LATINO/A THEATRE & DRAMA OF NORTH AMERICA
TA 471/571 ~ T/Th 12-1:50 pm ~ VIL 201

Overview: TA 472 Latino/a Theatre & Drama of North America is a survey of contemporary drama both as literature and as blueprint for performance. Students will emerge from this class with a greater understanding and appreciation of drama written by Mexican-American, Cuban-American, and other authors who self-identify as Latino/a, Chicano/a, and/or Hispanic. Students will develop tools and skills for analyzing and discussing dramatic literature, and for critically evaluating differences across texts. We will study how cultural traditions and political histories have informed the many different ways in which playwrights represent American communities. We will also study how the works of these authors expose race, class and gender stereotypes, and call into question the universalizing idea of the nation-state. We also will look closely at how these playwrights use theatrical form (such as magical realism, parody, song, ritual) to critique and/or enlighten contemporary North American culture. Because we live in the western US, much of our reading will focus on the concerns and work of playwrights of Mexican-American identity. But we will also read plays from across North American that demonstrate a variety of literary and performance styles, themes and viewpoints. We will read these texts not merely as literature, but as civic documents that illuminate diverse lives, perspectives and concerns of Americans.

Objectives:

a) Become familiar with the achievements of a number of prominent playwrights and performance companies.

b) Understand some of the political-historical “back-story” of these diverse plays and performances.

c) Learn to read drama both as a literary text and as schemata for live performance.

d) Explore in oral, visual, and written discussion how these texts work as socio-cultural and political documents.

e) Learn to identify and discuss different themes across a range of plays, including how those themes emerge in theatre for young audiences, as well as mature audiences.

f) Learn to identify and discuss a variety of theatrical means used by Latino/a playwrights such as: magical realism, storytelling, song, ritual, and parody.

g) Develop a critical and theatrical vocabulary for writing and speaking about these works and the human experiences they illuminate.

h) Strengthen oral and written communication skills through classroom discussion, presentations, and written assignments.

i) Strengthen theatrical skills of visual representation, storytelling, dramatic writing, and presentation.

Readings/Texts
You are welcome to share books with someone else in the class. However, you are responsible for the reading on the day it is assigned, and for having the play in hand for discussion. All of these have been ordered through the UO Duckstore coursebooks section. You may also find many of them used or less expensive at Smith Family bookstore, or online.

Ordered through the bookstore as Required

Primary Texts

- José Cruz González & Jennings, (editor). *Nine Plays by José Cruz González.*
Latino Drama Syllabus - 2

- Gloria Anzaldúa. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*.
- Luiz Valdez. *Zoot Suit and Other Plays*.
- Cherrie Moraga. *Heroes and Saints & Other Plays*.
- José Rivera. *Marisol and Other Plays*.
- Nilo Cruz. *Two Sisters and a Piano and Other Plays*.
- Milcha Sanchez Scott. *Roosters*.
- Quiara Alegria Hudes, *Water by the Spoonful*.

**Additional Plays on Blackboard –**
- Richard Montoya & Culture Clash. *American Night: The Ballad of Juan Jose*. (also available for check out in TA 216 ~ look on shelves to left of door.)
- Guillermo Verdecchia’s *Fronteras Americanas* (also available for check out in TA 216)

**Ordered as Recommended**
(We will read certain excerpts from these on Blackboard.)
- Jorge Huerta. *Chicano Theater: Themes and Forms*.
- Elizabeth C. Ramirez. *Chicanas/Latinas in American Theatre*.

**Graduate Students**: you should plan to read one of the books above in its entirety.

**Also Recommended:**
A Spanish to English pocket dictionary
A set of colored (water-based please!) markers or wax pastels for drawing
A blank (no lines) notebook for collecting your Scrapbook assignments

**Blackboard** will be used for this class. Plan on checking Blackboard frequently for readings, assignments or class announcements.

**Assignments/Course Requirements**

**Reading Assignments**
Reading is the heart of this course. Please read the plays and articles thoroughly and come prepared to discuss them in some depth. I will often provide questions ahead of time for you to think about while reading.

**Scrapbook**
Including image responses to plays, vocabulary notes, and found poems.

   **Response images/collages/art**: The art of theatre is a visual art; while it used words in the form of dialogue, it only comes alive in space. We will read many plays of style known as “magical realism” in which visual, aural and tactical images carry the central themes and meanings of the play. Rather than always responding to these plays intellectually, this assignment is designed to allow you to respond through the language of images. Each week you will bring to class a visual/image response to one of the plays assigned that week. This can be in the form of a collage of images, an original work of art you make, photographs or video that you shoot, music that you compose or collect. Your response should communicate what for you were the primary feelings, moods, issues, events, and meanings of the play. The response is not an illustration, and it is not a scenic design; rather it is a work of art that speaks about and back to the play. Your images should be accompanied by some written collection of lines, words, or phrases from the play text. **You only need to do ONE image response per week**, not one for each play.

   **Vocabulary notes**: you will encounter many terms that are familiar as well as terms new to you. Spanish terms; slang; invectives; stereotypes; place names; mythic terms. You should keep a running list of terms that come up in the readings as well as discussion and makes notes about the sometimes layered
and complex meaning of these terms.

**Found Poems:** sometimes I will ask you to respond to a reading by composing a poem of your own using words and phrases from the reading. The purpose is similar to the image responses – to engage your imagination and heart, your associative mind, as well as your intellect.

**Artist Presentation and Discussion**

Working in pairs with one other person from class, you will research one of the artists/playwrights that we are reading and provide a presentation to the class about the artist’s work. As part of this, you will also read the day’s readings and provide discussion questions that link the theoretical readings with the plays. I am available to help you with resources, media, etc. You may be creative in this venture, and are not limited to power-point. For example, you might want to perform, or ask the class to read aloud portions of the script; or you might find other inventive ways to engage the material.

**One Critical/Analytical Essay on a play not read on the reading list**

This is your opportunity to research and write about a play or performance of your choosing. You should apply the ideas and theories we have read and discussed in class, as well as additional material (historical, theoretical, critical) that you have researched. A more detailed Assignment Sheet will follow. Advice: choose your play and begin your research early. The calendar has interim deadlines for peer-reading and feedback on drafts.

undergrads: 7 – 10 page; grads 12-15 pages, double spaced; works cited/MLA style.

Drafts due in Week 6; final paper in Week 8.

**Mid-term and Final exam essays**

These will be primarily essay, with a choice of questions given in advance. Writing will be open book and done in class. Each is worth 50 points.

**Additional Course Expectations/Requirements:**

- Demonstrated preparation (i.e., doing reading and active contribution to class)
- Active class discussion and participation
- Collaborative approach to learning and respect for others’ viewpoints and experience

**Grad students only:** A report/presentation to the grad group about the book that you read and additional research you have done. We will schedule a couple of grad meetings for this course separately from the general course meeting.

Please see the Course Calendar for all Due Dates. All requirements must be fulfilled in order to receive a passing grade in the course.

**TA 472 Grading**

- 100 pts Class participation: active discussion, demonstration of preparation, contribution to class.
- 100 pts Scrapbook (weekly sharing & collected at mid-term and end of term)
- 50 pts Artist Presentation and discussion
- 50 pts Critical/Analytical Essay on a play we have not read in class
- 50 pts Mid-Term
- 50 pts Final Exam

400 points total

Grad students only: additional 40 points for your book report/presentation.
Grading rubric:
A Displays a thorough understanding of course concepts and is able to utilize these concepts in creative ways. Writing and oral work is clear, well-crafted, and insightful. Makes statements or asks questions in discussion that shape the class period in meaningful ways.
B Written and oral work displays a concerted effort to grapple with the course ideas and shows a good factual understanding of material. Discussion participation is active and thoughtful.
C Written and oral work meets the basic demands of the assignment but achieves no more. Some confusion or lack of facility in the attack of course concepts. Discussion attendance is good, but active participation is sporadic.
D Written and oral work lacks accuracy and focus. Discussion attendance is poor and participation rare.
F Written and oral work is incomplete, not addressed to the assigned topic, or not turned in at all. Discussion attendance and participation are extremely poor.

Attendance: Absences will be excused for documented illness, school-sponsored activities, true emergency situations, and required participation in significant cultural responsibilities in student’s community. Documented illness requires a doctor’s or health center statement and does not include appointments that can be made at other times. Missing class for either excused or unexcused absences may adversely impact the overall grade in the course based on the percentage of grade or points earned by attendance and participation in class as identified in the course syllabus. More than 2 unexcused absences will lower your final grade by a half grade point (an A drops to a B+) for each absence.

Misc Policies
I hope to get to know each of you individually – what concerns you as students, what impassions you as artists. Please feel free to visit my office to chat. Office hours are at the top of the syllabus.

All work must be completed according to directions, on time, and presented in a professional manner. If you have a problem meeting a deadline, please talk to me. I expect you to treat one another and me in a professional manner, and to treat our class as a professional association. I expect you to articulate your point of view within a context of mutual respect for another’s views and experience. I expect those of you who know you discuss easily (and perhaps loudly) to make this class a safe space for everyone to express their thoughts. Your classmates are a primary source of your learning.

Smoking on campus is limited to Smoking Stations only. Please consult the University Student Handbook for regulations regarding alcohol, drugs, etc. Using substances before or during class or rehearsal is cause for a failing grade in the course.

Plagiarism means using the written, spoken, or electronic words of someone else and not giving them credit. This includes all information on the internet including open-source or non-identified author information. Plagiarism is grounds for failure on the assignment and/or a failing grade in the course. Cheating or plagiarism on tests, examinations, papers, and other course assignments will earn an F on the assignment and possibly an F in the course. Plagiarism is the appropriation or imitation of the language or ideas of another person and presenting them as one’s original work. Although this sometimes occurs through carelessness or ignorance, this does not make it less serious. If you are uncertain about how to properly document your sources, please see me for guidance.

Any student in this course who has documented special needs that may prevent the fullest expression of his/her abilities or which could hinder full participation in class activities should contact me as soon as possible, so we can discuss appropriate accommodations necessary to complete your course requirements. You may be eligible for a note-taker or other assistance. The University has many useful systems and tools in place to empower and aid your learning. Please come and see me, or call Student Life at 346-3216, or Disability Services at 346-1155.