

LEAP 1100
Section 004

**Crossing Borders:
Identity in the Modern World**

“Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going?”

-Paul Gauguin

Instructor: Dr. Michael White

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Phone: 801-585-9867

Office: 142 Sill Center (due east of the Olpin Union, across from the visitor parking lot)

Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 12:30-1:30; *and* by appointment (I am always happy to consult with students, and as often as possible at the student’s convenience; please let me know IN ADVANCE when you’d like to meet, including scheduled office hour times.)

Peer Advisor:

Nikolina Pajic: nikolina.pajic@utah.edu; 801-512-6970

Library Instructor:

Peter Kraus: peter.kraus@utah.edu; 801-581-8891; MLIB 0086

Course Overview:

Drawing upon fiction, nonfiction, prose poetry, and film, the spring LEAP course will focus upon border crossings. Sometimes this will entail a literal, physical movement across political boundaries, reflecting the restless modern impulse to establish a sense of place in the world. Yet we will also come to understand *borders* in a more figurative sense, as represented by the limits and prohibitions against which people strive. Finally, bridging these concepts, we will reflect upon how human identity is constructed and defined in terms of physicality, race, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, etc. – and the myriad “crossings” that complicate identity formation, both within individuals and within communities. Along the way, we will compass a diverse array of human experience (and at least one monster’s) while becoming fluent with terms like *alienation*, *displacement*, and *hybridity*. The final project for the course will challenge students to grapple with these concepts on a more personal level.

* Note: LEAP 1100 fulfills both the Humanities and Diversity requirements.

Learning Objectives:

The overarching objectives for the course are to develop critical thinking and writing skills, to promote information literacy, to work effectively in groups, and to expand cultural awareness along with self-awareness. Above all, I hope that we can collaboratively create a classroom environment that allows for the lively (and respectful) exchange of ideas.

Required Texts:

The five main texts (all paperbacks) listed below are available at the University Bookstore:

Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (Penguin Classics, ISBN: 9780141439471)

Charles Baudelaire, *Paris Spleen* (New Directions, 9780811200073)

Robert Louis Stevenson, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* ((Signet Classics, ISBN: 9780451532251)

Richard Wright, *Black Boy* (Harper Perennial, ISBN: 9780061443084)

Art Spiegelman, *MAUS I: A Survivor's Tale* (Pantheon Books, ISBN: 9780394747231)

A few additional readings may be provided to students by the instructor as the semester progresses.

Course Requirements:

40 points - *Written Assignments*

20 points - short mid-term paper (see Class Schedule for the two deadline options)

20 points - final project*

30 points - *Tests*

2 tests: 15 points each

20 points - *Attendance and Participation* (including group panel debates**)

10 points - *Quizzes* (unannounced quizzes based on the readings and classroom discussion of readings)

2 extra-credit points (optional): *visit a religious/spiritual house of worship* (mosque, Buddhist temple, synagogue, etc.) that you have never visited before and that is otherwise unfamiliar; snap a few pics on site – if or as permitted – and then write a brief paragraph summarizing your experience (must be turned in by the last day of class, April 24th, to receive credit).

100 points total

Grading:

94 and above	A
90-93	A-
87-89	B+
84-86	B
80-83	B-
77-79	C+
74-76	C
70-73	C-
67-69	D+
64-66	D
60-63	D-
below 60	E

* The final project for the course will challenge you to *discover* and possibly *recover* a chapter of your family's story. You will focus on a particular *individual* who is/was a border crosser in any of the senses we have explored (or others). You will focus on a particular *moment* in this individual's life – and, yes, this will require/permit considerable creative license. You can write this narrative in third-person or in first-person (thereby adopting a persona). Importantly, this is a project in which you will work in two different media. So, this would likely include a written (or possibly oral) text and an accompanying visual text (collage, powerpoint, video, etc.). You *may* choose to blend the written and the visual – along the lines, say, of the graphic novel formula – but this is in no way required or expected.

My hope is that the project will combine research skills, writing and communication skills, creativity, and will engage you at the deepest intellectual and personal levels.

** Near the beginning of the semester you will be assigned to a panel group. Each group will be responsible for leading a panel debate on an assigned question pertaining to a recent reading or film screening. Group members will divide themselves into two camps and then proceed (in hopefully civilized fashion) to lob arguments back and forth. It is not necessary that each group member feels personally committed to a particular position – the important thing is to provide a model of argumentative repartee, of give and take. Once the presenters' initial points have been put forward, audience members (the rest of the class) will be invited to contribute arguments and counterarguments of their own. The hope is that by the end of the debate you'll come away with a more balanced and informed perspective on the issue. I will of course be on hand to facilitate, though I expect each group of debaters to do its best to guide the class discussion for approximately 30 minutes. You're in charge, so be creative and have fun.

Group members should arrange to consult with me (in my office or immediately after class) at least **two days before** their scheduled debate date.

Classroom Policies:

Assigned work is due **in class** on the due date, unless otherwise specified. Late work will receive partial credit unless prior arrangements are made (in exceptional cases).

Success in this class requires **regular attendance** and **engaged participation**. This includes being consistently **punctual** and contributing toward a classroom environment that fosters **courtesy and respect**. Speaking of which ...

The use of **non class-related portable electronic devices is disallowed** for the duration of each 80 minute class period. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

In order to be **prepared** for each class session, you must complete all of the assigned readings. Also, you are responsible for bringing all relevant readings to class on the day(s) they are slated to be discussed (see *Class Schedule* below).

Please ensure that your university email account (Umail) is operational. It is also imperative that you check this account on a regular basis as I will periodically use email to send out class announcements and to contact students individually.

Class Schedule:

Please note that the readings listed for any particular day should be done *before* you come to class on that day. Bring all assigned readings to class. Dates of readings and assignments may change, so be aware of announcements.

Week 1:

January 9:
Introduction to the course

January 11:
Overview of literary terms
Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

Week 2:

January 16:
Frankenstein

January 18:
Frankenstein

Week 3:

January 23:
Frankenstein

January 25:
Frankenstein

Panel Group 1: *Should the gender and/or race of an author influence how we read his/her book? Otherwise put, should our interpretation of a book be affected by the identity of its author?*

Week 4:

January 30:
Special Topic: The Modern Metropolis
Charles Baudelaire, *Paris Spleen* (specific selections to be announced)

February 1:
Paris Spleen (specific selections to be announced)

Week 5:

February 6:

Paris Spleen (specific selections to be announced)

February 8:

R.L. Stevenson, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*

Week 6:

February 13:

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde

February 15:

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde

Test #1

Week 7:

February 20:

Library Session (meet in the Marriott Library, Room 1009)

Short mid-term paper (option 1) due

February 22:

Black Boy

Week 8:

February 27:

Black Boy

March 1:

Black Boy

Panel Group 2: Does a memoir need to be faithful to the “whole truth and nothing but the truth” OR is there room for some creative “bending” of the facts?

Week 9:

March 6:

Black Boy

March 8:

Spike Lee (director), *Do the Right Thing* (in-class film screening)

Note: this film contains lewd language (aplenty), violence, and brief nudity (rated R)

Short mid-term paper (option 2) due

Week 10:

March 13:

Do the Right Thing

March 15:

Do the Right Thing

Panel Group 3: *At the end of Spike Lee's film we're given two points of view regarding appropriate responses to racial oppression – one from Martin Luther King and the other from Malcolm X. What is “the right thing” to do in terms of confronting injustice or oppression? (see also Colin Kaepernick's “knee” as potential discussion material)*

Week 11: March 19-23: NO CLASSES (Spring Break)

Week 12:

March 27:

Art Spiegelman, *Maus*

Course Grade/Progress Update (check your Umail)

March 29:

Maus

Week 13:

April 3:

Library Session (meet in the Marriott Library, Room 1009)

April 5:

Panel Groups 1, 2, 3, 4: *In your panel group, select a memorial site (Gettysburg Battlefield; the memorial at Pearl Harbor; Auschwitz; the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial in DC; 9/11 Ground Zero; etc...) and consider how the site is specifically conceptualized (and in some cases, designed) to serve as a cultural touchstone of memory/remembrance.*

Week 14:

April 10:

Jamaica Kincaid, “Girl” (text will be distributed to students in class the week preceding)

April 12:

Library Session (Specific Location TBA)

Week 15:

April 17:

Lydia Nibley (director), *Two Spirits* (in-class film screening)

Note: this film contains violent subject matter

April 19:

Two Spirits (discussion)

Panel Group 4: *What might be gained and/or lost by broadening our cultural conception of gender identity? (ie: what if we were to recognize a third, a fourth, a fifth gender ...?)*

Week 16:

April 24:

Test #2

End-of-semester celebration! (meaning snacks, and a super fun test)

Final project due Friday, April 27th by 5 PM at my office in the Sill Center OR sent by email (m.white@leap.utah.edu).

University Policy: accommodation for students with disabilities

Read the following statement and, if it applies to you, come speak to me and also visit the University's Center for Disability Services:

"The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in this class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the instructor and to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Olpin Union Building, 581-5020 (V/TDD) to make arrangements for accommodations. All printed information for this course can be made available in alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services."

University Policy: sexual misconduct

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) is a Civil Rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran's status, or genetic information. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 135 Park Building, 801-581-8365, or the Office of the Dean of Students, 270 Union Building, 801-581-7066. For support and confidential consultation, contact the Center for Student Wellness, 426 SSB, 801-581-7776. To report to the police, contact the Department of Public Safety, 801-585- 2677 (COPS).