LATINA FEMINISMS: Writings of Feminist Resistance and Healing

Instructor: Professor María J. Durán  Email: mduran@brandeis.edu
Meeting Time: Tues/Thurs 2-3:30pm EST  Office: Shiffman 204
Building and Room: TBA  Office hours: by appointment on Zoom

Course Description
This hybrid course (asynchronous, synchronous, and in-person) explores the theoretical frameworks and literary productions of feminisms developed by Latina/xs. It introduces students to a diversity of backgrounds and experiences (Chicana, Dominican American, Cuban American, Salvadoran American, and Puerto Rican authors) as well as a variety of genres (i.e. fiction, poetry, short stories, drama). Using intersectionality as a theoretical tool for analyzing oppressions, students will explore the complex politics of gender, sexuality, class, ethnicity, and race in the lives of Latina/xs. They will also explore Latina/x feminists’ theoretical and/or practical attempts to transcend socially-constructed categories of identity, while acknowledging existing material inequalities. Students will examine key themes in Latina/x feminisms, including the politics of representation, intersecting forms of oppression, identity, family, strategies of empowerment, resistance, and acts of healing.

Course Goals
◆ Define intersectionality and analyze oppressions through an intersectional lens
◆ Explain the theoretical contributions to feminist thought developed by Latina/x
◆ Explore the diversity within Latina/x feminist literary works, including their different cultural, historical, political, and social contexts
◆ Examine what forms resistance takes and how it manifests in in written works by Latina/x
◆ Compare, contrast, and critique Latina/x identity as a tool of analysis for resistance and healing
◆ Improve close-reading skills and writing skills for critical analysis of literary works

Course Materials
Listed below are required course materials available at the university bookstore or online. Other primary texts and secondary readings (PDF files) will be available on Latte and denoted [L] in the course calendar.
◆ Virginia Grise, Your Healing is Killing Me (2017)
◆ Access to a computer with reliable internet access
◆ Perusall (integrated in Latte)

Modes of Assessment (500 pts total)
75 pts, 15% Attendance and participation
200 pts, 40% Response papers (4 @ 10% each)
50 pts, 10% Take Home Exam
25 pts, 5% Civic Engagement
150 pts, 30% Final Project

98-100% ........... A   94-97% ........... A   90-93% ........... A-
88-89% ........... B+   84-87% ........... B   80-83% ........... B-
78-79% ........... C+   74-77% ........... C   70-73% ........... C-
68-69% ........... D+   64-67% ........... D   60-63% ........... D-
<59% ........... F

I will round up to the next full percentage point if the decimals are >0.50. A grade of 93.50% = 93% and earns you an A-; 93.51% = 94% and earns you an A. Each assignment will have a point-based rubric.
Attendance and Participation (15%)  
Our synchronous Zoom and in-person classes will begin at 2:00pm. If you (virtually) arrive 5+ minutes late, you are tardy. Three (3) tardies = one (1) absence. You will be marked absent if you arrive 15+ minutes late. You are allowed three (3) “freebie absences.” On your fourth absence, I will deduct a 1/3 of a letter grade from your final course grade per absence (e.g. if your course average is an “A” and you have three unexcused classes, then you will have an A-). If you then miss a fourth class, your grade will be lowered to a B+). To have an absence excused after the 3 “freebie absences,” you must email me on the week of your absence (either before or after).

Excused absences will include illness, required quarantine, family emergency, etc. Doctor's notes due to illness are not required. If you are unable to attend a class, please contact a peer to learn what you missed and/or sign up for office hours. If you miss class, you are still responsible for completing all assignments. Please email me to make alternative arrangements and/or to discuss make-up work.

Attendance alone does not equal participation. Active student engagement, open-mindedness, and sensitivity towards varying opinions are critical ingredients towards making this a successful course. Please come prepared to think, share, and discuss. Keep the readings handy (electronic or in print) so you can reference and engage them during discussions. If you are uncomfortable speaking in a large group setting, please let me know at the start of the semester so I can help you. Everyone is expected to contribute to what Cornel West has called the “intellectual marketplace of ideas.” And, to quote bell hooks, “As a classroom community, our capacity to generate excitement is deeply affected by our interest in one another, in hearing one another’s voices, in recognizing one another’s presence.”

Reading Responses (40%)  
You will write four (4) short responses on select topics throughout the semester. These responses are reading-based and should be 500-600 words. On the day that a response is due, you will exchange with a peer and then write a peer-response of 300-350 words. Detailed guidelines to follow.

Take Home Exam (10%)  
The open-note take-home exam will be released on Latte on Sunday, September 27th at 9am and will be due on Tuesday, September 29th at 2pm. It will be a combination of short answer and essay intended to assess your learning about the theoretical works of Latina/x feminisms.

Final Project (30%)  
In lieu of a final paper or exam, you will complete a submit a final project with a small group. This is a semester-long project that will prove to be academically and personally rewarding, as you create space to synthesize your course learnings and showcase them at the semester’s end. Detailed guidelines to follow.

Civic Engagement (5%)  
As part of the experiential component of this course, you must attend at least one out-of-class event that engages with issues related to this course (i.e. lecture, workshop, play, etc.) and write a short response. Detailed guidelines to follow. Upcoming civic engagement opportunities will be posted on Latte.

Late and Missed Work  
Deadlines for all assignments will be posted on Latte. All response short papers receive an automatic 3-day extension—no explanation required. If you need an additional extension, please give me at least 24 hours’ notice. Any paper submitted after granted extensions will incur -5 points per calendar date it is late. Extensions for the final project and civic engagement need to be arranged with me first. Please note that there are no extensions for the take-home exam. Other informal assignments (i.e. Perusall, writing prompts, other homework) will not be individually graded and therefore do not require formal submission. However, I encourage you to make up any work you have missed on your own time and at your own pace. Rest assured that there will be flexibility when any health-related issues arise.
Communication
Course announcements and learning materials will be available on Latte. Important matters (i.e. syllabus changes) will also be communicated over email. Make sure you email me from your Brandeis account; I expect and abide by proper email etiquette. I strive to respond to emails in 24 hours during the weekdays. Please allow up to 48 hours on the weekend.

Zoom Etiquette
All Zoom links for remote synchronous classes will be available on Latte. I highly encourage you to turn on your video during our Zoom meetings, but this is not mandatory. You are also not required to show your personal setting; you may opt to apply a virtual background. Please mute your microphones when you are not speaking.

Office Hours
Virtual! Sign up using Calendly. Come to ask questions about assignments, check your progress, or just to say hello. If none of the listed times work for you, email me.

Weekly Coffee Hour
Virtual! Find the link on Latte. This is a space designed to help us motivate one another, hold each other accountable, and build community.

Writing Format
Use 12-point, Times New Roman font, double-spacing, and 1” margins all-around. You may use either Chicago or MLA citation style for written responses.

Grade Inquiries
I will not discuss grades via email. If you have an inquiry about a grade you received or would like to know how you are doing in the course, please sign up for office hours.

Electronic Devices
Use them if/however they enhance your learning. Please refrain from emailing, messaging, checking social media, etc.). Remember to stay present during our class time.

The Writing Center
The Writing Center is a great resource for help on any writing assignments. Click here for information and to make an appointment with the Center’s staff.

Credit Hours
Success in this 4-credit course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week preparing for class (readings, writing assignments, etc.)

Time Zones
All times listed on this syllabus are Eastern Standard Time (EST). If your time zone makes synchronous meetings difficult, we will make a plan that will ensure your active learning and participation.

About Health and Safety
All students in this class are required to observe the university’s policies on physical distancing and mask-wearing to support the health and safety of all classroom participants. Face coverings must be worn by all students and instructors in classes with in-person meetings. Students and faculty must also maintain the appropriate 6 feet of physical distance from one another when entering, exiting, or being in the classroom and continue to sit in seats assigned by the professor to assist the university in its contact-tracing efforts. All faculty and students must also clean their work areas before and after each class session, using the sanitizing wipes provided by the University. (All classrooms will also be professionally cleaned by Brandeis custodial staff multiple times per day.)

Privacy
Recordings of classes will be available on Latte. To protect the privacy of each student and to foster a safe space, please do not screenshot or video share any content from this course on social media or elsewhere. Any student who violates this will need to meet with me and the department chair.

Zoom/Latte Tools
There will be a brief introduction to the interactive features of Zoom on the first day of class, as well as an orientation to the Latte tools for this course. Introduction to Perusall will take place in the second week.
**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 (see section 20 of R&R). Please consult Brandeis University Rights and Responsibilities for all policies and procedures related to academic integrity. 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. Allegations of alleged academic dishonesty will be forwarded to the Department of Student Rights and Community Standards. Citation and research assistance can be found at [Brandeis Library Guides - Citing Sources](#).

**Student Accessibility Support**

Brandeis seeks to welcome and include all students. If you are a student who needs accommodations as outlined in an accommodations letter, please talk with me and present your letter of accommodation as soon as you can. I want to support you. In order to provide test accommodations, I need the letter more than 48 hours in advance. I want to provide your accommodations, but cannot do so retroactively. If you have questions about documenting a disability or requesting accommodations, please contact Student Accessibility Support (SAS) at 781.736.3470 or [access@brandeis.edu](mailto:access@brandeis.edu).

**Mental Health**

Your mental health and well-being are important to me. Significant stress or anxiety, disrupted sleep, mood changes, among other things, can interfere with your academic performance. Whether or not the source of these symptoms is coursework, I am here for you if you need to talk about any issues. I am, however, not a therapist, and Brandeis provides excellent mental health services to support the well-being of all students. You can make an appointment with Brandeis Counseling Center by calling (781) 736-3730. If you need help, please ask for it. Asking for help is a smart and courageous thing to do.

**Student Support and Funding**

Brandeis is committed to supporting all our students so they can thrive. Resources are available to help with the many academic and non-academic factors that contribute to student success (finances, health, food supply, housing, mental health counseling, academic advising, physical and social activities, etc.). Please explore the many links on this [Support at Brandeis page](#) to find out more about the resources that Brandeis provides to help you and your classmates to achieve success.

The Office of Student Financial Services (SFS) participates in the administration of the Brandeis Emergency Fund, which is available to both undergraduate and graduate students experiencing some kind of financial emergency when other resources are not available. SFS can provide confidential support for students with demonstrated financial need facing financial challenges. To apply for emergency funds, please complete an [online application](#).

If you are having difficulty purchasing course materials, please make an appointment with your student financial services or academic services adviser to discuss available options.

**Teaching Continuity**

The COVID-19 pandemic is far from over, and we may need to pivot to fully remote learning at any point in the semester. In this event, we will continue with both synchronous and asynchronous learning using Zoom and Latte. All announcements and assignments will continue to be posted on Latte. Assignment deadlines may change. Please stay informed of such changes via Latte and communicate early and often. Always reach out to me if you need anything to support your learning and well-being in this course.
Classroom Culture
This course values lived experiences, diverse perspectives, inclusivity, community, resistance in the face of oppression, social justice, change, and acts of healing. Indeed, we will discuss how many of these values manifest in the works of Latina/x scholars and writers. In this class, we will put people first, as we practice empathy and understand that our own lives may differ drastically from the lives of others. We will practice safety as we abide by university protocols for public health. We will build a community—during class time, office hours, and virtual weekly hangouts. Finally, we will celebrate accomplishments. Share will me your successes—major or minor—and I will acknowledge them however you prefer. Your dedication and perseverance during these challenging times matter.

Guidelines for Discussions
We are likely to have discussions about social and political issues that are meaningful and/or sensitive. There may be moments where you feel uncomfortable in this class, and this is okay. I encourage you to embrace feelings of discomfort; let yourself be challenged. The goal of this course is not to “force” certain ways of thinking; instead, it will expose everyone to ways of thinking and being in the world that may or may not be different from their own. Disagreements are expected, but we are all responsible for remaining respectful and being held accountable for what we say. If you are concerned about your ability to handle a particular topic or text, please email me.

We will follow these guidelines:

- Always listen carefully, with an open mind, to the contribution of others.
- Remain intellectually curious by asking questions.
- Ask for clarification when you don’t understand a point someone has made. Do not make assumptions about what someone has said or his/her/their intent.
- Always critique ideas or positions, NOT the people in this class.
- Avoid generalizations. Define terms as best as possible.
- If you challenge others’ ideas, do so with factual evidence and appropriate logic.
- Interrogate your negative reactions to readings and discussion to see what insight they can reveal about yourself and/or about others.
- If others challenge your ideas be willing to change your mind if they demonstrate errors in your logic or use of facts.
- Point out the relevance of issues when their relevance might not be obvious to others.
- Respectfully refer to your peers by preferred names and pronouns.
- Above all, respect the beliefs of others, even if they differ from yours.

On the first day of class, we will collectively set other expectations, which will later be shared on an updated document.
READING SCHEDULE*
*Schedule and readings are subject to change. Updates will be posted on Latte.

Week One: Course Introduction
Thursday, August 27
♦ Introductions and syllabus review
♦ Introduction letter DUE on Sunday, 8/30 at noon

Week Two: Language Matters
Tuesday, September 1
♦ [L] Nicole M. Guidotti-Hernández, “Affective Communities and Millennial Desires: Latinx, or why my computer won’t recognize Latina/o”
♦ [L] Nicole Trujillo-Pagán, “Crossed out by LatinX: Gender Neutrality and Genderblind Sexism”
♦ Optional: [L] Salvador Vidal-Ortiz, and Juliana Martinez, “Latinx thoughts: Latinidad with an X”

Thursday, September 3
♦ Kimberlé Crenshaw, “The Urgency of Intersectionality”:
♦ Recommended: Jane Coaston, “The Intersectionality Wars”:
♦ Recommended: Loretta Ross, “The Origin of the Phrase, ‘Women of Color’”:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=82vl34mi4lw

Week Three: Foundations of Latina/x Feminisms
Tuesday, September 8

Thursday, September 10 – Brandeis Monday (no class)
♦ Watch “Feminist Freedom Warriors: Cherrie Moraga”:
http://feministfreedomwarriors.org/watchvideo.php?firstname=Cherr%C3%ADe&lastname=Moraga
♦ Watch “Feminist Freedom Warriors: Maylei Blackwell”:
Transcript: http://feministfreedomwarriors.org/uploadfolder/Maylei%20Blackwell.pdf

Week Four: Queering and Race-ing Latina/x Feminisms
Tuesday, September 15
♦ Response #1 DUE at 2pm

Thursday, September 17
♦ [L] Juana Rodríguez, “Divas, Atrevidas, y Entendidas: An Introduction to Identities” (excerpt)
♦ Peer Response #1 DUE 9/19 at 11:59pm
Week Five: Queering and Race-ing Latina/x Feminisms

Tuesday, September 22

Thursday, September 24 [in person 75min]
♦ Optional: [L] Patricia Marina Trujillo, “Feminisms” entry  
♦ Synthesis and review  
♦ [L] Take home exam available on Latte on 9/27 at 9am

Week Six: Poetics of Latina/x Womanhood

Tuesday, September 29
♦ [L] Ariana Brown’s poetry (selections TBD)  
♦ Take home exam DUE at 2pm

Thursday, October 1
♦ Guest speaker: Ariana Brown (TENTATIVE)

Week Seven: Poetics of Latina/x Womanhood

Tuesday, October 6 [synchronous AND in person 45min—group 1]
♦ Response #2 DUE at 2pm

Thursday, October 8 [synchronous AND in person 45min—group 2]
♦ [L] Judith Ortiz Cofer, Silent Dancing (selections TBD)  
♦ Peer Response #2 DUE 10/17 at 11:59pm  
♦ Mid-course feedback survey

Week Eight: Poetics of Latina/x Womanhood

Tuesday, October 13
♦ [L] Colonize This!: Young Women of Color on Today’s Feminism (selections TBD)  
♦ Brainstorming: final project collection proposals  
♦ Guest Speaker: Daisy Hernández (TENTATIVE)

Thursday, October 15
♦ [L] Achy Obejas, “We Came All the Way from Cuba so You Could Dress Like This?”  
♦ Workshop I: collection proposals  
♦ Collection Proposals DUE 10/17 at 11:59pm

Week Nine: Poetics of Latina/x Womanhood

Tuesday, October 20
♦ [L] Leticia Hernández-Linares, Mucha Muchacha, Too Much Girl (selections TBD)  

Thursday, October 22 [in person 75min]
♦ Synthesis and reflections on poetics
**Week Ten: The Nation and Collective Resistance**

Tuesday, October 27
- Julia Alvarez, *In the Time of the Butterflies*
- Response #3 DUE at 2pm

Thursday, October 29
- *In the Time of the Butterflies* (continued)
- Peer Response #3 DUE on 10/31 at 11:59pm

**Week Eleven: The Nation and Collective Resistance**

Tuesday, November 3
- *In the Time of the Butterflies* (continued)

Thursday, November 5 [*in person 75min*]
- *In the Time of the Butterflies* (continued)
- [L] Lynn Chun Ink, “Remaking Identity, Unmaking Nation: Historical Recovery and the Reconstruction of Community in *In the Time of the Butterflies* and *The Farming of Bones*”
- Workshop II: individual contributions, part I

**Week Twelve: Collective Care and Feminist Performance**

Tuesday, November 10
- Virginia Grise, *Your Healing is Killing Me*

Thursday, November 12
- *Your Healing is Killing Me* (continued)
- Workshop III: individual contributions, part II

**Mark your calendars for this week for a performance lecture/workshop with V. Grise (date TBA)**

**Week Thirteen: Towards Conocimiento and Healing**

Tuesday, November 17
- [L] Gloria Anzaldúa, “now let us shift…”
- Peer Response #4 DUE at 2pm

Thursday, November 19 [*in person 75min*]
- “now let us shift…” (continued)
- Peer Response #4 DUE on 11/21 at 11:59pm

**Week Fourteen**

Tuesday, November 24 and Thursday, November 26 – Thanksgiving break (no classes)
- Complete Workshop IV: collection introductions
- Continue to work on final projects

**Week Fifteen**

Tuesday, December 1
- Workshop V: putting it all together

Thursday, December 3
- Reflections and evaluations
- Civic Engagement DUE at 2pm

Final Project Showcase: Wednesday, December 9 TBA
Final Projects DUE: Thursday, December 10 at 2pm