

**English 2700**  
**Fall 2018**

Professor Howard Horwitz  
Office hours: T, Th 10:45-12:15, or by appt.

**Diversity in American Literature**  
T, TH 9:10-10:30; BUC 107  
3619 LNCO, [h.horwitz@utah.edu](mailto:h.horwitz@utah.edu)

**This course fulfills the Diversity and Humanities area general education requirement, and can fulfill both requirements (I have been told; double check).**

**The course is available to non-English majors.**

This course will examine literary texts, some film and other video, and some non-fiction materials, in order to examine the idea of “diversity” in American writing and culture. Apparently some students do not appreciate this required course title, because it feels like the imposition of a cultural agenda. Conversely, some students appreciate exposure to a variety of perhaps unfamiliar materials. I hope the course can help us consider the relation between population diversity (diversity in the national or geographical origin of persons or their ancestors—my ancestors hailed from central and southern Europe, arriving in the 1880s) and diversity of cultural practices. Bear in mind that the notion of diversity in the U.S. includes class and caste diversity as well as the more familiar gender, racial, ethnic, and religious diversity. We will read texts by and about figures from a variety of backgrounds and from several periods of American culture. The materials we will study, along with the general rubric “diversity,” imply a broad question. If one investigates the relation of diverse backgrounds to American culture, mustn’t we ask, does a continuous and coherent American culture exist? What seem to be, or what do people assume to be, the attributes of American culture, of what it means to be an American? Can we think of American culture as a coherent phenomenon?

We will discuss the 1996 film *Lone Star*, and perhaps another film. I have ordered two novels for the course. All other written materials will be short fiction or essays or excerpts from longer works, and will be available on the Canvas page for the course. (We will discuss the organization of the course Canvas page during the first class meeting.) Especially in a 2000-level course, where we discuss some basic skills of interpretation and essay writing, I think shorter works help us focus on critical skills. We are learning how to process writing, video, and other materials that involve the cultural phenomena treated in this sort of course.

**Required texts**, available in the University bookstore:

Ana Castillo, *The Guardians* (Random House, 9780812975710)

Nella Larsen, *Passing* (Penguin, 978014243727)

**Writing assignments:** regular, brief exercises (75-100 words) on most texts we study (15% of the final grade); one 2-page, **optional**, ungraded, diagnostic essay, to begin a conversation about writing with individual students; two 3-4 page essays, one 4-5 page essay. I will distribute questions for the first two graded essays; students will develop their own questions for the final essay; we will have discussions about ways to form the question for the third essay. **No exams.** The first graded essay is worth 25% of the final grade; the second and third formal essays are each worth 30% percent of the final grade. Students can revise the first two graded essays, and the grade on the revision replaces the grade on the first version. The brief exercises enable me to

gauge whether students are keeping up with assignments and understanding the material as we proceed. The exercises help students gain practice articulating ideas about the course materials. The stakes are low for any single exercise, and so you can try out ideas. As I comment on the exercises, I can often identify the germ of an argument for the formal essays. Submitting the exercises regularly can only help a student's grade; if you don't submit exercises, your grade by definition will suffer.

Attendance is required. I employ a bonus system to evaluate class participation, rewarding students who participate regularly and thoughtfully. I do not take attendance, but if I notice regular absences from particular students, I begin to count absences which can accumulate a penalty.

We will discuss matters of composition for 5-10 minutes of nearly every class meeting. Most of the topics we discuss are treated in the file Matters of Composition that you can find on the course Canvas site. I try to help students learn to organize essays around a concrete thesis, with every stage of the essay developing this core argument. I try to help students learn to organize sentences around concrete, active verbs.

#### *University Writing Center:*

The University Writing Center offers one-on-one assistance with writing. Tutors can help you understand your writing assignments, work through the writing process, and/or polish your drafts for all the courses in which you are enrolled. Sessions are free of charge, and you can meet as often as you need. To make an appointment, call 801.587.9122. The Writing Center is located on the second floor of the Marriott Library. Visit the website at [writingcenter.utah.edu](http://writingcenter.utah.edu). Let me suggest that before you visit the Writing Center, come to my office, and certainly show me outlines and drafts of the formal essays. I myself have helped train some of the tutors at the University Writing Center, and these tutors are well trained and experienced. But bring me your writing first. Discussing with me your exercises, on which the stakes are low, might be useful as preparation for longer writing assignments.

#### *Disabilities:*

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 the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Olpin Union Building, 581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations.