

ENGL 3362
Literature of the Southwest:
Welcome to the Desert of the Real¹

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Fine Arts Building 113C
T/Th 11-1, W 11-12

CLASS
T/Th 4:00-5:15
FAC 189

While the American West invokes cowboy virtues of the real, authentic, genuine item, and so on, the Southwest, with its desert mirages and indigenous cultures also has an air of the exotic, nightmare, mystical vision, or dream. The texts we will read this semester all make varying claims to the region we call the Southwest as real, unreal, surreal, magically real, or hyperreal. We will explore these literary portrayals of the Southwest, considering the issues of regional representation or performance: why is it so difficult or impossible to capture the essence of place? What is at stake? We will also consider issues that are intrinsic to these texts, including questions of U.S. and borderlands history, environmental and cultural justice, and ethnicity.

Texts:

Edward Abbey, *Desert Solitaire*
Ana Castillo, *So Far From God*
Cormac McCarthy, *Blood Meridian*
Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony*
Rebecca Solnit, *Savage Dreams*
Alfredo Vea, *La Maravilla*
Joy Williams, *The Quick and the Dead*
Shorter Readings available as e-texts (PDFs) through WT Class

Work

Short Essays (40%): As there are no exams in this course, you will have a number of short essays to write. I will always give you a specific prompt and at least a week's notice before they are due. They will be of varying type, from straight literary analysis to more exploratory writing. These essays will be submitted into "drop boxes" in WT Class.

Quizzes and Participation (20%): We will have quizzes periodically which will be of various kinds, from short answer questions over the assigned reading and main ideas from lecture to paragraph responses to quotes or prompts. Quizzes will be significant as a more quantitative measure of learning. Into this grade I will also factor in a participation grade, based on your engagement, contributions, and courtesy in the class.

Final Researched Essay (30%): You'll have the option here either of pursuing the theoretical question of the real as developed in this course or of providing cultural/historical context for a reading of one of the assigned texts. You will hand in a topic proposal for approval of your topic. The final product should be a five-page + essay with a bibliography of four + secondary sources. We will discuss this more later.

Presentation of Final Researched Essay (10%): Instead of a final exam, you will give a conference-style presentation of your final researched essay. We will get into more specific parameters of this later.

¹ This phrase, which we will discuss further, has its origins in Borges, Baudrillard, Zizek, and *The Matrix*.

Policies

Office Hours: I encourage you to visit during my office hours or to make an appointment to meet with me to discuss any aspect of this course.

Attendance: I take role every day. More than 4 absences will affect your grade dramatically. An absence is an absence; budget carefully. Excessive tardiness can constitute an absence.

Work: Please be prepared for and committed to the reading load for this course! You must complete all assignments to succeed in the course. Your shorter papers will be evaluated largely on your analysis or close reading of the text. The final paper, part of which is a formal topic proposal, will have a modest research component, but the emphasis will still be on your thoughts, analysis, and engagement of the text. Frequent reading quizzes and daily participation will a significant factor in your grade. Late papers will be penalized; quizzes may not be made up.

Participation: Participation is of great importance to the success of this course, your learning, and our shared enjoyment of our scholarly work. Therefore, coming to class prepared and willing to take part in discussion will be rewarded. Poor citizenship, on the other hand, will be detrimental to your final grade. One important component of your participation will be your service as a discussion leader during the term.

WTAMU seeks to provide reasonable accommodations for all qualified persons with disabilities. This university will adhere to all federal, state, and local laws, regulations and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations as required to afford equal educational opportunity. It is the student's responsibility to register with Disability Support Services and to contact the faculty member in a timely fashion to arrange for suitable accommodations.

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty: All work submitted for this course must be your own and must be written exclusively for this course. The use of all sources (ideas, paraphrases, summaries, quotations) must be properly documented. Academic dishonesty has dire consequences at WTAMU. I photocopy suspected plagiarized papers for a leisurely investigation that may continue long after I hand them back. For university rules and consequences, check the following link:

WT Academic Integrity Code:

<http://www.wtamu.edu/administrative/ss/code/appendix1.htm>

This syllabus constitutes a contractual agreement between professor and student. I expect that you have read and understood the work load and policies for this course.

Schedule (subject to revision)

Week 1

- Jan. 13 Intro to Course
15 Turner/Bolton/Anzaldúa (PDFs, WTClass, under “Lessons”—print and bring to class)

Week 2

- 20 Graves, “The Last Running” (PDF)
22 Abbey, Desert Solitaire xi-94

Week 3

- 27 Abbey 95-195
29 Abbey 196-269

Week 4

- Feb. 3 Momaday, from The Way to Rainy Mountain (PDF); Silko (get started reading)
5 Silko, Ceremony 1-84

Week 5

- 10 Silko 84-201
12 Silko 201-62

Week 6

- 17 McCarthy, Blood Meridian 3-150
19 McCarthy 151-222

Week 7

- 24 McCarthy 223-337
26 McCarthy, PPHM

Week 8

- March 3 “Atzlán” Materials (PDF); Castillo, So Far From God 19-113
5 Castillo 114-189

Week 9

- 10 Castillo 190-252
12 Flores (PDF); Field-Writing Exercise

Week 10

Spring Break

Week 11

- 24 Veá, La Maravilla 1-112
26 Veá 113-88

Week 12

- 31 Veá 189-305
April 2 *Plutonium Circus*; get a good start on Solnit’s Savage Dreams

Week 13

7 Solnit, Savage Dreams xi-212

9 Solnit 215-93

Week 14

14 Solnit 294-387

16 Williams, The Quick and the Dead 3-105

Week 15

21 Williams 106-218

23 Williams 219-308

Week 16

28 Conclusions / Lessons Learned / Resolutions

30 DEAD DAY

Final Exam: