

INGL3285

The Puerto Rican Experience in the United States or Literature of the Puerto Rican Diaspora

Professor: Maritza Stanchich, Ph.D.

Times/Places: Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:30-12:50 p.m. LPM309

Office hours: 1:30-2:30 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays or by appointment, office #5 basement of Pedreira, down hall from English Department (or near Carpa/Teatro)

Email: pertinent emails only please to mstanchich@gmail.com

Course description:

As the second largest group of the booming U.S. Latina/o population in the United States, and now outnumbering Puerto Ricans on the island, Puerto Ricans “afuera” have since the early twentieth century forged important social, political, cultural and artistic movements. The Nuyorican Poets are just one group that has created a large body of literature, from New York to Hawaii, from the 1900s to today.

How this literature challenges colonial and national paradigms, both in the United States and in Puerto Rico, will be a central question. Among these paradigms are the links between language, race and nation. For example, our study urges us to rethink commonly held assumptions, such as about language (monolingualism, bilingualism and spanglish), national cultural identity (*jibarismo*) and race (confronting differing concepts of race and racism), as well as about assimilation and belonging, and national literary canons.

Literature will be analyzed with attention to its social-political-historical-cultural contexts, from the turn of the twentieth century to the present. Our study will emphasize literary genres such as short story, novel, essay, poetry and drama, and themes including, classism, racism, gender, sexuality, cultural hybridity, exile, bilingualism, biculturalism.

Teaching strategies: Classes will consist of analysis and discussion of readings, and conceptual understanding of related issues. Visual and audio materials will be incorporated.

- Los estudiantes que reciban servicios de Rehabilitación Vocacional deben comunicarse con la profesora al inicio del semestre para planificar el acomodo razonable y equipo asistivo necesario conforme a las recomendaciones de la Oficina de Asuntos para las Personas con Impedimiento (OAPI) del Decanato de Estudiantes. También aquellos estudiantes con necesidades especiales que requieren de algún tip de asistencia o acomodo deben comunicarse con la profesora.

Methods of Evaluation:

Class attendance and punctuality: 15 percent

Class participation: 15 percent

Freewrites and short writing assignments: 15 percent

Midterm Exam: 25 percent

Final Exam: 30 percent

- Note that four absences will drop your grade by one. If you have four excused absences, then one more unexcused absence will affect your grade similarly. Seven absences will drop two grades. Twelve absences or more will not pass the course.
- Late assignments: I will accept freewrites no more than two class dates after the due date. I will not accept late assignments that are more than one week late, nor will I ever

accept all assignments at the end of the semester. I am open to extending exam deadlines a day or two if you need to...just ask!

- Grading system for freewrites is to use √, √+ or √-, according to your own level of English and analytical proficiency. Works that receive √- may be resubmitted.
- Please also note: For students with disabilities, there will be differentiated methods of evaluation. *Evaluación diferenciada a estudiantes con necesidades especiales.*

Papers and Exams: A few Freewrites will be due throughout the semester. Take-home midterm and final exams will consist of five short identifications and a choice of one essay. Essays will require analyzing and citing works we have discussed. I will review guidelines one week before take-home exams are due.

¡OJO!: INTERNET PLAGIARISM WILL EARN A FAILING GRADE FOR THE COURSE AND CAN RESULT IN SUSPENSION FROM ENTIRE UPR SYSTEM.

Please remember that if you copy any writing off the internet, you need to cite it “in quotes” and state which website it came from. Even if you paraphrase (or summarize) or put another writer’s ideas into your own words, you need to write, as NAME the CRITIC states, or I agree/disagree with NAME of CRITIC, or in parenthesis after the sentence (NAME of CRITIC) or footnote the author and website.

I grade according to your ability, so no matter what your comfort level is with writing in English, you are better off submitting your own work, even with errors! Please ask if you need a deadline extension...I am flexible with deadlines to a degree.

Plagiarism Statement from English Department website:

Plagiarism is the use of another person's ideas or experience in your writing without acknowledging the source. Other forms include repeating another's particular apt phrase without appropriate acknowledgement, paraphrasing someone else's argument as your own, introducing another's line of thinking as your own development of an idea, and failing to cite the source for a borrowed thesis or approach (*The MLA Style Manual*). Plagiarism may be punished by failure in a course as well as by suspension or dismissal from the English Graduate Program and the entire University.

Reading List and Course Outline

Required Texts (At local Río Piedras bookstores, though I recommend ordering from Internet at sites like Powell’s, Alibris, etc.)

Bernardo Vega, *Memoirs of Bernardo Vega* (shorter, cheaper copy also available at **PromoImage**)

Piri Thomas, *Down These Mean Streets*

Esmeralda Santiago, *When I Was Puerto Rican*

Recommended but not required: Irene Vilar, *Impossible Motherhood*

- A photocopied *Course Reader* will be available at **PromoImage** just off Avenida Universidad, and includes articles, stories, poems and essays (it should be ready Thursday or Friday).

Week 1: Tues. Aug. 21: Review syllabus and ground rules for the course

***First assignment (THIS IS REQUIRED). Due by next class or no later than Tues., Aug. 28

In a short and informal one- to two-page paper, describe your personal, political and/or intellectual interest in this course subject. Here are some ideas to consider. You can choose **ONE** of them to write about, **OR** you may focus on your own idea.

- Have you ever lived or do you have family members or close friends who have lived or live in the United States? When? Where? Tell me a little about this. Or briefly interview someone you know from Puerto Rico who has lived in the United States about their experience.
 - How do you define the term “Nuyorican” and how have you heard it used? Do you think you have preconceptions about Puerto Ricans in the US and are your views open to revision?
 - What newsworthy issues have captured your attention regarding Puerto Ricans in the United States? These could be in arts and entertainment (such as Marc Anthony and JLo getting divorced), sports (Did you notice Boricuas from the diaspora in any Olympic events? Are you a Carlos Delgado fan and why? where would US baseball be without Latinos anyway?), politics (such as the recent interventions of US Rep. Luis Gutiérrez, or whether Puerto Ricans in the US should be able to vote in status plebiscites here), or other developments (for example, more Puerto Ricans now live in the United States than here and we are currently experiencing an exodus from the island to places such as Central Florida and Texas). Or any other news of interest.
 - Do you think Puerto Rican literature from the United States should be considered Puerto Rican literature? US American (or US ethnic?) literature? Both? Neither? How do you feel about studying this literature in an English class? Or with a non-Puerto Rican professor?
- ******OJO:** Remember to focus on only **ONE** such topic for your short, informal essay.

Thursday, Aug. 23: Introductions and fill out index cards

- You are encouraged to turn in first short writing assignment (or no later than next class)
- I will also highlight terms for class discussion from the next reading assignment...
- Please purchase and bring the Course Reader to class today or no later than Thursday

Week 2: Tues., 28: Read to discuss all these relatively easy articles from Reader:

1. 2000 and 2010 Census report on US Latinos, for Puerto Ricans in relation to all US Latinos
2. *Primera Hora* article “176,000 Dejan La Isla” and related ones, “Con tristeza...” and “Éxodo...”
3. *San Juan Star* article “The Puerto Rican Exodus”
4. *New York Times* article “Falling Back” by Mireya Navarro
5. *El Nuevo Día* article “Jóvenes puertorriqueños en Nueva York: Una Nueva Perspectiva...”
6. *El Nuevo Día* article “Más boricuas en EE.UU. que en la Isla”
7. *San Juan City Magazine* article “Who Are We? Identities of Stateside and Island Boricuas”
8. *El Nuevo Día* special report on the migration (this is long, browse and read what interests)
 - Last day to turn in 1st short writing assignment

Thursday, Aug. 30: in Reader, Edna Acosta-Belén, “*Adiós Borinquen querida:*” *The Puerto Rican Diaspora, Its History, and Contributions,*” Chapter 1, The Puerto Rican Migratory Experience. (Also available in Spanish “Adios, Borinquen Querida”: La diaspora puertorriqueña, su historia y sus aportaciones – Capitulo 1, La Experiencia Migratoria...)

- We will discuss at least half of this chapter of about 40 pages, but read it all ASAP

Week 3: Tues. and Thurs. Sept. 4 and 6: From Reader, finish discussing Edna Acosta-Belén *Adiós Borinquen querida* and read and discuss from *Blurred Borders* by Jorge Duany.

Week 4: Tues. and Thurs. Sept. 11 and 13: Complete reading and discussion of *Adiós Borinquen querida: The Puerto Rican Diaspora, Its History, and Contributions*— Chapter 1
• View film online at YouTube: “La operación,” dir. Ana Maria Garcia (1982)

Week 5: Tues. Sept. 18: *Memoirs of Bernardo Vega* (Parts 1 and 3)

Thurs., Sept. 20: Finish *Memoirs of Bernardo Vega* (Part 6)

- Freewrite on racism handed out and due in class next Thursday
- Make sure you get or have novel *Down These Mean Streets* by Piri Thomas

Week 6: Tues. Sept. 25: In Reader, Jesús Colón all selections

Thurs., Sept. 27: Finish discussing Colón

- Turn in Freewrite on racism
- Begin reading Piri Thomas novel for next week

Week 7: Tues., Oct. 3: Piri Thomas’ *Down These Mean Streets* (Chapters 1–12)

Thurs., Oct. 5: Continue discussing Piri Thomas (Chapt. 13-22)

- Also in Reader article by Jorge Duany “Paradojas raciales de los puertorriqueños”

Week 8: Tues., Oct. 10: Finish *Down These Mean Streets* (Chapt. 23-35 and Afterword)

Thurs., Oct. 12: Finish discussing *Down These Mean Streets*

- I will hand out and review take-home midterm exam **due Thursday, Oct. 18**

Week 9: Tues., Oct. 16: Nuyorican poet Pedro Pietri’s “Puerto Rican Obituary”

Thurs., Oct. 18: Miguel Piñero “The Book of Genesis According to Saint Miguelito”

- **Midterm exam due** in class or in my mailbox by 2 p.m. (please just let me know if you need an extension...don’t miss class because you haven’t finished or printed it!!!)

Week 10: Tues., Oct. 23: Sandra Maria Esteves “From the Commonwealth” and “A la Mujer Borinqueña”

Thurs., Oct. 24: Documentary on The Young Lords to be screened in class

Week 11: Tues., Oct. 30: Tato Laviera’s “against Muñoz pamphleteering” (Also in Reader, as a companion piece to this, read the famous poem by Luis Muñoz Marín “Panfleto”)

- Freewrite on Spanglish language usage in Nuyorican poets due next Thursday

Thurs., Oct. 31: Tato Laviera’s “asimilao” and “nuyorican”

Also Gloria Anzaldúa’s essay “How to Tame a Wild Tongue” and Aurora Levins Morales essay “Forked Tongues: On Not Speaking Spanish”

Week 12: Tues., Nov. 6: Receso Electoral (!!!)

Thurs., Nov. 8: Contemporary Nuyorican poets. At end of Reader: Willie Perdomo especially “Nuyorican School of Poetry” and “Nigger-Rican Blues” ALSO Mariposa’s “Ode to the Diasporican” and “Tears of the Tigers” ALSO and Urayoán Noel “Kool Logic/La lógica kool” and check out online Edwin Torres (at <http://www.brainlingo.com/>)

- Freewrite on language in Nuyorican poets due

Week 13: Tues., Nov. 13: Toward post-Nuyorican developments

Assignment from Reader, Abraham Rodriguez Jr. stories “The Boy Without a Flag” and “Babies” and Rodney Morales’ story “Ship of Dreams”

• Will assign Citation Freewrite on Abraham Rodriguez Jr. OR Rodney Morales OR Judith Ortiz Cofer due Tuesday

• OPTIONAL BOOK TO BUY/READ: Irene Vilar’s memoir *Impossible Motherhood* (to read over Thanksgiving weekend with *When I Was Puerto Rican* by Esmeralda Santiago)

Thurs., Nov. 15: Screen film “Brincando el charcho” in class

Week 14: Tues., Nov. 20: From Reader Judith Ortiz Cofer’s “American History” and “The Story of My Body” AND On Reserve, Luzma Umpierre’s poem “Immanence”

• Citation freewrite due

Thurs., Nov. 22: Holiday, Happy Thanksgiving!

Week 15: Tues., Nov. 27: Discuss Esmeralda Santiago’s *When I Was Puerto Rican* (focus on chapters starting on pages 1, 5, 35, 61, 187, 211, 267)

Also from Reader, Esmeralda Santiago essay “Island of Lost Causes”

Thurs., Nov. 29: Finish discussing *When I Was Puerto Rican* (have book finished)

Week 16: Tues., Dec. 4: Victor Hernández Cruz poems in Reader, and On Reserve Jack Agüeros poems “Sonnet for 1950” and “Sonnet: The History of Puerto Rico”

Thurs., Dec. 6: Martín Espada poems in Reader

• Final take-home exam handed out in class today due Thursday, Dec. 13, by 4:30 p.m. in my mailbox (please ask if you need a one or two-day extension!)

Week 17: Tues., Dec. 11: Last class! To be handed out in advance if we have time, but not assigned yet: Select writings by poet Aracelis Girmay or postmodernist Giannina Braschi

Thurs., Dec. 13: Final exams due by 4:00 p.m. in my mailbox near English Department office. (Please just let me know if you need an extension of a day or two.)

¡Exito y Felicidades!