

Literature and Civilizations II, Honors [Theme: Finding Home]



Course Information

Course prefix, Number, and section number: ENGL 20923.665

Course Title: Literature and Civilizations II (Honors)

Semester and year: Fall 2025

Number of credits: 3

Course component type: lecture [LEC]; No prerequisites; concurrent enrollment n/a

Class location: SCHAR 1007

Class meeting days and times: Tues/Thurs 15:30-16:50 (3:30 p.m. to 4:50 p.m.)

Instructor's name: Sarah Ruffing Robbins

Websites: <https://sarahruffingrobbins.wordpress.com/> and https://addran.tcu.edu/faculty_staff/sarah-ruffing-robbins/

Office location: Reed 118

Office hours: Tuesdays 5:00 p.m. -6:00 p.m. in Reed office; Wednesdays 4:00-5:00 p.m. via Zoom [here](#); additional times available by appointment: Send email to request time.

Preferred method of contact: email E-mail: s.robbins@tcu.edu

Response time: generally 24 hours except on weekends and during TCU official breaks

(Please allow until Sunday evening for emails sent on a Friday during regular sessions. I check email irregularly during official TCU holiday times.)

Final evaluative exercise day and time: October 10th, 2:00-4:30 [Turn in digitally.]

Final evaluative exercise description (see directions on D2L: Individual project submitted via D2L)

Note for students: The syllabus is your first course reading. It provides an orientation to, overview of the flow, and expectations of the course. You should turn to the syllabus for details on assignments and course policies.

Student Resources & Policy Information: Click or scan QR code for resources to support you as a TCU student. Please note section on [Student Access and Accommodation](#), [Academic Conduct & Course Materials Policies](#), and [Emergency Response & TCU Alert](#).



Land Acknowledgement

TCU acknowledges the many benefits, responsibilities, and relationships of being in this place, which we share with all living beings. We respectfully acknowledge all Native American peoples who have lived on this land since time immemorial. TCU especially acknowledges and pays respect to the Wichita and Affiliated Tribes, upon whose historical homeland our university is located. [Please

Course Description

Catalog Description:

Along with ENGL 20913, this course explores the role of literary, rhetorical and dramatic expression in the development of cultural ideas, institutions and values. This course focuses on responses to inherited cultural developments registered within various literary and rhetorical texts from around the world.

Section Description:

Content—This seminar for Lit/Civ II will focus on an overarching theme of *finding home*. Through reading and writing that incorporates both personal responses and group projects, we'll explore themes of migration, displacement, settler colonialism, and resistance in a range of imaginative and non-fiction texts that position American culture in a global, cross-cultural context. Here are major questions (linked to course learning goals) we'll address together. By the end of the term, you should demonstrate knowledge and ability to express informed judgments about each of these questions:

- How have our personal and/or familial/group experiences of moving to a new home shaped us? Why?
- Addressing historical diasporas and displacements: Historically, how has the idea of the American Dream involved the welcoming (or resistance to welcoming) immigrants? In what ways does (North) American history demonstrate that immigrants have not always been welcomed, despite some of our treasured myths? How has the making of “America” as a home for settlers from other places involved displacing Indigenous peoples, and what impact does that history continue to have on US society?
- How have literary and popular culture texts with literary features (e.g., films, news reporting, periodical stories, graphic narratives) addressed social issues associated with individuals and groups seeking to find and make a home in America? What rhetorical and aesthetic techniques have been used?
- What literary features in genres using new media can we interpret and use ourselves to engage with social issues and potentially invite others to develop informed viewpoints?

Learning methods—Much of our work will be project-based, and a key expectation for success in the class will be active, collaborative discussion. While we'll occasionally have very brief in-class writing exercises just to spark our thinking, we'll focus on building bigger-picture connections across our readings—including materials that YOU bring into our study by being on the alert for social media, print, and online publications related to our course theme.

Course Materials

Required Materials:

I. Readings on D2L: You are responsible for reading materials provided on D2L for each class meeting. See the Course Content section for each class meeting date.

II. Books to purchase

[You may secure your texts from any source, but be sure you acquire the editions identified at the links below for each text. Please acquire a PAPER copy for use in class discussion.]

Afua Cooper, [*My Name Is Phillis Wheatley: A Story of Slavery and Freedom*](#)

Robert Conley, [*Mountain Windsong: A Novel of the Trail of Tears*](#)

George Takei, [*They Called Us Enemy*](#)

Francisco Jimenez, [*The Circuit: Stories from the Life of a Migrant Child*](#)

III. One additional text—a graphic narrative--to be read in small groups. Please hold off on purchasing until groups are formed after the class begins to meet. Thanks.

EXAMPLES: [Text options to be finalized in early August]

[*Year of the Rabbit*](#) by Tian Veasna

[*Displacement*](#) by Kiku Hughes

[*American Born Chinese*](#) by Gene Luen Yang

Learning Outcomes

TCU Core Course Learning Outcomes:

- 1) LT (Literary Traditions): Students will examine literature's connections to society and culture.
- 2) GA (Global Awareness): Students will analyze the dynamics, processes, or legacies of global systems.

Major Course Requirements Linked to Learning Outcomes and Assessment

Assignment/Project	% of grade	Outcomes measured
Varying dates: Brief in-class and online (D2L/googledoc) writing exercises checking on basic comprehension of reading assignments and student engagement with the LO-s; approximately 7 or 8 spread across the semester (average, with lowest grade dropped); see D2L for each class period to find out if you have a daily writing activity and, if so, what the prompt will be	10	1, 2
Throughout the term: Participation (Attending class enables you to participate; each time you come to class for the entire period, you earn 3.5 participation points)—see below	10 (maximum possible score = 100 points toward 10% of final grade—see chart below for details)	1, 2
9/16: Memoir or interview paper on	20	2

finding home; see tentative directions below and updates in D2L		
9/30 draft and 10/7 final: Close reading paper due; workshopping draft due 9/30] in class; see tentative directions below and updates in D2L	20	1
10/30 or 11/4: Small-group presentation using new media to interpret images from a graphic narrative (i.e., to analyze visual rhetoric in action); see tentative directions below and updates in D2L	20	1, 2
12/9, 4:30: Registrar-assigned day/time: Synthesis Project (See note at end of syllabus; see tentative directions there and updates in D2L)	20	1,2
TOTAL breakdown of your grade	100	

Attendance Policy:

Earning Participation Points: **3.5 points per for attending the full period x 30 meetings = 105 pts** **Maximum grade in your final evaluation will be 100.** [Note that you may miss twice and still earn a high A score. Throughout the semester, you'll receive options for special on-campus events connected to course themes. You may attend any of those to earn make-up participation points for a missed class by submitting one-page written reflection. Limit: 2 times.]

Examples of scores/grades you would earn, with total grade for participation/engagement/attendance then becoming 10% of overall grade, as noted above:

If you attended this number of class meetings....	You would earn this many attendance points:
20	70 (20 X 3.5) or a C-level score
22	77 (22 X 3.5) or a C+-level score
25	87.5 (25 x 3.5) or a B+-level score
27	94.5 (27 x 3.5) or an A-level score

Late Work Policy: If you anticipate missing a target date for turn-in of an assignment, please make arrangements with me ahead of time. Adjustments in a due date are possible with advance notice—with the exception of the final project turn-in date/time, which is controlled by the registrar's office. See me about a possible I/incomplete grade if you cannot meet that assigned due day/time, due to emergency or serious illness.

University Absences Official University Absences are absences described in the Official University Absence Policy and include the following: Title IX related issues, military leave, holy days, and university related absences. Students entitled to such absences may work with faculty members to complete assignments and exams within a reasonable amount of time after the absences. Please alert Sarah ahead of time if you have a university absence coming up so that we can plan together for keeping you caught up with course work.

Medical Privacy Statement: Because it is considered an infringement on student privacy for me to have access to student medical records, I cannot accept medical documentation to justify absences. If you have a legitimate reason for your absence and want to provide verification, please access the Absence Documentation Form [here](#).

Grading Scale:

Grade	Undergraduate
A	94-100
A-	90-93.99
B+	87-89.99
B	84-86.99
B-	80-83.99
C+	77-79.99
C	70-73.99
C-	70-73.99
D+	67-69.99
D	64-66.99
D-	60-63.99
F	0-59.99

Specific Course Policies for Our Class

Important Turn-in Information for the Exam/final project:

Before the assigned submission time, you should upload your project (in one or more files) to the D2L webspace for our class in the turn-in sub-folder for final project. Projects turned in late accrue a 5-point late penalty if not uploaded by the assigned exam time. Beyond that penalty, work submitted late accrues an additional 5-point deduction from the final project grade for each day late from the assigned due date. For the exam/research paper, NO submissions can or will be accepted after [add date based on registrar-assigned day/time for final evaluation for this class], because your final course grades are due to the registrar that afternoon.

EMAIL: Reminder

Only the official TCU student email address will be used for all course notification. It is your responsibility to check your TCU email on a regular basis.

Communicating with respect in class and online (i.e., “Netiquette”): Diverse viewpoints are welcome in our classroom. Be respectful of the right of all classroom community members to hold and articulate, with cultural humility, divergent views. One resource on cultural humility is [here](#).

[TENTATIVE] Course Schedule

Unit 1: Moving to Find a Better Life vs. Forced Displacement



Note: Column labeled “Reading/Preparation to complete before class” tells you what to do BEFORE class on each respective date. Go to D2L “prep guides” for more detail each time.

Project and product: Addressing our Ideas about Finding Home by Moving	Concepts Explored
Project: Personal Memoir Narrative OR Feature Story based on an interview	Creating ideals of Americans’ moving to a

			better life; cultural memory and popular culture; film as myth-maker; Black Atlantic Diaspora
Date	Topic	Reading/Preparation to complete before class	In-Class Activities
8/19	Introducing Course Themes	Optional: Preview the course syllabus on D2L	Freewriting on course themes of moving to find a home; breakout and whole-group discussion of our writings; uploading writing to a TCU BOX to share
8/21	Pioneer Spirit and the “New Land”	Review course syllabus on D2L and bring any questions to class. Read through classmates’ postings of writing to TCU BOX on course themes. Optional for 8/21: You might want to begin reading the Afua Cooper biography <i>My Name is Phillis Wheatley</i>	Go over expectations for first writing project. Highlight points to admire in classmates’ writing on moving to find a new home (from TCU BOX postings.) View and discuss scenes from <i>The Grapes of Wrath</i> film by John Ford
8/26	Narrating Enforced Migration	--Read about 1/2 of Afua Cooper’s <i>My Name is Phillis Wheatley</i>	--Discuss first 1/2 of Afua Cooper biography of Wheatley --View video interview with Dr. Tim Sommer of the UK about his research on PW
8/28	The Black Atlantic and Diaspora Studies	Complete reading of <i>My Name is Phillis Wheatley</i> by Afua Cooper	--Continue discussion of Cooper’s biography + explore Wheatley’s own poetry --View and interpret images from <i>Wake</i> , graphic narrative by Rebecca Hall --Revisit expectations for memoir/interview paper
9/2	Drafting Your First Project	Memoir/interview/feature story paper—see D2L for updated directions BRING DRAFT TO CLASS FOR WORKSHOPPING	Workshopping drafts View and discuss scenes from and <i>The New Land</i> (film by Jan Troell)
9/4	Responding to History with Creative Writing	Continue working on your first paper (memoir or interview feature story) Post an update on your progress to our googledoc for today	Discuss Wheatley-Peters-inspired poems by Eve Ewing and drea brown [copies available in D2L]
9/9	Who can best tell stories of diaspora, and in what forms?	Read widely about bannings of Art Spiegelman’s <i>MAUS</i> —draft informal reflections (Use google to find some readings of your own; make notes so you can share responses in class) Read “Making Space for Palestinian Happiness” by Nabil Echchaibi and “The Land of Sad Oranges” by Ghassan Kanafani [both available in D2L]	<i>MAUS</i> imagery and issues: viewing and discussion We’ll also discuss: What is “public humanities”? And how does lit play a role in public humanities?

9/11	Sharing our learning with multiple publics	Continue working on your first paper; see D2L for updates [Bring an excerpt to class to share orally.] Check out the website for “The Genius of Phillis Wheatley Peters” project; find one resource of special interest to you and send bookmark URL and brief response to our googledoc for class	Sharing responses to PWP project website
9/16	Sharing and evaluating writing	First paper due (memoir or interview); see D2L for updates	View and discuss clips from John Ford’s <i>The Searchers</i> and from <i>How The West Was Won</i> ; Preview Native Am readings

Unit 2: Settlers Displacing or “Assimilating” (Erasing?) Native Peoples



Project and Product: Exploring Stories of Contact and Displacement			Concepts explored
“Close reading” paper: applying close reading approaches to our studies			Cultural conflicts and crossings; assimilation; counter-histories
Date	Topics	Preparation to complete before class	Additional In-Class Activities
9/18	Counter-histories	--graphic narrative options: <i>Select your preferences</i> —see D2L for final list -- <i>Mountain Windsong</i> : read at least through Chapter 6 and prepare to discuss development of plot and setting, reading stances you are using to process the different strands of the text, characterization, and a passage you admire	Preliminary discussion: <i>Mountain Windsong</i> Looking ahead to graphic novel presentations (later in the semester)
9/23	Removal history	<i>Mountain Windsong</i> : read at least through Chapter 19 Preview directions for “close reading” assignment in D2L; bring questions to class	Hear expectations/directions for “close reading” paper Read and interpret poems from Heid Erdrich’s <i>National Monuments</i> Read and interpret poems by Laura Tohe and Jessica Belin
9/25	Native Modes of Storytelling	Complete reading of <i>Mountain Windsong</i>	Complete in-class discussion of <i>Mountain Windsong</i> Read and interpret poems by E. Pauline Johnson, First Nations author from early 20 th -century Canada
9/30	Reflection and Re-vision	Prepare “Close reading” paper draft for in-class workshopping; see D2L	Share-outs from your “close reading” drafts in team workshopping

	through close reading		<p>View and discuss videos of MMIW-related songs</p> <p>View and respond to images from Joe Harjo's Indian Removal Act I and II</p>
10/2	Indigenous Art as Alternative Home-making	<p>Continue working on your “close reading” paper.</p> <p>IMPORTANT: Locate TCU’s Contemporary Arts Gallery on map ahead of class meeting held there on 10/2</p>	<p>Visit Joe Harjo exhibition: Indian Removal Act III: We Are a Wounding at TCU’s Fort Worth Contemporary Arts Gallery—3050 Waits Avenue https://calendar.tcu.edu/event/indian-removal-act-iii</p>
10/7	Transitioning to project on graphic narratives and on historicizing our readings of new storytelling approaches	<p>Second project (Close reading exercise) due; see D2L for updates</p>	<p>Listen to and discuss “Alexander Hamilton” song from <i>Hamilton</i>: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VhinPd5RRJw</p> <p>View and discuss video and song from the <i>Hamilton</i> mixtape: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6_35a7sn6ds</p> <p>Go over expectations for small-group presentation on a graphic narrative about migration experiences</p>

FALL BREAK: 10/9—No Class Meeting

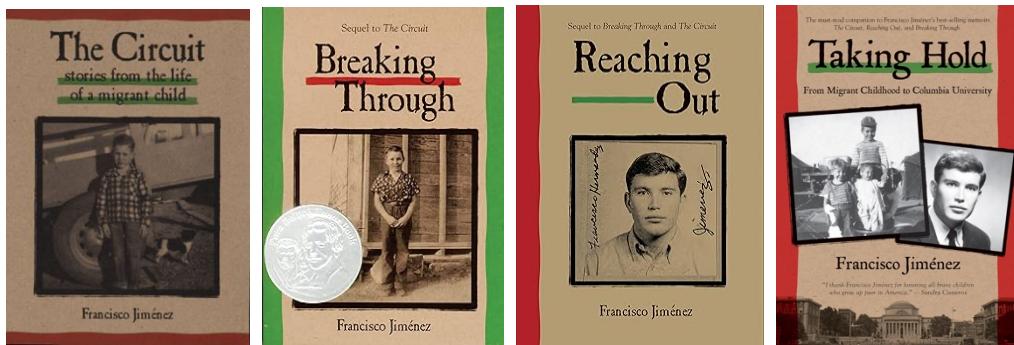


Unit 3: Immigrants Encountering Stereotypes, Prejudice, and Resistance



Project and Product: Picturing Ethnic Identity as Difference	Concepts explored
Analyzing visual rhetorics; critiquing and resisting stereotypes; preparing presentations on graphic narratives as an engaging literary genre	Visual imagery and rhetoric, stereotypes, persuasion

Date	Topic	Reading/Preparation to complete before class	Additional Activities in Class
10/14	Myth of the “Open Door” for Immigrants (anti-Irish discourse)	Optional preview reading: Lazarus, Emma. “The New Colossus” https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46550/the-new-colossus and an explication of the poem: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/articles/144956/emma-lazarus-the-new-colossus Begin reading your “choice reading” for small-group presentation on a graphic narrative	<u>View and comment on anti-Irish and immigrant visual imagery</u> <u>Hold touch-base meeting with your presentation group: where will you meet on 10/21 when you have the full class period for collaborative planning?</u>
10/16	Myth of the “Open Door” for Immigrants II (anti-Chinese discourse)	Continue reading of your choice text for the small-group presentations.	*Discuss Emma Lazarus poem and Joseph Bruchac’s poem on “Ellis Island” https://www.commonlit.org/en/texts/ellis-island View & discuss anti-Chinese editorial cartoons from <i>The WASP</i> and related visual texts: https://thomasnastcartoons.com/2014/02/14/a-statue-for-our-harbor-11-november-1881/ Preliminary image analyses from George Takai’s book <i>They Called Us Enemy</i>
10/21	Graphic Narratives	Complete reading of “choice” graphic narrative text for your small-group presentation.	Meet with your small group No whole-class meeting today!
10/23	Incarceration as Enforced Migration	Begin reading of <i>They Called Us Enemy</i> Complete daily writing assignment linked to this narrative and submit to D2L.	Carry out close readings of surprising racist images from Dr. Seuss: https://freshwriting.nd.edu/volumes/2015/esays/can-we-forgive-dr-seuss In-class discussion of Takai, <i>They Called Us Enemy</i> ; Touch-base reminders on group presentation
10/28	Photo Rhetoric and anti-Japanese American WWII Sentiment	Complete reading of <i>They Called Us Enemy</i> . Prepare second daily writing task linked to this topic and submit to D2L.	--Final discussion of <i>They Called Us Enemy</i> and related topics. -- Discuss additional Japanese American Internment images from D. Lange: https://gpb.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/ang14.soc.ushist.intern/picturing-japanese-american-internment-dorothea-lange/ --In-class time to finalize small-group presentation planning.
10/30	Presentations Day 1	Graphic Narratives: Small-group presentations (see D2L for updates)	--First set of group presentations
11/4	Presentations Day 2	Graphic Narratives: Small-group presentations (see D2L for updates)	--Second set of group presentations --Discussing directions for exam project



11/6	Reading and Reflection	--No in-class meeting on 11/6: time to read all of <i>The Circuit</i> (See writing exercise for 11/11.) Suggestion: Read through directions for the final self-evaluation exercise (in lieu of exam).	Time for reading and reflection
11/11	Migrant Farm Labor in Literature	-- Complete writing exercise on <i>The Circuit</i> --Optional: --Do some drafting and/or planning for your final project	Discussion of <i>THE CIRCUIT</i>
11/13	Documentary Filmmaking on Migrant Farmer Work	-View and make notes on <i>Harvest of Loneliness</i> , documentary film on migrant farm workers https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PcV2EOo-Xdc	-Mini-conference sharing presentations of papers from your writing on <i>The Circuit</i> -Re-Viewing and discussing scenes from <i>Harvest of Loneliness</i> . -Connecting <i>The Circuit</i> with documentaries
11/18	End-of-course reflection	Read directions for end-of-course project. Start preparing a written plan for your final project to bring to class on 11/18	Viewing examples from past classes; hearing tips from Dr. Robbins about the project; workshopping your starter drafts
11/20	DRAFT part 1 or Part 2	Prepare a DRAFT of part 1 or part 2 of your end-of-course project to present informally in class	Brief informal presentations from your end-of-course projects

Preparing Final evaluative exercise:
Constructing Syntheses and Reflecting on Take-aways



Date	Topic	Reading/Preparation to Complete before Class	Additional In-class Activities
12/2	Re-visiting Themes and Texts	Review D2L for directions and guidelines for preparing your final project—exam equivalent. Due no later than 4:30 12/9; Prepare complete draft of part 3 of the project	Workshopping; reflecting on our learning in the course
12/9	Wrap-Up!	Prepare and submit final project	Your final project is due no later than 4:30 p.m. on 12/9.