



# SPAN322: “North of the Río Grande” US Latino/Chicano Literature

Mid-Term Revision

March 3, 2020

**LANGUAGE**

# Language

“Language serves as a tool for either inclusion or alienation. [. . .] Language outlines the barriers between cultures.”

“The use of language invokes a strong feeling of pride or heartbreak. [. . .] No matter the book, language has the potential to immerse the reader in a story and make them feel as if they are living the life of the characters that are described.”

**TERRITORY**

# Territory

“It does not matter where these borders are, the fact that they divide means that inevitably people who live in either side of the border will have different conditions and contexts in relation to each other. [. . .] Territory itself was the center of the dispute for which different countries claim their rights and possession. Embedded within the concept of territory, there are also other concepts such as the law.”

“None of these books could have happened if not for these boundaries, and the trespassing of these boundaries.”

“*Down These Mean Streets* holds another layer of boundaries; the physical to mental, the territory of the inner mind vs. the territory of action.”

**THE LAW**

# The Law

“If we think about the law, we think about rules, regulations and their enforcement; yet we also think about it as something that citizens respect, value and use to guide their behaviour, because if the rules are not abided by, there are consequences.”

“Law is the instrument of the dominant social class and can only represent and pursue the interest of this dominant class. [...] The laws represent social hierarchy in that they are an expression of [...] political and numerical domination. [...] Political inequalities are transformed into social inequalities which then perpetuate themselves.”

**COMMUNITY**

# Community

“A community is formed by those who have a sense of connection and belonging with each other. It is created through a sense of fellowship and people having commonalities with one another.”

“The notion of community and what it means is not as simple as establishing clear-cut boundaries. Rather a sense of self-identity provides one’s sense of belonging in whichever community one feels affiliated with. Whether based on traditional or legal boundaries, or cultural and racial affiliations, community is not a label that can be prescribed. The boundaries of communities, both visible and invisible provide each and everyone of us with a sense of belonging.”

**MEMORY**

# Memory

“Not just personal but also communal memory, holds. [. . .] These books have been able to inspire simply just by recounting memories that are out of our present context and gives us a more in depth understanding of history and the ‘sad’ reality of what people had to go through back then and even until now.”

**WIKIPEDIA**

# Editing Wikipedia

- Our aim is to have “Featured articles” or at least “Good Articles.”
- Such articles are the minority that have passed a process of peer review from other editors.
- This process can take some time, so we need to get going on getting these articles ready for review.
- Submit them by March 12!



# OBJECTIVES AND SKILLS

# Objectives

- Read and discuss key texts of US Latino and Chicano fiction
- Study the US Latino/Chicano literary canon
- Consider its relationship to the mainstream canon
- Contextualize literature in C20th and C21st political history
- Address core issues of identity politics and culture
- Theorize the notion of representation in its multiple meanings
- Rethink the role of the author in literature and politics

# Transferable Skills

- Close reading
- Literary analysis and reflection
- Literary history
- Literary, cultural, and political theory
- Critical thinking
- Research
- Writing for the public

# Questions

- What overlaps or patterns do we see in the books we are reading?
- Is there sufficient commonality to talk of “Latino literature” or should we refer to “Latino literatures” in the plural?
- Does “Latino” constitute an identity, and to what extent does literature help to produce that sense of identity?
- If the role of literature is to help construct an idea of group identity, does autobiography play a special role?
- Does autobiography negate or enhance a work’s literariness?
- Does it matter who writes Latino literature, or what they write about? What is the role of style as well as genre?
- Should Latino literature be part of the US canon? Is this category a “cultural ghetto” and/or special pleading?

# Questions

- How do we do justice to (not flatten out or ignore) the “kink” at the heart of Latino / Chicano literature?
- What are that kink’s effects on its environments?

**MID-TERM**

# Mid-Term Concepts

- Community
- Language
- The Law
- Memory
- Territory

# Mid-Term

- In the exam, you will have a choice of three of these concepts, and pick one of them to write an essay about two or more of the texts you have read.
- E.g.: “Analyze the meaning and significance of ‘Community’ in two or more of the texts we have read so far.”
- You may bring in notes (a “cheat sheet”), maximum one side of Letter size paper.

**NEXT STEPS**

# For Thursday

- Revise for mid-term.
- Make substantial edits on Wikipedia.
- Write brief comments on two of your classmates' blog posts. Especially on Blogger, make sure you sign them.