

ENGL 5325/CRN 16382: Genre - Theory and Practice
The Latinx Novel
 Hudspeth Hall 213, W 6-8.50pm
 Fall 2023

Instructor: Dr. Marion Christina Rohrleitner

Office: Hudspeth Hall 321

Office Hours: W 4.30-6pm, M/W 10.30am-12.30pm (in person in HUD 321) and by appointment (on zoom)

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Course description: This course introduces graduate students to the origins and evolution of one of the most established and enduring genres in world literature – the novel; we will discuss why this genre has remained so prominent over time and space, how it is connected to colonial and imperial enterprises, to the rise of the bourgeoisie and the public sphere. We will then look at what happens to this historically Eurocentric genre when contemporary Latinx writers - Mexican Americans/Chicanx, Dominican Americans, Cuban Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Argentine Americans - choose to write in this genre and, in doing so, change it in productive, original, exciting, and often surprising ways. We will read a wide range of texts that engage in various sub-genres of the novel - the historical novel, the graphic novel, the novel in verse, the speculative novel, the documentary novel, and many more – and discuss how Latinx writers explode the genre by putting it in conversation with Latin American literary traditions such as the testimonio or the dictatorship novel, by bringing a specific postmodern sensibility to the genre, and/or by making creative use of popular culture, oral traditions, and translanguaging. Furthermore, we will challenge a monolithic view of “the” Latinx novel and look at the long trajectory of Latinx novels since the late 19th century. We will pay attention to paradigmatic shifts in Latinx fiction and talk about how Latinx novels reflect, embrace, promote, or resist social change. Finally, we will also discuss how and why Latinx novels challenge singular labels, and instead merge various forms of fiction and non-fiction writing, creating hybrid genres that more effectively reflect Latinx lives.

Of equal importance to our conversations will be key debates in Latinx studies, including the use of the still controversial term “Latinx”; we will investigate its origins and potential as well as critiques of the term. Other central scholarly debates, often embedded in the novels we read, are about calls for the cancellation of Latinidad due to historical and present forms of anti-Blackness and anti-indigeneity embedded in Latinidad, the tension between nation-based and transnational (or anti-national) definitions of Latinidad, the impact of the #metoo movement on Latinx letters, critiques of the limitations of ethnic representation in novels and notions of Latinidad as positionality rather than essence, and the growing importance of the speculative mode, sci-fi, and horror genres in Latinx novels.

Required primary texts (available for purchase at UTEP bookstore; be sure to get the correct edition)

Tomás Rivera. *..y no se lo tragó la tierra/...and the earth did not part* (1971)

Tim Z. Hernández. *All They Will Call You*

Salvador Plascencia. *The People of Paper*

Elisabeth Acevedo. *The Poet X*

Justin Torres. *We the Animals*.

*Junot Díaz. *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*.

Julia Álvarez. *In the Name of Salomé*

Ana Menéndez. *The Apartment*

Christy Road. *Spit and Passion*.

Hernán Díaz. *In the Distance*

*I did not order this book through the bookstore.

Note: I ask you to purchase a **paper copy with the correct ISBN** number rather than ebooks; the online pagination, if it exists, is often out of sync with the pagination I provide on the syllabus, and this makes a focused discussion and shared close reading very difficult if not impossible. In addition, studies have shown that students tend to retain printed work much better. You may of course rent the assigned texts or buy used hardcopies in any bookstore or online. Make sure to **always bring a paper copy of the book** we are discussing to class so you can actively participate in class discussions. Thanks!

Additional required readings:

I will supplement the assigned primary texts with excerpts from additional novels (to give you greater exposure to more Latinx novels) and scholarly essays marked with an asterisk (*) on the syllabus. I will ask you to find the assigned secondary sources (usually scholarly articles) on JSTOR or MLA/EBSCO, so you can practice researching online and we make use of the library's digital subscriptions. Carefully read these additional texts, print them out or bring an electronic version to class, look up terminology and references, and summarize the author's argument so you can recall, reproduce, and engage with the in-class discussion. Reading, preparing, and answering questions on these sources feed into your participation grade.

Course Requirements

Attendance and Participation

20%

In a graduate course, students are expected to carry and shape conversations in class as much as the instructor. As a result, regular attendance and active participation are essential for your success not only in this course, but in your career as a graduate student in general. Being in attendance alone does not give you any credit— it is a mere basic requirement and expected; only active participation will give you credit. Active participation includes coming to each class on time and prepared with concrete and informed questions and comments about the assigned texts, volunteering questions and comments to both the instructor and your classmates during and after my lectures and your peers' presentations, as well as actively engaging with scholarly debates in class discussions, for example by referring to current scholarship and familiarizing yourselves with critical terminology

As part of your participation grade, you are required to **submit a total of five short (150-200 words) entries** on Blackboard (BB) over the course of the semester: **3 responses and 2 questions, on different texts**. These responses and questions should engage with one very specific aspect of the readings due every **Wednesday by noon**; ideally, you should make concrete references to the primary and/or secondary texts assigned that week and comment on the larger questions that tie the class together in your questions and responses. These questions and response paragraphs are meant to serve as discussion triggers for our class on Wednesday – feel free to bring up your questions and responses throughout the class. The quality of these paragraphs will feed into your participation grade. You are required to share a total of 5 submissions (3 responses and 2 questions) over the course of 5 different weeks; each can earn a maximum of 40 points for submission. This way, your written contributions to class discussion will add to your oral contributions during class time.

The **questions are due by noon on Monday** - to give your peers enough time to think about the questions to respond; all responses are due by noon on Wednesday. This allows me to read your questions and responses before class. I will provide brief feedback to your questions and responses by Friday afternoon. Please copy and paste these questions and response paragraphs into the provided space rather than attaching a word.docx. Include at least one direct citation from the primary or secondary texts you are discussing via parenthetical documentation. I will not accept, grade, or comment on late papers or on papers that do not meet the basic formal requirements of length, formatting, and proofreading.

Since we meet only once a week, each student may **miss two classes** without repercussions or explanations. A third absence will result in dropping one letter grade. As you know, anything less than an B is not acceptable for graduate work, and even a B poses a potential problem if you wish to be accepted into a Ph.D. program. A

fourth absence will result in me dropping you from the class, regardless of the circumstances. You simply cannot get credit for or succeed in a graduate class if you are not fully present throughout the semester. If you anticipate any problems due to extenuating circumstances (such as illness or family-related issues etc.) do contact me at your earliest convenience so we can find a workable solution.

Book Review

20%

One important aspect of academic work consists in staying up to date with recent scholarship and publications in the field. The writing of book reviews is an excellent exercise in displaying one's familiarity with current research and scholarly debates and offers an opportunity for publication. Each graduate student is therefore required **to research scholarly journals** which publish book reviews in Latinx Studies and studies of the novel, and decide on one publication as a model for your own review. I will provide a list of relevant journals and publications in the second week of the semester and will ask everyone to decide on a book for review **by September 13. Note that these books must be scholarly books, not additional novels.** They can, however, be about works of fiction we have not discussed in class as long as they are relevant to the field of Latinx Studies.

The submission date of your book review depends on the book you choose to review – and to which assigned primary text you would like to connect it thematically, formally, or otherwise. Students will research recently (ideally within the last 5 years) published **scholarly books (monographs or edited collections)** on the texts and/or issues we discuss in this course, read a current scholarly publication on such a subject, and write a book review in the style, length, and format of the selected journal. You will submit a short, one-paragraph proposal (150-200 words) of the book review, which includes a full citation of the text you wish to review, a short rationale why you decided on this specific text, a citation of the journal after whose book reviews you wish to model your own, a reason why you decided on this specific journal format, and the connection you want to make to the primary text assigned for that week. You will submit this information to me via email by 6pm the Monday of the week in which we discuss the primary text to which you will connect your review. I will provide you with feedback within two days. This way you have a week to complete your review.

I will then ask you to submit your completed book review as a word.docx attachment via blackboard by noon the following Wednesday after we discussed the novel to which you connect your book review. Length and format of your reviews depend on the journal of your choice. Ideally these book reviews can be submitted for publication. The books you review should also be one of your sources for your research papers and ideally be connected to your conference presentations., so your research is streamlined throughout. Absolutely no extensions will be given.

Individual Conference Presentations

20%

Conference presentations are another important aspect of a scholar's job regardless of whether you are tenured, on the tenure track, contingent faculty, or a graduate student applying to a PhD program or someone on the job market. Conferences are an excellent opportunity to network and to present one's most recent research agenda to an informed audience. In this class you will get the opportunity to practice the skills necessary for successful conference presentations. I expect you to look for actual conference calls at the CFP by the UPenn site (<http://call-for-papers.sas.upenn.edu>) and choose one to which you would like to submit your abstract and that works with the focus of our class.

The **Monday before your presentation** you will submit your abstract (200 words) to me via email by noon so I can give you feedback and final suggestions. Like at most actual conferences, you have 15 minutes (do not go over time!) to present your argument and will then respond to questions from the plenary. Your presentation should discuss one very concrete and well-defined aspect of the assigned text(s) for that week. and draw on existing scholarship. Ideally identify a conflict in the debate on the text of your choice and add your perspective. Your presentation may be on the same text you work on for your research paper. Be professional, yet creative, in your presentations, and make effective use of technology, such as power point, film clips, music, etc, when appropriate. The average conference paper is 6-7 pages (double-spaced) – feel free to read from your paper or

speak freely. In either case, be sure to practice and stay focused on your specific argument. Come prepared with a handout (not longer than one page!) and/or power point or other visual aid, concrete questions for the class, and be prepared to answer questions from the audience. Make sure to set up a meeting with me before your presentation – note that I reserve Thursdays and Fridays to work on my own research and writing, and thus prefer to meet on Mondays to Wednesdays only. Your presentation may be on the same primary text as the one to which your book review is connected – it is smart to streamline your research and writing.

If more than one student chooses to present on the same novel, I encourage you to work together and submit a panel with 2-3 abstracts to me. This is great practice for real-life conferences.

Project Proposal and Annotated Bibliography 5%

By noon on Wednesday, **November 22**, you will submit a **project proposal** (200-300 words) and an annotated bibliography featuring at least 4 scholarly sources as a word.docx attachment on blackboard. This proposal should demonstrate that you have been doing some research and have already begun to formulate your thesis. I will provide feedback that day so you can get started on drafting your paper. Your proposal and annotated bibliography can earn a maximum 50 points. I encourage you to come to office hours or set up an appointment to discuss your ideas early on.

Final Paper 35%

Your final paper is in many ways the culmination of your work in this course. It should reflect your knowledge of the primary text(s) you discuss, as well as your familiarity with current scholarship and terminology and major debates in the field. Your paper must have an original argument and needs to enter an already existing scholarly conversation. You will be graded not only on the quality of the final product, but also on your progress during the process of writing from proposal to final paper. Bear in mind who your intended audience for this piece is: is it an academic audience reading, say, a scholarly article in a scholarly journal? In this case model your final piece of writing on one such article. Or are you writing to a more general audience, say a long essay in a publication like *The Atlantic* or *The New Yorker*? In this case, be sure to use a similar style and tone. Independent of which venue you choose, you must document your research and engage scholarship.

After you received feedback on your proposal, I will ask you to bring 2 hardcopies of the first 3-5 pages of your final draft – or any other portion of your writing where you feel you need and want feedback - to our last class on **December 6**, to workshop them. Your final paper is due by 6pm on **Monday, December 11** and needs to be submitted to me via blackboard as a word.docx. The paper must be 15-20 pages long (3700 to 5000 words, double-spaced, **excluding** the works cited list), follow MLA format, feature parenthetical documentation, and a proper works cited list (consisting of at least 5 scholarly sources, in addition to your primary sources). Be aware that writing in a concise manner is more demanding and important than being verbose and jargony. Absolutely no extensions will be given.

Grade breakdown

Attendance and participation: 200 points	A= 900-100	or 90-100%
Conference presentation: 200 points	B= 800-899	or 80-89.9%
Book review: 200 points	C= 700-799	or 70-79.9%
Project proposal: 50 points		
Final paper: 350 points	D= 600-699	or 60-69.6%
TOTAL: 1000 points	F = 0-599	or 0-59.9

Email: Please check your UTEP email **daily**. Contact me on webmail (mrohrleitner@utep.edu) with urgent requests or concerns. Responding to emails sent by your professor in a timely manner (usually within 24 hours during the work week) is good professional practice and will be part of your participation grade. Note that I do not read or respond to emails on the weekend and during holidays.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is an offense against academic honesty and any instance of plagiarism will immediately be handed over to the Dean of Students without exception, who will decide on your penalty. Be aware that I

take all instances of plagiarism very seriously. Each plagiarized assignment will automatically receive 0 points. I do not accept revisions or late submissions, or assignments that do not meet the minimum length requirement of original work, therefore you will fail each plagiarized assignment. Every time you use someone else's ideas or words in your papers you must reference the source. This is true for both direct quotes and paraphrasing. The same rules that apply to print sources also apply to web-based sources. You may safely assume that if you find a source on the internet, so will I. If you have any questions or uncertainties, contact me well before your paper is due. I also strongly encourage you to consult the following useful website for further information: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/2/>

AI: ChatGPT and similar platforms can be useful tools for writers and researchers; they are, however, not permitted in this course. It is crucial you find your own voice as a writer and critical thinker and do not rely on artificial intelligence to articulate your ideas; to make matters worse, AI often contains false information. I urge you to not use it for any written assignment in this graduate course. Thank you.

Extra credit: I will offer plenty of extra credit opportunities throughout the semester. These include readings by relevant authors, film screenings and events in the community. You can earn 5 points per extra credit (attend and submit a summary/response) and you may submit up to three extra credits.

Covid recommendations: If you experience symptoms but cannot get a test in time for our class, please let me know via email and stay home. If you test positive for Covid-19, please let me know via email; I also encourage you to report to covidaction@utep.edu and recommend you do not return to campus until you are cleared by the covid action team on campus and/or test negative. Thank you.

Students with special needs: I will gladly make any reasonable accommodations for students with limitations due to disabilities, including learning disabilities. Please see me personally before or after class in the first two weeks to discuss any special needs you might have. If you have a documented disability and require specific accommodations, you will need to contact The Center for Accommodations and Support Services in the East Union Bldg., Room 106 within the first two weeks of classes. The Center for Accommodations and Support Services can also be reached in the following ways:

Web: <http://www.utep.edu/cass>

Phone: (915) 747-5148 voice or TTY

Fax: (915) 747-8712

E-Mail: cass@utep.edu

Syllabus¹

Wednesday, August 30	<p>Introductions, syllabus, and course expectations Why (the) novel – and an entrance into Latinidad *Terry Eagleton. "Introduction." <i>The English Novel</i> *Orhan Pamuk. "What Our Minds Do When We Read Novels." <i>The Naïve and Sentimental Novelist</i> * Ricardo Ortíz. "The Trouble with Unity"</p>
Wednesday, September 6	<p>The uses of "Latinx" and a prehistory of the Latinx novel *Alan Peláez Lopez. "The X in Latinx is a Wound." * Bill Orchard. "Bruja Theory" * Claudia Milian. "The Copiousness of Latin" * Excerpts from <i>The Squatter and the Don</i> and <i>George Washington Gómez</i></p>
Wednesday, September 13	<p>The movement/autobiographical novel: Tomás Rivera...<i>y no se lo tragó la tierra/ ...and the Earth Did Not Part</i></p>

¹ Subject to change. Updates will be announced in class and posted on BB.

- * Marta Sánchez . From *The Translational Turn*
 * Ramón Saldívar. "A Dialectic of Difference: Towards a Theory of the Chicano Novel."
- Wednesday, September 20 The queer novel/bildungsroman: Justin Torres. *We the Animals*
 *Ricardo L. Ortíz. "Queer Latinx Studies and Queer Latinx Literature: After' Queer Theory or Thought and Art and Sex after Pulse."
 *Suzanne Boost. "Transgressing Borders: Puerto Rican and Latina Mestizaje"
 Excerpts from *What Night Brings; Sor Juana's Second Dream*;
- Wednesday, September 27 The documentary novel: Tim Z. Hernández. *All They Will Call You*
 *Barbara Foley. "The Documentary Novel and the Problem of Borders"
 *From Ariana Vigil. *Public Negotiations*
 *Maria Antonia Oliver-Rotger. "Mourning across Borders: Multidirectional Memory in Tim Z. Hernandez's *All They Will Call You: The Telling of the Plane Wreck at Los Gatos Canyon*"
 7-8pm: Blumberg auditorium
- Wednesday, October 4 The novel in verse/bildungsroman: Elizabeth Acevedo. *The Poet X*
 *Excerpts from *Thirty Talks Weird Love*
 *Omaris Zamora. "Black Latina Girlhood Poetics of the Body"
<https://post45.org/2020/01/black-latina-girlhood-poetics-of-the-body-church-sexuality-and-dispossession/>
 *Macarena Martin Martinez. "Corporeal Activism in Elizabeth Acevedo's *The Poet X*: Towards a Self-Appropriation of US Afro-Latinas' Bodies"
 *From Brenna Friesner. *The Verse Novel in Young Adult Literature*
- Monday, October 7: Reading by Kali Fajardo-Anstine, EPCC Valle Verde, 12pm
- Wednesday, October 11 The experimental/speculative novel: Salvador Plascencia. *The People of Paper*
 * Ramon Saldívar. "Historical Fantasy, Speculative Realism, and Posttrace Aesthetics"(part I)
 * Lauren Berlant. "Genre Flailing"
 * Mitchum Huehls. "The Post-Theory Theory Novel"
- Wednesday, October 18 The episodic novel: Ana Menéndez. *The Apartment*
 *Excerpts from *Here in Berlin*
 *Dalia Kandiyoti. "Consuming Nostalgia: Nostalgia and the Marketplace in Cristina García and Ana Menéndez"
 * from Isabel Alvarez Borland. *Cuban-American Narratives of Exile: From Person to Persona*.
- Tuesday, October 24: Reading by Ana Menéndez, 5.30pm, Location TBA
- Wednesday, October 25 The historical novel: Julia Alvarez. *In the Name of Salomé*
 *Elena Machado Sáez. From *Market Aesthetics*
 *Ricardo Ortiz. "Archive and Diaspora: Julia Alvarez as Poet, Novelist, Historian." *Latinx Literature Now!*
 *From José David Saldívar. *The Dialectics of Our America*
 *Emma Perez." *Queering the Borderlands*. The Challenges of Excavating the Invisible and Unheard
 *Excerpts from *Forgetting the Alamo*;

- Wednesday, November 1 Annual Conference of the American Studies Association(ASA) in Montréal. NO CLASS. Read ahead!
- Wednesday, November 8 The dictatorship/historical fantasy/pop culture novel:
Junot Díaz. *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*.
* Ramon Saldívar. "Historical Fantasy, Speculative Realism, and Postrace Aesthetics"(part II)
*Elena Machado Sáez. Dictating Desire, Dictating Diaspora: *Junot. Diaz's The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* as Foundational Romance."
*Maia Gil'Adí. "I think about you, X—!": Teaching Junot Díaz after "The Silence."
- Wednesday, November 15 The graphic novel: Cristy C. Road. *Spit and Passion*
*Jennifer Caroccio Maldonado. "Life Out Loud in the Closet: The Grotesque as Latinx Imagination in Cristy C. Road's *Spit and Passion*."
*Frederick Luis Aldama and Christopher Gonzalez."Introduction."
Graphic Borders: Latinx Comic Books Past, Present, and Future"
- Wednesday, November 22 No class. **Submit project proposals and annotated bibliographies** as a word.docx attachment on BB **by noon**
- Wednesday, November 29 The "new" Latinx novel?: Hernan Díaz. *In the Distance*
*Marissa Lopez. From *Racial Immanence*
*Tatiana Flores. "Latinidad is Cancelled: Confronting an Anti-Black Concept"
- Wednesday, December 6 Review and **workshopping drafts** (3-5 pages) in class
Friday, December 8 Dead Day
- Monday, December 11 Final projects are due as a word.docx by 6pm on BB. No extensions.
Tuesday, December 19 Grades are due to be submitted by instructor.
Wednesday, December 20 Grades are available to students.