

## English 970: Latino/a Literature of Trauma and Testimony

**Marta Caminero-Santangelo**

**Class time:** TR 2:30-3:50

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**Office Hours:** MF 11:15-12:15; W 11:00-11:30

Also 3:00-5:00 (CTE, 135 Budig Hall) and by appointment

**Syllabus, Fall 2015**

**Class location:** 3001A Wescoe

**Office:** 3128 Wescoe

**Course Description:** This course considers recent (1990s to today) US Latino/a literature that has attempted to address and represent human rights crises in the second half of the 20th-century, by constructing something like a "testimonial" voice in fictional narrative. By moving back and forth between Latin American examples of *testimonio* and the testimonial novel and US Latino/a versions of the latter, we will consider such issues as the authority of a representative to speak for a group, representation of / by the "subaltern," the imagining and construction of ethnicity and nation, issues of transnationalism (the relationship of US Latinos to their countries of origin) and pan-ethnicity (the relation of different US Latino groups to each other), theories of trauma and the construction of cultural trauma, the potential power of narrative to affect human rights discourses, and obstacles to the affective / effective power of storytelling.

The pedagogy in this course involves active learning via class discussion, small group breakouts and working groups, student presentations, and weekly responses to the reading. Research has shown that such forms of active learning increase student success across the board and also help to "level the playing field" in terms of diversity and inclusion. I will also endeavor to be as transparent as possible in the class by making grading criteria and expectations explicit throughout.

**Course Objectives:** Our primary goal in this course is to develop an understanding of crucial issues related to the representation of repression and human rights struggles in literature, the voice / representation of the "subaltern," narrative constructions of nationhood, ethnicity, and other forms of peoplehood, and the relationship between U.S. Latino/a and Latin American literature. In the process of discussing these issues we will of necessity also be working on more general skills associated with the professional study of literature, including the application of relevant theoretical paradigms to literary study.

### Required Textbooks:

Guatemala		Dominican Republic	
Rigoberta Menchú	I, Rigoberta Menchú	Julia Alvarez	In the Time of the Butterflies
Héctor Tobar	The Tattooed Soldier	Edwidge Danticat	The Farming of Bones
Chicano/a		Cuba	
Helena María Viramontes	Under the Feet of Jesus	Reinaldo Arenas	Before Night Falls
Luis Alberto Urrea	The Devil's Highway	Elías Miguel Muñoz	The Greatest Performance
El Salvador		Criticism	
Manlio Argueta	One Day of Life	John Beverley	Testimonio: On the Politics of Truth

Demetria Martinez	Mother Tongue		Kimberly Nance	Can Literature Promote Justice?
Mario Bencastro	Odyssey to the North			

**Course Evaluation:** Your grade will be determined by the following requirements:

Class participation	10%
Talking point	5%
Critical reading responses (8 total, 2 pages each) 5% x 8 =	40%
5-minute research presentation	5%
Research paper (15-20 pages)	40%

In this course we will be using the +/- grading scale, approved by the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences to describe intermediate levels of performance between a maximum of A and a minimum of F. Intermediate grades represented by plus or minus shall be calculated as .3 units above or below the corresponding letter grade.

**Critical reading responses:** 40% of your grade will consist of weekly reading responses (about 2 pages, typed) to the reading. Responses are due before class on the day the reading is due, and are turned in via Blackboard.

To allow you some flexibility in your schedule, I will require eight reading responses (out of 12 total). This means that I can either drop four lowest grades, or you can choose not to do four responses, or some combination. However, everyone *must* write a reading response for the two “mandatory reading response” due, since these readings constitute the theoretical core of the course and are indispensable. (If you don't do well on these, I can drop your grade later as one of the four dropped grades; but I want to ensure that everyone does the reading.) **In general, I would recommend writing all the early responses;** that way if you get to the end of the course and have done well, you can skip two or three and use the time for your research papers.

Since you are free to drop four responses without penalty, late reading responses will be severely penalized. I will subtract a full letter grade for each weekday / weekend that the response is late, and a partial letter grade for responses that I receive later on the same day that they are due.

The reading response should ask crucial questions—and explore possible answers--about the issues involved in the reading, using our theoretical discussions as a lens. Responses should display careful scholarly thinking beyond "book review"-type evaluations; when secondary readings are assigned along with a novel or text, responses should either attempt to apply some or all of these to the text, or they may discuss each reading separately. Responses that explore a single issue or a couple of issues in “depth” will receive better grades than those that raise several issues, but only superficially. You should also avoid focusing only on a particular passage in a novel or primary reading. I am not asking for close reading in these responses; rather, I am asking you to suggest, broadly, how the text fits into the framework of the various issues raised in the class. Reading response grades will be based on the level of sophistication in engaging with the reading and applying crucial questions central to the course, **as well as on evidence that all assigned reading was completed.** (If you have trouble “proving” you did all the reading within the framework of your particular discussion, it's perfectly acceptable to tack on a final summary paragraph that outlines the reading you didn't discuss.)

**“Talking Points”:** In an effort to distribute the responsibility for an interesting class discussion, and to ensure a diversity of voices besides just my own, I am requiring each student to sign up to do a “talking point” for one of the readings on the syllabus. The student is asked to bring in something--a “visual aid” such as a photograph, a material object, or perhaps 5 minutes of a video clip, or alternatively a page of related text (a newspaper or magazine article, a poem, etc.) that is pertinent and can be quickly read--and to use the “aid”

as a springboard for questions or discussion. There is no single “right” way to do this; a talking point might add to our historical knowledge of the particular reading's context, may relate it to current events or other concurrent historical events, may contradict a point in the reading, or something else. The point is to stimulate 10 minutes of discussion that would be related to the reading for the day but would not necessarily focus on it.

**Research Papers:** At the end of the semester, students will turn in a research paper which applies the issues, and at least some of the secondary critical / theoretical texts read and discussed in class, to a class literary work or works of your choice. Your paper should demonstrate independent thought and scholarship (rather than relying primarily class discussion).

Papers should be directly relevant to the central issues of the course: i.e. they should consider US Latino/a or Latin American literature of repression, human rights struggles, and / or testimony; and they should take up issues including some of the following: representing the subaltern; the construction of ethnicity and/or nation; the authority to speak for a group; transnationalism and pan-ethnicity, etc.

**Proposal:** To ensure that you are making timely progress towards your research paper, I am requiring a paper proposal in Week 7 (October 9). The proposal should articulate the general topic you wish to explore, as well as the ways in which you see this topic coming up in the work(s) you wish to write on, and should outline some preliminary hypotheses or arguments. Again, feel free to talk with me before the proposal due-date to brainstorm on possible ideas for your project. (To do this, of course, you will need to have finished the text you are going to be working on!) While the proposal will not be graded, an unsatisfactory proposal (or one that is incomplete or not turned in at all) will result in a deduction of the grade for your research paper.

**Working drafts** will be due electronically to me on Friday, December 4, by 5:00 pm; you will exchange these (through me) with others in a “writing group” in order to discuss your research and receive their suggestions. (Working drafts and peer editing are mandatory.)

**Final papers** are due Monday, December 14 before midnight.

### The “fine print”:

Expectations for this course are made explicit here “for the record,” although they will of course be familiar to many of you. Students for the course are expected to arrive to class promptly and prepared, and to miss classes only rarely for “excusable” reasons (e.g. illness, professional conferences, religious observance) of which you notify me in advance if at all possible. This is especially true in this class, since it meets only once a week—so missing a class is the equivalent of missing an entire week of class. Students are also generally expected to complete the readings on time, to participate actively in class discussion, to complete reading response papers on time, to submit full working drafts when they are due, and to participate actively in peer editing. These expectations are all taken into account in final grading, and appropriate grade penalties are assigned for failure to meet expectations.

This course adheres to the University’s policies on **plagiarism** and **cheating** as stated in the current Student Handbook. The penalties for plagiarism are severe. Not only quotations, but also *ideas* or even *phrasing* that is / are not your own *must* be properly cited!

Notes on research expectations: a worthwhile research paper (or article or book) has an arguable **thesis**--that is, an overall argument about the work(s), that is *worth arguing* (is interesting, engages in an important debate, and is not obvious). Successful papers must also be able to support an interpretation effectively with textual **evidence**; the strongest “evidence” for a literary argument about a text is generally the text itself (rather than your paraphrase or plot summary). Research papers will also be required to make effective use of secondary materials in order to enrich and support an argument. While the critical / theoretical materials read in class certainly count as “secondary” sources, and can (indeed, *should*) be used in your papers, they don’t really count as “research,” since they’ve been provided for you! A good guideline might be that you should refer usefully to

at least 5 secondary scholarly sources (literary criticism, history, or theoretical materials from scholarly books or journals) in your paper that you found independently of class.

Since I need to get my final course grades in on time, I will consider an extension for research papers only in highly extenuating circumstances. However, in all cases it is better to *communicate* with me if you feel you need an extension! Late papers will receive a full grade deduction for every calendar day they are late.

All student work must be carefully typed, edited, and proof-read, double-spaced in 12-pt Times New Roman with 1-inch margins, and must have correct MLA-style citation. Papers must also (of course) reflect the correct rules of grammar and spelling

**Students with disabilities** that may interfere with completing your course work should consult with me as soon as possible to discuss accommodating your needs. You should also contact the Office of Disability Resources in 22 Strong Hall or contact them at 785-864-2620 (v/tty) or consult the website at <http://www.achievement.ku.edu/disability/>.

**Enrollment / Drop policy:** If you are having trouble succeeding in the course, it is especially important that you consult with me so that we can develop a plan of action that may enable you to complete the course. If you decide to drop this class, please refer to the Website here: <http://www.registrar.ku.edu/current/schedule.shtml> .

Students may neither add nor change sections in any course after **Friday, August 28** without departmental permission. From **September 15 to November 18**, you will be assigned a grade of W if you withdraw. **You may not drop or withdraw after Wednesday, November 18.**

**Policy on Student Academic Creations:** Ungraded student-authored work may be shared with other class members during the semester. Please do not submit materials on sensitive subjects that you would not want your classmates to see or read, unless you inform me in advance that you do not want your work shared with others. Other uses of student-authored work are subject to the University's Policy on Intellectual Property and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. If I wish to use your work outside of this class (e.g. as a sample for another class or future classes), you will be asked to fill out and sign a written form authorizing such use.

## **KU Resources**

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**KU Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)** – CAPS can help students with issues related to adjusting to college and other psychological, interpersonal, and family problems. Individual and group sessions are available. You can find more information at <https://caps.ku.edu>; Phone is 785-864-2277. CAPS is located in Watkins Memorial Health Center.

**KU Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA)** – OMA provides direction and services for current and prospective students from underrepresented populations. In addition, through collaborative partnerships it offers diversity education programs that foster inclusive learning environments *for all students*. OMA's programs and services enhance the retention of successful matriculation of students, while supporting their academic and personal development. You can find more information at: <https://oma.ku.edu/about> Phone is 785-864-4350 OMA is located in the Sabatini Multicultural Resources Center next to the Union.

**KU Academic Access and Achievement Center (AAAC)** – AAAC offers many services and programs to assist students in their academic success and to enhance their collegiate experience at KU. Choose from learning strategy consultations, group workshops or general or course-specific academic assistance, by appointment or on a walk-in basis. Feel free to talk with AAAC and ask for information or direction about academic and personal issues. You can find more information at: <https://achievement.ku.edu/> Phone is 785-864-4064 The AAAC is located in Rm 22 Strong Hall.

**KU Public Safety** – Public safety is dedicated to providing a safe and secure environment for the thousands of students, faculty, staff and visitors that are on campus each day. Public Safety's website (<https://publicsafety.ku.edu/>) contains practical information that can protect you from becoming a victim of a crime, help you recognize and report suspicious activity, and guide you in the event of an emergency.

**KU Emily Taylor Center for Women & Gender Equity (ETC)** – The ETC provides leadership and advocacy in promoting gender equity and challenge gender-related barriers that impede full access, inclusion, and success. The ETC provides services, assistance, advocacy and support to campus community members of all genders. We also provide consultation, information and resources to Edwards and KUMC campus members, parents of KU students and the community by request. Appointments are recommended, but not necessary. Services are private. In situations involving discrimination and violations of Title IX, ETC staff report information to campus authorities. Center programs and facilities are also accessible to individuals with disabilities. For those requesting accommodations, please contact KU [Student Access Services](#) at 785-864-4064

or [achieve@ku.edu](mailto:achieve@ku.edu). The ETC is located in 4024 Wescoe Hall.

**KU Writing Center** - The Writing Center offers a variety of ways for students and members of the community to get feedback on their writing. It offers face-to-face consultations, online appointments, and an eTutorinappointments. Information regarding each type of appointment and a tool for scheduling can be found at <http://writing.ku.edu/> The Writing Center has multiple locations on campus.

**KU Student Involvement & Leadership Center (SILC)** – SILC prepares students to become contributing members of society by providing meaningful co-curricular experiences. **SILC** is responsible for coordinating registered university organizations and providing leadership education experiences for students in addition to providing programs and services to specific target populations including fraternity/sorority members, non-traditional students, and students of all gender identities, gender expressions and sexual orientations. More information can be found at <https://silc.ku.edu/>. A notable program of SILC is the Safe Zone Training, which aims to reduce homophobia, transphobia, and heterosexism on our campus to make KU a safer and freer environment for all members of our community, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. By agreeing to become a Safe Zone ally, the participant agrees to undergo training and to serve as a resource for people seeking clarification on issues of sexuality and gender diversity. SILC is located in the Sabatini Multicultural Resources Center.

**Formal KU Policies** – Important KU policies to be aware of include:

Academic Misconduct (<http://policy.ku.edu/governance/USRR#art2sect6>),

Final Examination Schedules (<http://policy.ku.edu/governance/USRR#art1sect3>)

The Grading System (<http://policy.ku.edu/governance/USRR#art2sect2para3>)

## SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS

Week	Date	Readings	Other Assignments
One	Tues Aug 25	Introduction Clarifying terms: Latino, Hispanic, Chicano Clarifying histories: commonalities and divergences	
	Thurs Aug 27	Introduction, continued: Race, Nation, Ethnicity, Pan-ethnicity, and the Construction of a "We"  <b>Blackboard:</b> (blackboard: click on "Course Materials," then "Blackboard Readings")  Poems: Vando, "Nuyorican Lament"; Gonzales, "I Am Joaquin" Readings on "nation" and "ethnicity": Guibernau, <u>Nations Without States</u> (excerpt) Ashcroft, et. al., "Nation" from <u>Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies</u> Anderson, <u>Imagined Communities</u> (excerpt) Sollors, <u>Beyond Ethnicity</u> (excerpts) Defining ethnicity: Cornell & Hartmann, from <i>Ethnicity and Race</i> (chapter 2: "Mapping the Terrain: Definitions"; also pp. 96-97, on "Interests") Yúdice, "Testimonio and Postmodernism," pp. 42-44, 46-47, 55-57	No response due, but reading is <b>required!</b>
		<b>Guatemala</b>	
Two	Tues Sept 1	Menchú, <i>I Rigoberta Menchú</i> (complete) [If you are short on time, you can skip Chapters 5, 8-10, 20, 26, 29-31]  <b>Required:</b> Beverley, Chapter One, "The Margin at the Center" in <i>Testimonio</i> ; Nance, <i>Can Literature Promote Justice?</i> (pp. 7, 12-13, 16-17, 50-55, 58-59, 62-63, 66-75)	Mandatory reading response due (Menchú in light of critical readings)
	Thurs Sept 3	Menchú, continued.  <b>Blackboard</b> <b>Recommended:</b> Sommer, "Resistant Texts and Incompetent Readers"	

Week	Date	Readings	Other Assignments
Three	Tues Sept 8	<p>The Rigoberta Menchú Controversy:</p> <p><b>Required:</b> Beverley: <i>Testimonio</i>, Preface pp. xiv-xvii, Introduction pp. 1-9. 11-13, 18-19, 22-23, and Chapter 4, “What Happens When the Subaltern Speaks”</p> <p><b>Blackboard (required):</b></p> <p>Stoll, “The Story of All Poor Guatemalans” from <i>Rigoberta Menchú and the Story of All Poor Guatemalans</i></p> <p>Stoll, “The Battle of Rigoberta” from <i>The Rigoberta Menchú Controversy</i></p> <p>Arias, “Rigoberta Menchú's History Within the Guatemalan Context” from <i>The Rigoberta Menchú Controversy</i></p> <p>Pratt, “I, Rigoberta Menchú and the 'Culture Wars' ” from <i>The Rigoberta Menchú Controversy</i></p>	Reading response due
	Thurs Sept 10	<p><b>Blackboard (required):</b></p> <p>The testimonial novel:</p> <p>Craft, "Characteristics of Testimonial Novels as Practiced in Central America"</p> <p><b>Suggested:</b></p> <p>Rodriguez, “Refugees of the South: Central Americans in the U.S. Latino Imaginary”</p> <p>Skłodowska, “Spanish American Testimonial Novel”</p> <p>Begin reading <i>The Tattooed Soldier</i></p>	
Four	Tues Sept 15	<p>Tobar, <i>The Tattooed Soldier</i> (1<sup>st</sup> half)</p> <p><b>Blackboard (required):</b></p> <p>Caruth, “Unclaimed Experience”</p> <p>Excerpts from <i>Who Can Speak</i>, eds Roof and Wiegman:</p> <p>"Identification and Difference" by Lakritz</p> <p>"The Problem of Speaking for Others" by Alcoff</p> <p>"Speak for Yourself" by Elam</p>	Mandatory reading response due (including critical readings)
	Thurs Sept 17	<p>Tobar, <i>Tattooed Soldier</i> (2<sup>nd</sup> half)</p> <p><b>Blackboard Recommended</b> Davis, “Burning Too Few Illusions” (on “Rodney King” riots)</p>	
		<p><b>Chicana/o Writing:</b> The "subaltern" in the US</p>	
Five	Tues Sept 22	<p>Chicano Movement readings:</p> <p><b>Blackboard (excerpts):</b></p> <p>Barrio, <i>Plum Plum Pickers</i></p>	

Week	Date	Readings	Other Assignments
		Rivera, "And the Earth did not Devour Him"	
	Thurs Sept 24	Viramontes, <i>Under the Feet of Jesus</i>  <b>Recommended:</b> De Genova, "Mexican Illegality."	Reading response due (also consider the novel in light of "Who Can Speak" and Testimonial Novel readings)
Six	Tues Sept 29	Viramontes continued	
	Thurs Oct 1	Urrea, <i>The Devil's Highway</i> pp.1-5, 14-70, 98-176; 212-219  <b>Required:</b> Felman and Laub: <i>Testimony</i> [excerpts]	Reading response due
		<b>El Salvador</b>	
Seven	Tues Oct 6	Argueta, <i>One Day of Life</i> (1 <sup>st</sup> half)  <b>Blackboard (required):</b> Alexander, et. al. <i>Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity</i> , pp. 8-15, 22, 35-39, 43-44 Testimony and human rights: Dawes: <i>That the World May Know</i> , pp. 1-2, 6-12, 20-29, 62, 65-67 Schaffer and Smith: <i>Human Rights and Narrated Lives</i> pp. 1-7, 19-27  <b>Recommended:</b> Background readings in El Salvador: Winn, <i>Americas</i> (excerpt) Burns, <i>Latin America: A Concise Interpretive History</i> (excerpt) Gonzalez, <i>Harvest of Empire</i> (excerpt) Boff & Boff, <i>Introducing Liberation Theology</i> (excerpt)	Mandatory reading response due (novel plus critical readings)
	Thurs Oct 8	<i>One Day of Life</i> (2 <sup>nd</sup> half) and critical readings, continued.	
	<b>Fri</b> <b>Oct 9</b>		<b>Research proposals due</b>

Week	Date	Readings	Other Assignments
Eight	Tues Oct 13	<b>Fall Break—No Class</b>	
	Thurs Oct 15	Martínez, <i>Mother Tongue</i> <b>Blackboard (required):</b> Cunningham, "Sanctuary and Sovereignty: Church and State Along the U.S.-Mexico Border."	Reading response due
Nine	Tues Oct 20	<i>Mother Tongue</i> , continued	
	Thurs Oct 22	Bencastro, <i>Odyssey to the North</i> <b>Blackboard (required)</b> Coutin, "The Oppressed, The Suspect, and the Citizen"	Reading response due
Ten	Tues Oct 27	Bencastro continued (but read ahead to Alvarez)	
		<b>Dominican Republic</b>	
	Thurs Oct 29	Alvarez, <i>In the Time of the Butterflies</i> <b>Blackboard required:</b> Alexander, et. al. <i>Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity</i> , pp.48-50 <b>Recommended:</b> González Echevarría book review: "Sisters in Death." Irizarry, "The Ethics of Writing the Caribbean: Latina Narrative as <i>Testimonio</i> "	Reading response due
Eleven	Tues Nov 3	Alvarez, continued	
	Thurs Nov 5	Alvarez, continued <b>Blackboard Required</b> (looking ahead to Danticat): Background readings on the Dominican Republic and Haiti: Winn, <i>Americas</i> (excerpt) Wucker, <i>Why the Cocks Fight</i> (excerpt) <b>Recommended:</b> Ink, "Remaking Identity, Unmaking Nation"	
Twelve	Tues Nov 10	Danticat, <i>The Farming of Bones</i> (excerpts) <b>Blackboard Required:</b> Dawes, <i>That the World May Know</i> , pp. 38-45	Reading Response due

Week	Date	Readings	Other Assignments
	Thurs Nov 12	Danticat, continued	
		<b>Cuba</b>	
Thirteen	Tues Nov 17	Arenas, <i>Before Night Falls</i> (excerpts)  <b>Blackboard (Required):</b> Bejel, “Cuban CondemNation of Queer Bodies” and <i>Gay Cuban Nation</i> (excerpt)  <b>Recommended:</b> Background readings on Cuba: Borland, <i>Cuban-American Literature of Exile</i> (excerpt) Novas, <i>Everything You Need to Know about Latino History</i> (excerpt) Burns, <i>Latin America: A Concise Interpretive History</i> (excerpt) Olson & Olson, <i>Cuban Americans: From Trauma to Triumph</i> (excerpts)	Reading response due
	Thurs Nov 19	Arenas continued  <b>Blackboard Recommended:</b> Mullins, “Seeking Asylum”	
Fourteen	Tues Nov 24	Muñoz, <i>The Greatest Performance</i>	Reading response due
	Thurs Nov 26	<b>No class-Thanksgiving Break</b>	
Fifteen	Tues Dec 1	<i>The Greatest Performance</i> continued	
		<b>Course Wrap-Up</b>	
	Thurs Dec 3	5 minute research presentations	
Please Note 📧	<b>Fri Dec 4</b>	Turn in your working draft (10 pages minimum) to me on Blackboard by 5:00 pm. I will distribute these to your classmates in your peer working group by 10:00 pm, so that you can read and comment on them for Tuesday’s class.	Working drafts due on Blackboard by 5:00 pm
Sixteen	Tues Dec 8	Read and comment on drafts for your working group In class: draft workshop	Peer editing reviews due

Week	Date	Readings	Other Assignments
	Thurs Dec 10	Conclusion: Last Day of Class	
Finals Week	<b>Mon Dec 14</b>		<b>Final Research Papers Due by 11:59 pm.</b>