Lit 145: American Ethnic Literature

From the idea of the melting pot at the turn of the century to contemporary debates about multiculturalism, much of the finest American literature of the twentieth century has been produced by writers who explore issues of identity, ethnicity, and personal and cultural transformation. As a nation of immigrants, we have produced many texts that thematize the struggles of newcomers to adapt to an alien culture while they are also trying to negotiate a meaningful relation to their native cultures. Through novels, essays, and an autobiography, we will discover changing perceptions of ethnicity and assimilation and consider the recent role of diversity in evaluating what is valuable in American society.

Jan 5   Introduction

Jan 10   Cahan, “The Imported Bridegroom,” xerox

Jan 12   Sollers, “The Invention of Ethnicity,” xerox
          Randolph Bourne, “Transnational America,” xerox
          Woodrow Wilson, “Address,” xerox

Jan 17   Yezierska, *Bread-Givers*

Jan 19   Yezierska

Jan 23   1000-word paper due

Jan 24   Roth, *Goodbye, Columbus*

Jan 26   Roth

Jan 31   Kingston, *The Woman Warrior*

Feb 2    Kingston

Feb 7    Chin, *Donald Duk*

Feb 9    Chin

Feb 14   Rodriguez, *The Hunger of Memory*

Feb 16   Rodriguez
Feb 21         Mukherjee, *Jasmine*
Feb 23         Mukherjee
Feb 28         Roth, *American Pastoral*
March 1        Roth
March 6        Roth
March 8        Roth

A WORD ABOUT PAPERS: Between weeks 6 and 10 you have the option of turning in two 1500-word papers or one 3000-word paper. If you choose the former option, I must have a final draft of the second paper by the beginning of week 8 (Monday, Feb 20). All final papers are due Friday, March 16. There is no midterm or final exam for this course.

PLEASE NOTE: Attendance is mandatory. You cannot miss more than three classes.

GRADES: The breakdown for grades is:
  Papers: 85%
  Participation: 15%