

Introduction to Mexican American Literature

Fall 2020

Professor Charles Tatum

THURSDAYS from 10 am-12 pm

September 17, 24, October 1, 8, 15

Course Description:

Of the over 50 million Latinas and Latinos living in the United States today, approximately 35 million are Americans of Mexican descent. Yet, the trajectory of Mexican American culture in general and literary expression in particular is still relatively unknown. This course will offer a succinct overview of this rich literary tradition that dates to the mid-nineteenth century. In the first session Tatum will trace its development through the 1950s. In the following four sessions he will focus on the resurgence of Mexican American literature that began in the mid-1960s and that has rapidly burgeoned over the past six decades. Included in our readings will be the narrative fiction (novels and short stories), poetry and autobiographical works of authors such as Rudolfo Anaya, Lorna Dee Cervantes, Luis Urrea, Helena María Viramontes, Sandra Cisneros, Gary Soto, Alberto "Tito" Ríos and Juan Felipe Herrera (a recent U.S. poet laureate). In the last session Tatum will introduce a younger generation of Mexican American writers including Manuel Muñoz, Kristin Valdez Quade, Casandra López and Ada Limón.

Dr. Charles Tatum is Professor Emeritus of Spanish at The University of Arizona. He is the author of a monographic study *Chicano Literature* (1982), published in translation in Mexico in 1986. Among his other book-length publications are: *Chicano Popular Culture*, 2001, (2nd edition, 2017); *Chicano and Chicana Literature: Otra voz del pueblo* (2006); and *Lowriders in Chicano Culture*. He has edited or co-edited several anthologies of Mexican American literature. Tatum served as editor for a 3-volume *Encyclopedia of Latino Culture* (2013).

Required Textbooks for this course:

Rudolfo Anaya. *Bless Me, Última* (any edition); Tey Diana Rebolledo and Eliana Rivero, eds. *Infinite Divisions: An Anthology of Chicana Literature*. The University of Arizona Press, 1993; Sandra Cisneros. *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories* (any edition); Luis Alberto Urrea. *Nobody's Son. Notes from an American Life* (any edition). Print.

PDFs: #1, #2, #3

Readings listed under each date are those to be discussed on those days. You will receive a few discussion questions and topics in advance that will help focus your readings and discussions.

Week 1 – September 17

Introduction

Terminology

Origins of Mexican American literature to 1848

Development of Mexican American literature from 1848 to the 1960s

The cultural aspects of the Chicano Movement

Selections from *Infinite Divisions*: 1-33, 35-74

PDF #1 selections: Tomás Rivera, Américo Paredes, Rolando Hinojosa

PDF # 2 selections: Alurista, Tino Villanueva, Francisco X. Alarcón, Gary Soto

Week 2 – September 24

Mexican American narrative fiction

Bless Me, Ultima

PDF #1 selections: Dagoberto Gilb, Ana Castillo, Kathleen Alcalá

Week 3 – October 1

Mexican American narrative fiction (continued)

Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories

Selections from *Infinite Divisions*: Helena María Viramontes (126-130), Patricia Preciado Martin (167-171), Gloria Anzaldúa (293-294), Denise Chávez (324-329), Estela Portillo (360-368)

Week 4

Mexican American poetry

Selections from *Infinite Divisions*:

PDF #3 selections: Alberto Ríos, Juan Felipe Herrera

Week 5

Mexican American memoir and autobiography

Luis Alberto Urrea. *Nobody's Son: Notes from an American Life*

The continuing promise of Mexican American literature

PDF #3 selections: Ada Limón, Eduardo C. Corral, J. Michael Martínez, Kirstin Valdez Quade