

Comparative Ethnic Literature:
African American, Hispanic, and Jewish Autobiography –
Remembering Difference
Spring 2006
JOE LOCKARD

English 494/598 [SLN 94181/95970]
African and African American Studies 494/598
[SLN 28186/18251]
Chicana/o Studies 494/598[SLN 47857/29089]
TTh 1:40-2:55PM/PEBE 117



TEXTS

JUAN FRANCISCO MANZANO, *Autobiographia de un esclavo / Autobiography of a Slave*
(Cuba, 1839-40)

FREDERICK DOUGLASS, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*
(United States, 1845)

PRIMO LEVI, *Survival in Auschwitz*
(Italy, 1958)

RICHARD WRIGHT, *Black Boy*
(United States, 1945)

ANZIA YEZIERSKA, *Red Ribbon on a White Horse*
(United States, 1950)

ALBERT MEMMI, *The Pillar of Salt*
(Tunisia-France, 1955)

MAYA ANGELOU, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*
(United States, 1970)

INGA MUSCIO, *Autobiography of a Blue-Eyed Devil: My Life and Times in a Racist, Imperialist Society*
(United States, 2005)

LINDA ANDERSON, *Autobiography*
(New Critical Idiom Series, 2001)

COURSE SUMMARY

This course triangulates and interweaves three ethnic literatures, examining how African American, Hispanic and Jewish cultures narrate memories of difference. It begins by exploring processes of autobiographical self-construction within historical narrative, and how ethnic meta-histories have functioned as cultural staging points. After examining the slave narrative tradition, the course considers a series of twentieth-century autobiographies that voice the redemption of 'valueless bodies' and elaborate processes of social subordination and cultural destruction. Finally, we shall consider autobiographies as sites of cultural resistance and creation of dissident subjectivities.

DEPARTMENTAL CREDIT

For English department undergraduates with a Literature concentration, this course satisfies requirements for (a) Gender/American Ethnic Literatures/Postcolonial Studies, and (b) Post-1900 Literature. For English graduate students, the course satisfies requirements for (a) Post-1900 Literature, (b) Genre, (c) Ethnic Studies, and (d) Cultural Studies. For African and African American Studies and Chicana/o Studies students, consult your departments. Satisfies credit for a certificate in Jewish Studies.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- Full reading knowledge and discursive command of course texts expressed through discussion participation. [20 percent]
- Undergraduates, two 8-10 page argumentative papers; graduates, one 25-30 page research paper. [80 percent] All papers in MLA style. Graduate students must meet with the course instructor early in the semester to discuss their paper topics.

Regular attendance and completion of all requirements are needed for a passing grade. No post-semester extensions on the seminar paper will be granted without documented health reasons.

If further clarifications are needed concerning course content and requirements, do not hesitate to e-mail the instructor or attend office hours, preferably early in the semester.

OFFICE HOURS AND RESOURCES

Instructor office hours for Spring 2006 will be Wednesday, 9-12, 1:30-3:15. No office hours are available on Monday or Friday. It is always advisable to e-mail or call ahead in order to schedule a meeting, as occasional meetings may interrupt this schedule. I can be contacted via Joe.Lockard@asu.edu. My office telephone is (480) 727-6096; do not leave voice mail.

For consultation on papers with content in Hispanic, Mexican or Chicana/o Studies, Professor Rebeca Siegel-Valdez (Languages and Literatures) will have office hours by appointment for students from this course. Contact her directly by e-mail.

For consultation on papers concerning her autobiography, *Autobiography of a Blue-Eyed Devil*, Inga Muscio has volunteered to respond to student questions by e-mail. The instructor will provide the e-mail to those students in need.

GRADES

Grades are an archaic form of evaluation, and better forms of evaluation can be employed. However, your instructor appreciates having a salary and this course gives honest grades using clear criteria. Consult the Grading Criteria handout distributed in the first class for an understanding of grading standards in English department courses. You have the right to query or challenge any grade given during this course, without concern for making the request. Upon receiving a grade query, the instructor will either raise or confirm the grade and provide an explanation for the decision.

COURSE ELECTRONICS

This course employs a MyASU website that should be visible and can be accessed from your MyASU homepage. The course site contains the syllabus, assignment announcements, supplementary readings, and relevant course materials. Any files placed on the MyASU course site will be announced by e-mail specifying their content and location within the site.

E-mail instructions: All class e-mail from the instructor will be generated from the course site, and MyASU sends e-mail to university addresses. Since e-mail will not be delivered to non-university addresses, please check your university e-mail regularly and correspond with the instructor from that same address. The instructor cannot accept responsibility for ensuring e-mail receipt at non-university addresses.

ACCOMMODATIONS

If you have a learning variation that makes in-class assignments, including in-class speaking and/or writing, difficult for you, please let me know and we will arrange another method of evaluation. If certain instructional styles work better for you than others, please let me know: e.g., if you need handouts in large print, if certain visual formats are more difficult for you to understand than others, if all printed material needs to be in black and white instead of colors, etc. If you need assistance taking notes, please tell me and I will arrange an accommodation. Further, if you find accommodations necessary because of work or childcare issues, let me know during office hours or by e-mail. Such accommodation requests should be made at the beginning of the semester. Finally, if childcare arrangement lapses would prevent you from attending class, please bring your child to class and we shall be delighted to welcome her/him. The instructor definitely can use the play company.

DETAILED SCHEDULE

- This schedule is subject to adjustments and alterations, which will be announced both in class and online.
- Readings are due for discussion on the assignment date specified. Any handouts will be provided one class in advance of the discussion date.
- There are 28 scheduled class meetings for this course.

Tuesday, January 17

Introduction; discussion of autobiography theory.

Thursday, January 19

Anderson, 1-17, 27-59

Tuesday, January 24

Anderson, 60-133

Thursday, January 26: **FOUR SLAVE NARRATIVES**

Manzano, [entire]

Tuesday, January 30

Manzano

Thursday, February 2

Memoirs of Boston King [entire, inc. video]

See: http://antislavery.eserver.org/narratives/boston_king/

Tuesday, February 7

Douglass [entire]

Thursday, February 9

Douglass

Tuesday, February 14

Douglass

Thursday, February 16

Levi, 1-78 [to 'The Drowned and the Saved' chapter]

Tuesday, February 21:

Levi [complete]

Thursday, February 23

Comparative discussion of Manzano, King, Douglass, and Levi.
Graduate student presentation (1)

Tuesday, February 27: **MODERNIST AUTOBIOGRAPHY**

Wright, 1-170.

Undergraduates: Paper #1 due.

Thursday, March 2

Wright, 171-303

Tuesday, March 7

Wright, 307-453

Thursday, March 9

Cancelled.

MARCH 12-19 SPRING BREAK

Tuesday, March 21

Yeziarska, 11-113

Thursday, March 23

Yeziarska, 114-228

Tuesday, March 28: **Postcolonial and
Resistant Autobiographies**

Memmi, Prologue, 3-113

Thursday, March 30

Memmi, 114-236

Tuesday, April 4

Memmi, 249-342

Thursday, April 6

Angelou, 1-111

Tuesday, April 11:

Angelou, 112-193

Thursday, April 13

Angelou, 194-290

Tuesday, April 18

Muscio, Preface, 1-191

Thursday, April 20

Muscio, 195-505

Tuesday, April 25

Graduate student presentations (2)

Thursday, April 27

Release day

Tuesday, May 2

Final class meeting.
Undergraduates, Paper 2 due.
Graduates, Seminar Paper due.