learn to honor and respect one another. In this class, we will embody these commitments as we interact with one another and with the class material. These commitments, while always important, acquire special relevance as our class takes up especially fraught subject matter about race, racism, and injustice. If you experience or witness something that does not honor these commitments, please talk with the instructor as soon as possible. Please review the following webpage <https://my.westmont.edu/s/classroom-honor-respect>. You may also find it helpful to access the College's policy on Bias, Harassment, and Discrimination.

- **Accessibility and Accommodations**

Westmont is committed to ensuring equal access to academic courses and college programs. In keeping with this commitment under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008, individuals with diagnoses that impact major life activities are protected from discrimination and are

entitled to reasonable accommodations. Students who choose to disclose a disability are encouraged to contact the Accessibility Resource Office (ARO) as early as possible in the semester to discuss potential accommodations for this course. Accommodations are designed to ensure equal access to programs for all students who have a disability that impacts their participation in college activities. Email aro@westmont.edu or see westmont.edu/accessibility-resources for more information.

- **Library**

Westmont librarians are available to advise and consult with you on your research assignments. You can drop by the Research Help Desk or schedule an appointment with a librarian assigned to your course. To identify a specific librarian and find subject-specific resources, consult Voskuyl Library's Research Guides or email askalibrarian@westmont.edu

- **Counseling and Psychological Services**

CAPS is available to support students with access to safe, free, and confidential access to professional counseling services. If you find yourself facing issues like anxiety, depression, addiction, or any other crisis, please reach out to CAPS. They are located on lower campus in the same building as the health center (near Armington Hall) and can be reached at (805) 565-6003 or at caps@westmont.edu. You can also schedule an appointment on their website: westmont.edu/counseling-and-psychological-services

- **Turnitin**

Westmont subscribes to turnitin.com, a web-based plagiarism prevention service to which papers are submitted and compared to resources in the database, with the results of the comparison (including hyperlinks to web pages or other papers with the same text) sent to me. I use turnitin.com as a tool to hold us both accountable.

Please be aware of the following: You agree that by taking a course, all required papers, exams, class projects or other assignments submitted for credit may be submitted to turnitin.com or similar third parties to review and evaluate for originality and intellectual integrity. A description of the services, terms and conditions of use, and privacy policy of [turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com) is available at <http://www.turnitin.com>. Please understand that all work submitted to turnitin.com will be added to its database of papers. Further understand that if the results of such a review support an allegation of academic dishonesty, the course work in question as well as any supporting materials may be submitted to the Honor Council for investigation and further action.

- **Writers' Corner**

Westmont's writing center, is a creative space where student writers can find friendly "test readers" as they develop projects for professors, employers, and others. Peer tutors coach and collaborate with students as they mature into more skillful and confident writers. **Come visit us in Voskuyl Library 215 or request an online tutorial.** Clients with appointments are given first priority; drop-in clients are also welcome. All tutorials are free of charge. **Make an appointment here:** <https://westmont.mywconline.com/>

- **Guidance**

I am ready, willing, and able to help you with your questions and concerns regarding the course. If you struggle to understand something or find yourself falling behind or feeling overwhelmed, please talk to me as these occasions occur instead of waiting until the end of the semester.

The best way to reach me is by email. I check my inbox frequently, but I will not be able to guarantee a response if you email me after 5 p.m. or over the weekend. I also encourage you to visit me during my office hours. I see my office as an extension of our classroom, and I am eager to guide you in your academic pursuits. Come to office hours with questions about class discussions, writing techniques or strategies, writing projects you're working on, ideas you wish to develop, and so on. During my open office hours, you may stop in my office whenever you like. I am also happy to schedule another time to meet if my office hours conflict with your schedule.

Course Readings & Tentative Schedule

Date	Topic/Reading	Due
T	Introduction; Westmont <i>Biblical and Theological Foundations of Diversity Statement</i> (Coursepack)	
Th	LP: "The Ballad of Gregorio Cortez" (85–91); Américo Paredes (179–180); Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzalez (181–193)	Annotation 1
T	Rodolfo Anaya, <i>Bless Me, Ultima</i> (1-82)	Annotation 2
Th	Rodolfo Anaya, <i>Bless Me, Ultima</i> (83-176)	Annotation 3
T	Rodolfo Anaya, <i>Bless Me, Ultima</i> (177-262)	Annotation 4
Th	Orlando Creso, From <i>Being Latino in Christ</i> (Coursepack).	Annotation 5, Close Reading Essay
T	LP: Rhina P. Espaillat (200); Jack Agüeros (203-204); Francisco X. Alarcon (216–219); Julia Alvarez (227–228)	Annotation 6
Th	Gloria Anzaldúa, from <i>Borderlands/La Frontera</i> (Coursepack, Reading 1)	Annotation 7
M	Virgilio Elizondo, from <i>Galilean Journey</i> (Coursepack)	Annotation 8
W	LP: Ana Castillo (237–238); Lorna Dee Cervantes (239-247); Sandra Cisneros (248–253)	Annotation 9
M	Robert Chao Romero, from <i>Brown Church</i> (Coursepack).	Annotation 10
W	Andrés Montoya, <i>The Iceworker Sings</i> (1–39)	Annotation 12, Biblical and Theological Application Essay
M	No Class (Holiday)	
W	Andrés Montoya, <i>The Iceworker Sings</i> (41–79)	Annotation 13
M		Annotation 14; Term Paper Proposal

W	Midterm Oral Exam (Appointments Available)	
M.	<i>LP:</i> Martín Espada (261–265); Juan Felipe Herrera (279–283); Orlando Ricardo Menes (295– 296); Pat Mora (297–301)	Annotation 15
W.	<i>LP:</i> Gary Soto (342–345); Luis Alberto Urrea (349–352); Richard Blanco (367–368); Aracelis Girmay (391–394).	Annotation 16
Mar.	Break	
M	Tattooed Soldier (3–82)	Annotation 17
W	Tattooed Soldier (85–153)	Annotation 18, Term Paper First Draft
M	Revision Workshop	Annotation 19
W	Tattooed Soldier (157–312)	Annotation 20
M	<i>LP:</i> John Murillo (426–427); Ire'ne Lara Silva (440–441); Natasha Carrizosa (463–465); Marcelo Hernandez Castillo (466–467)	Annotation 21
W	<i>LP:</i> Maya Chinchilla (470–471); Eduardo C. Corral (474–475); Natalie Diaz (480–483), Laurie Ann Guerrero (493)	Annotation 22
M	<i>LP:</i> Darrel Alejandro Holnes (497); Antonio de Jesús López (499–500); David Thomas Martinez (502); Yesenia Montilla (507–508); Alan Pelaez Lopez (514).	Term Paper Final Draft
W	Afterlife (1–78)	Annotation 23
M.	Afterlife (78–141)	Annotation 24
W	Afterlife (142–256)	Annotation 25
M	Dana Gioia (Coursepack)	
W	<i>LP:</i> Gabriel Ramirez (518–519); Julian Randall (520); C.T. Salazar (532–533); Jacob Shores Argüello (536); Brandon Som (537); Ada Limón (404–407).	Annotation 26
Finals Week	Final Oral Exam (Appointments Available)	Reflection Essay Final Draft

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Appendix A: Course Objectives by Category

- GENERAL EDUCATION LEARNING OUTCOMES (GELO)
 1. Students will be able to communicate in written form for a variety of purposes and audiences across the curriculum.
 2. Students will analyze issues of justice and injustice involving race and racism in the United States in biblically and theologically grounded ways.
 3. Students will identify Christian responsibilities to pursue justice and reconciliation in diverse relationships, practices, and structures according to the character of God's loving reign expressed in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.

- INSTITUTIONAL LEARNING OUTCOMES (ILO)
 1. Diversity: This course will contribute to forming graduates who are able to effectively analyze topics and human experiences using categories such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, socio-economic status, and disability with respect to a biblical vision of human flourishing.
 2. Critical Thinking: This course will contribute to forming graduates who are able to demonstrate sound judgment and creative thinking when evaluating the strength of evidence in support of a claim.
 3. Competence in Written Communication: This course will contribute to forming graduates who are able to write effectively in various contexts.

- PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES (PLO)
 1. Thinking Critically: Students will be able to demonstrate critical discernment in their examination of literary texts in ways that expand their affections and sympathies— by assessing their own cultural and theological assumptions, engaging in research, and evaluating evidence.
 2. Reading Carefully: Students will be able to read literary texts carefully, analyzing both the contexts and techniques (e.g., literary devices and genre characteristics) that shape their meaning.
 3. Writing with Rhetorical Sensitivity: Students will engage various audiences in writing with sensitivity to rhetorical situations and scholarly standards.