If you are thinking about a major or minor in Hispanic Studies, please see Professor Jerónimo Arellano, the Undergraduate Advising Head, as soon as possible to fill out the appropriate paperwork and to make sure that you understand the prerequisites and requirements.

Topics in Latinx Literature and Culture
Autobiography and Writing the Self

TTh 3:30pm-4:50pm
Shiffman 122

Professor James Mandrell
Office: Rabb 130
Office telephone: x63215
E-mail address: mandrell@brandeis.edu
Office hours: T and Th 5:00pm to 6:00pm; and by appointment
about the course

In this course, we will consider one particular aspect of Latinx cultural production, autobiography. Through our reading and discussion of autobiographical texts, we will take up some of the most pressing topics in literary studies: the relationship between writing and identity formation, the political and ethical obligations of minority literature, the relationship between biographical background and literary interpretation, and questions of sex/gender, socioeconomic class, and genre. Our engagement with autobiographies will not only be critical; we will have an opportunity to explore creatively the nature of autobiography and self-expression in various writing assignments.

General goals for the course are to

• continue to develop and refine language skills;

• continue to develop and refine writing skills;

• continue to develop and refine analytical skills in the context of Hispanic culture;

• continue to develop a familiarity with specific aspects of cultural production in the hispanic world;

• develop skills in drawing connections between and among various texts and kinds of texts;

• and to continue to explore cultural difference as a meaningful area of study.

Particular goals are to

• develop an understanding of the elements and vocabulary of various forms of autobiography as a literary genre;

• develop a broader understanding of the vicissitudes of latinx culture and history as they relate to autobiography;

• develop insight to questions of difference as they relate to literary expression;

• engage over the course of the semester through discussion and writing with critical and creative aspects of latinx autobiography;

• develop as a writer and critic of literature.

design of the course

This class is a seminar, a shared learning experience that entails specific obligations. Your primary obligation is social in nature: your commitment is to the class and to making it work well. This means that you must come to class having completed and then puzzled over the assigned reading; that you must come to class prepared to discuss the literary texts, to share your ideas with the class, and to move discussions forward in meaningful ways; that you must come to class not only willing but eager to hear what others have to say and to respond to it in a collegial fashion.
All of the required texts for the course are available in LATTE.

Success in this four-credit course is based on the expectation that you will spend a minimum of 4.5 hours per class session, if not more, preparing for our discussions (readings), completing assignments, and writing papers, etc.

Because your alert attendance and participatory spirit are essential, you will need to turn off and to put away all electronics, including laptops, tablets, and smartphones. You must also put away all foodstuffs for the duration of the class.

Note that there are no excused absences in this course with the possible exception of a documented personal or medical emergency. Since you chose to enroll in this course— which meets two times a week, Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 3:30pm to 4:50pm—I presume that the schedule is a convenient one for you. Any absence that cannot be documented as being caused by a medical or personal emergency will result in a lower final course grade; each absence has the potential to lower the final course grade by one “notch” (from A- to B+).

Writing assignments must be emailed to me in MS Word-readable format before class on the date they are due. Late work will be accepted at my discretion and, if accepted, will be penalized by a grade that is at least a full letter lower (e.g., an A paper will receive a grade of B). In some instances, we will workshop writing assignments in class. On those days, you should also bring a hard copy of the assignment with you to class.

The final examination is arranged by the Registrar and is currently scheduled for Wednesday 13 December, 18:00 to 21:00. It is possible that the date and/or time for the final examination will change once the exam schedule is finalized by the Office of the Registrar. Since the official final exam period runs through the evening of Tuesday, 19 December 2017, you should not make travel plans before then until we know for certain when the final exam will be held. Please note this information from the Registrar’s webpage (emphasis added):

A detailed final examination schedule of all final examinations administered by the Office of the University Registrar is published each semester around the mid-term period. *Final examinations administered by the Office of the University Registrar must be given during the scheduled final examination period and may not be given prior to the scheduled time.* Students and faculty should confirm the date and time of final examinations, once the detailed schedule is published, prior to making any travel arrangements. (http://www.brandeis.edu/registrar/bulletin/provisional/college/regulations)

Students should not make travel plans based on the Tentative Exam Schedule which is likely to change. Once the final exam schedule has been posted, students can make their definitive travel plans. *Students are required to be on campus to take all scheduled final exams. Travel plans are not considered a valid excuse for rescheduling final exams.* No exceptions to this policy will be made. (http://www.brandeis.edu/registrar finals/).
One final point: you are responsible for checking your Brandeis email account daily throughout the semester in case there are announcements about the class or I need to reach out to you directly.

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**semester project**

We will work together to determine the form that the semester project for the class should take. More information about this will be forthcoming.

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**evaluation**

The class will decide as a group the formula for the calculation of the final course grade. Elements will include: attendance, preparation, and participation; the writing assignments; the semester project; and the final examination.

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**grading scale**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>100-98</th>
<th>90-88</th>
<th>80-78</th>
<th>70-68</th>
<th>60-</th>
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<tr>
<td>A+</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>97-94</td>
<td>87-84</td>
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<td>67-64</td>
<td>60-</td>
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<td>A-</td>
<td>93-91</td>
<td>83-81</td>
<td>73-71</td>
<td>63-61</td>
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</table>

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**the bottom line**

All written work must be typewritten, double-spaced, unless otherwise indicated. No late work will be accepted. No incompletes will be given for the course. If you have a question or a problem, it is your responsibility to make me aware of it.

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**academic integrity**

Every member of the University community is expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. A student shall not submit work that is falsified or is not the result of the student’s own effort. Infringement of academic honesty by a student subjects that student to serious penalties, which may include failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension from the University, or other sanctions). A student who is in doubt regarding standards of academic honesty as they apply to a specific course or assignment should consult the faculty member responsible for that course or assignment before submitting the work. Students may not drop or withdraw from a course while an allegation of academic dishonesty is pending. Instructors may require students to submit work to turnitin.com (plagiarism detection software).

A student’s name on any written exercise (such as an examination, report, thesis, theme, notebook, laboratory report, or computer program) or provided in association with an oral presentation constitutes a representation that the work is the result of that student’s own thought and study. Any such work shall be stated in the student’s own words and produced without the assistance of others, except where quotation marks, references, or footnotes accurately acknowledge the use of sources, including sources
found on the Internet. Selling copies of exams, reports, or information relating to a course is not permitted. Sharing exams, exam or quiz questions and answers, or other materials produced from a previous course, for use other than for study assistance in connection with a current course, may be considered an infringement of academic integrity.

Talking during an examination or possession or use of unauthorized materials or equipment, including but not limited to notes, cell phones, or calculators, during an examination constitutes an infringement of academic honesty. Attempting to receive credit for work not originally submitted also constitutes an infringement of academic honesty. Accepting assistance from others with or without their knowledge constitutes an infringement of academic honesty. All policies regarding examinations apply to take-home and open-book examinations.

In some instances, a student may be authorized by a faculty member to work jointly with another student or with other students in solving problems or completing projects. Students may not collaborate on assignments, however, without explicit permission from the instructor. To provide one’s own work to assist another student in satisfying a course requirement, either knowingly or through negligence, constitutes an infringement of academic honesty. Assistance from personnel associated with University-sanctioned tutoring services is acceptable.

Unless permission is received in advance from the faculty member in charge of the course, a student may not submit, in identical or similar form, work for one course that has been used to fulfill any academic requirement associated with another course at Brandeis or any other institution. A student who perceives the possibility of overlapping assignments in his or her courses should consult with the appropriate faculty members before presuming that a single effort will fulfill the requirements of both courses.

Rights and Responsibilities 2017 - 2018

students with disabilities

If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and if you wish to request a reasonable accommodation for this class, please see the instructor immediately. Note that reasonable accommodations are not provided retroactively.

course of study

august  31   [introduction to the course]

september  5   [autobiography, etc.]
  • Conway, “Memory’s Plots”
  • Romano, “Foreword”
  • Smith and Watson, “Life Narrative: Definitions and Distinctions”
  • Smith and Watson, “A Tool Kit: Twenty-four Strategies for Reading Life Narratives”
  • Tobar, “Immigration Porn”
  • Wallerstein, “Latin@s: What’s in a Name?”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Assignment/Workshop</th>
<th>Reading Assignment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>[writing assignment 1: workshop]</td>
<td>[writing assignment 1 due]</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| 12    | [Thomas, *Down These Mean Streets*]  
  - Thomas, *Down These Mean Streets* |  |
| 14    | - Thomas, *Down These Mean Streets*  
| 19    | [Rodriguez, *Hunger of Memory*]  
  - Rodriguez, *Hunger of Memory* |  |
| 26    | - Rodriguez, *Hunger of Memory*  
  [Durán, “Latino Autobiography, the Aesthetic, and Political Criticism: The Case of *Hunger of Memory*”] |  |
| 28    | [writing assignment 2: workshop] | [writing assignment 2 due] |
| 3     | [Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*]  
  - Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera* |  |
| 10    | - Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*  
  [Torres, “The Construction of Self in U.S. Latina Autobiographies”] |  |
| 11    | [writing assignment 3: workshop] | [writing assignment 3 due] |
| 17    | [Ortíz Cofer, *Silent Dancing*]  
  - Ortíz Cofer, *Silent Dancing* |  |
| 19    | - Ortíz Cofer, *Silent Dancing*  
  [Gatto, “Mambo, Merengue, Salsa: The Dynamics of Self-Construction in Latina Autobiographical Narrative”] |  |
| 24    | [Santiago, *When I Was Puerto Rican*]  
  - Santiago, *When I Was Puerto Rican* |  |
| 26    | - Santiago, *When I Was Puerto Rican*  
  [Sánchez González, “‘I Like to be in America’ [sic]: Three Women’s Texts”] |  |
<p>| 31    | [Arenas, <em>Before Night Falls</em>] | [writing assignment 4 due] |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>November 2</td>
<td>Arenas, <em>Before Night Falls</em></td>
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| November 7 | Arenas, *Before Night Falls*  
[Ocasio, “Autobiographical Writing and ‘Out of the Closet’ Literature by Gay Latino Writers”] |  |
| November 9 | [Vilar, *The Ladies Gallery*]  
[Vilar, *The Ladies Gallery*] |  |
| November 14 | [Vilar, *The Ladies Gallery*] |  |
| November 16 | [Vilar, *The Ladies Gallery*]  
[Kanost, “Re-Placing the Madwoman”] |  |
| November 21 | [Villaseñor, *Burro Genius*]  
[Villaseñor, *Burro Genius*] | [writing assignment 5 due] |
| November 28 | [Villaseñor, *Burro Genius*] |  |
| November 30 | [Villaseñor, *Burro Genius*] |  |
| December 5 | [Alvarez, *¡Yo!*]  
[Alvarez, *¡Yo!*] |  |
| December 7 | [Alvarez, *¡Yo!*]  
[Dalleo and Machado Sáez, “Writing in a Minor Key: Postcolonial and Post-Civil Rights Histories in the Novels of Julia Alvarez”] |  |
| December 13 | final exam, 18:00 to 21:00 |  |